Constructing a Just City:
A Feminist Theo-Ethical Contribution

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emmanuel College and the Graduate Centre for Theological Studies of the Toronto School of Theology. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael’s College.

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University of St. Michael’s College

2018

Abstract

As it has been materialized in urban environments, the ideology of neoliberalism has produced the conditions for increasing economic inequality in Toronto and in many other North American cities. Both poverty and extreme wealth are on the rise, and in Toronto, these disparities are spatialized, which is to say, they are mapped into and onto the urban landscape. Urbanized neoliberal political economic relations can be recognized by the prioritization for the concerns and interests of wealthy private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations and financial capital, through the commodification of human lives and particular ethno-cultural ‘others,’ and through the disregard for the needs of the most vulnerable city dwellers.

Neoliberal urbanization, as a spatial strategy, has consequences on the sense of self of urban inhabitants. When cities are built and maintained with the priorities of wealthy urban inhabitants in mind and premised on a neglect for the needs of the most economically disenfranchised, all urban inhabitants are scripted to think of themselves as responsible for their own (economic) well-being, not for the (economic and social) well-being of others.
In this thesis, I address the moral problems of urban economic injustice and neoliberal subjectivity spawned by neoliberal urbanization. Using liberative, feminist and materialist methods, I propose a theo-ethical moral vision for middle-class urban Christian inhabitants to become moral agents who are able to resist with the hope to transform spatialized structural injustice, and the commodification of human life.

To do so, I suggest the moral norms of responsible relationality, public neighbour love understood as stranger love, and justice-love. I develop the metaphor of God’s body as made up of connective tissues of love in order to understand what it is that love is and asks of disciples of Jesus in the context of urban neoliberalization. I examine the transformative city building practices of participatory planning and the right to the city movement as seeds of hope for the future. I argue for participatory art as a moral and spiritual resource for moral agents in the pursuit of economically just cities.
Acknowledgements

I am profoundly grateful to my advisor, Dr. Marilyn Legge of Emmanuel College, for her support and encouragement with this project. This work is stronger and clearer because of her feedback. In the course of this research, writing and re-writing, Marilyn continued to hold me accountable to the notion that theo-ethical inquiry ought to participate in the work of liberation; I have been inspired by her strong and spirit-filled example in life, teaching and writing to abide by this praxis and belief.

I am also deeply grateful to Michael Bourgeois, Pamela Couture, John Dadosky and Bill Kervin for their support in various, unique and important ways throughout the journey towards this end. I am appreciative of my examining committee—Marilyn, Michael, John, Elizabeth Bounds and Mary Jo Leddy—for their thoughtful and constructive engagement with my project.

I could not have done this work without good friends and various communities of belonging. I am eternally appreciative for the companionship, guidance and encouragement of Natalie Wigg-Stevenson—a friend, supporter and teacher for life. I am grateful for colleagues Kim Penner and Ren Ito; it has made all the difference to have close connections with these passionate and thoughtful scholars throughout these long and rich years of study. The practical, joyous, creative and emotional support of my friends outside of academic life (Anna, Ness, Stef, Julia, Ding, Robin, Steven and more) have been a blessing to me. The Rectory Collective, St. George the Martyr, L’Arche and Epiphany St. Mark’s have each been places for practicing and being formed in the discipline of love which I reflect on in these pages.
I am grateful to my parents and sister-in-law, who helped me to carve out space to work on this project by offering their time, resources and care.

I dedicate this work to Nathan and Millie. In your own ways, both of you have enabled this project to see the light of day by feeding me with love, encouragement, understanding, snacks, rocks and sticks. Thank you.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Cities are ever-increasingly the milieu wherein a majority of humans live their lives. Fifty-five point four percent of the world’s population resides in an urban area, which is expected to rise to sixty percent by 2030.¹ With these ever-greater populations, attention to the effects of urban existence on human life and other-than-human life is of crucial moral and theological concern.

Within the landscape of the Christian tradition, there has been a long standing and “deep ambivalence towards the city.”² As Timothy Gorringe notes, the city has been understood as both a place of violence and hubris, as well as a site of redemption and creativity.³ As it is imaged in Scripture, the city is both “Babylon, the place of alienation, exile, estrangement and violence, and Jerusalem, the place where God dwells, sets God’s sign, and invites humankind to peace.”⁴ This dual representation can be traced throughout Scripture; the city is where we sin and where God punishes us, as well as a place to encounter grace and be redeemed.

The tension between these two Biblical representations of the city has repeatedly been developed theologically with the emphasis on the city as a place of human downfall. Since the fourth century CE onwards, there has been hostility to the city on the part of

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³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
Christian theologians.\textsuperscript{5} This is most clearly evident in, amongst other sources, Augustine’s \textit{City of God}, where the earthly city was understood as fixated on domination and love of self, and the city of God was rightly motivated towards love of God. In earthly cities, Augustine suggested that there could be no true happiness, as true happiness could only be realized in the “perfect peace of the eschatological kingdom.”\textsuperscript{6} Heaven, not earth, was where grace could be found.

This interpretive binary of the city as site of sin and salvation underscores a significant aspect of what it is that has been considered when inquiring into the nature of the city, or when the city has been regarded as a context to examine theologically. That is, when the city has been interpreted theologically, it has been predominantly assessed for the ways that it malforms human (spiritual) life and therefore, theological treatment of the city has focused on what kinds of human lives are enabled within the urban milieu.

In line with this dominant tradition of reflecting on cities through the vantage point of concern and hope for human life, in this thesis I will consider ways that cities (and Toronto specifically) can instil and facilitate indifference and sinfulness as well as instilling and facilitating love between urban inhabitants.\textsuperscript{7} I will argue that North American cities, and Toronto in particular, have been and continue to be constructed through neoliberal political economic principles and practices that have had a direct impact on what is considered valuable and possible for human life. Urbanized neoliberal political economic relations can be recognized in the prioritization for the concerns and

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{7} Sin as a structural phenomena is explored in Chapters Two and Three, and love is explored in Chapter Four.
interests of wealthy private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations and financial capital, through the commodification of human lives and particular ethnocultural ‘others,’ and through the disregard for the needs of the most vulnerable city dwellers.

I will also argue that cities can be places where people can feel connected to and responsible for the many strangers who inhabit this shared space. While cities, and as I will demonstrate below, Toronto in particular, are both sites for inculcating irresponsible and unjust ways of relating between urban inhabitants – that theologically are sinful – they are also contexts for people becoming responsible and loving through engagement with structural, spatial and cosmological relations.  

This thesis is a contribution to seeking justice in cities as one response in the midst of neoliberal globalization. While this project does not expand on the phenomenon of economic globalization and corporate led global capitalism, it is widely recognized that neoliberalism is the supporting ideology for this global socio-economic

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8 I use the term structure (as Iris Marion Young explains it) to “describe a set of socially caused conditions that position a large number of people in similar ways” (Responsibility for Justice [New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011], 18). I explore structures more fully in Chapter Three. Critical social theorists David Harvey in Social Justice and the City (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2009), and in Rebel Cities (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2013), and Edward Soja in Seeking Spatial Justice (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) have each examined the causes of injustice in contemporary urban environments as geographic, or spatialized in nature. They both contest that there is an inherent spatiality, or an observable geography, to social relations of injustice that serve to concretize processes/structures into unjust social relations. I explore spatiality as a theoretical concept more fully in Chapter Three.

development practice\textsuperscript{10} – hence the terms “neoliberal globalization” and the “neoliberal global economy” are often used in reference to the practice of unrestricted “flows of goods and services, capital, and people across national borders.”\textsuperscript{11} Neoliberalism has functioned and continues to operate as a kind of “ideological software” for globalization by “inspiring and imposing far-reaching programs of state restructuring and rescaling across a wide range of national and local contexts.”\textsuperscript{12} My interest in this project, however, is at the North American civic scale and with the materialized ideology of neoliberalism as it impacts the construction of cities. By focusing on the local specificities of the city, I recognize that the inclinations that I uncover indeed connect to the global and historical trajectory of neoliberal globalization.

**Context: The City of Toronto**

In this thesis, I am investigating the context of Toronto, the city in which I have lived for the majority of my life. I turn to the specific context of Toronto in recognition that the structural and spatial arrangements of this urban context are particular, but not entirely unique. I turn to the context of Toronto in order to examine the injustice of economic inequality. The growth of economic inequality and income disparity is “widely

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space,” 33.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
acknowledged as the defining challenge of our time.” In this thesis I concur that this injustice is caused by the neoliberalization of all aspects of economic and social life.

In the past thirty years, many urban centres in North America (including Toronto) have developed extreme socio-economic disparities. Toronto has the highest child poverty rate amongst large cities in Canada, and most of the children living in poverty are those of colour. While more than a quarter of all children in this city are living below the poverty line, the amount of wealth in this city continues to skyrocket. Toronto is tied for fourth place amongst urban centres with the fastest growing “super-rich” population in the world. That is, there are 4,110 people in this city of 2.7 million whose wealth exceeds 30 million dollars. Indeed, Toronto’s income inequality is increasing at double the national average.

Liberative Theo-Ethics

In order to address this moral problem, this thesis follows within the traditions of liberative, feminist, and critical theological-ethics (hereafter referred to as theo-
ethics), in that I agree that the purpose of theo-ethical work ought to participate in “the forging of historically liberative social relations.”

To pursue the goal of resistance and work for liberation within the context of urban economic injustice in Toronto, I assume that theo-ethical work ought to transpire through an interpretive spiral (or circle) of action and reflection. While liberative theologies engage this spiral/circle distinctly in the interest of particular concerns for social justice, the process typically includes: an examination of concrete, situated and contextual struggles for justice, an engagement with critical theoretical social theories in order to understand the socio-historical causes of a particular injustice, a clarification of accountabilities, an assessment of how unjust conditions are grasped and (re)framed through dialogue with the practices and norms of faith communities and/or how faith communities (and their norms and practices) contribute to fostering these unjust conditions, and a deliberation and commitment to pursuing responsible and liberative action in light of these dynamics. Given these methodological base points to assess through the emancipatory criticism that it produces. In turning to the stories of women, through the examination of concrete experience, and by integrating interdisciplinary sources, feminist Christian social ethicists seek to understand complex standpoints, the relationship between the public and the private, and the background conditions that shape our lives in common so that we are equipped to participate in the liberatory transformation of our communities. Feminist social ethicists recurrently maintain an “ontological and a moral insistence on the relationality of all things,” while upholding and examining the autonomy of the human person. Christian feminist social ethicists practice a commitment to justice as solidarity. “Justice demands a full analysis of the social forces involved, so that we can understand just what needs to be changed and why.” For feminist social ethicists, justice is understood as a relational category, and requires engagement through coalition building (Elizabeth Bounds, Pamela Brubaker, Mary Hobgood. “Feminist Ethics and Public Policy,” Welfare Policy [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999], 12-17).

In the Canadian context, the framework of critical theology is frequently employed. As Gregory Baum suggests, “critical theology is grounded in an emancipatory commitment embracing in solidarity the victims of society,” and these methods are increasingly committed to “becoming a theology of resistance.” “From Solidarity to Resistance,” in Intersecting Voices: Critical Theologies in a Land of Diversity, eds. Don Schweitzer and Derek Simon (Ottawa, ON: Novalis, 2004), 53.


For feminist social ethical hermeneutical methods see Marilyn Legge, The Grace of Difference, 17-18, and Beverly Harrison, “Theological Reflection in Struggle for Human Liberation,” Making the
urban consequences of rampant urban neoliberalization, I situate my thesis as a contribution to seeking justice in the city.

_A Liberative Theo-Ethic for Middle-Class Urban Christians_

I construct this thesis from my own location as a white, middle-class, highly educated, cis-woman, married and mother of a young child, living in Parkdale (a gentrifying\(^\text{23}\) neighbourhood within Toronto). Using Christian feminist liberative social ethical method I will attend to the context of economic injustice within Toronto. This includes acknowledging how I benefit from (i.e. am structurally complicit in), am malformed by, and am capable of resisting this form of injustice. In this work, I construct a liberative trajectory towards contesting the harmful consequences of urban neoliberalization from a middle-class economic-social (hereafter referred to as eco-social) position.

There is no agreed upon definition of the term ‘middle-class.’ I use the category here to refer to median income as well as a referent to ‘middle-class lifestyle’. According to the 2016 Canadian Census, the median income per household was $70,336.\(^\text{24}\) The notion of ‘household,’ however, is a slippery term; what counts as a household, and how

\(^{23}\) Gentrification will be explored in Chapter Two.

much any given household requires for qualifying as middle-class is contextual.
Likewise, the notion of median income is problematic as it does not take equity and
extended familial wealth and security into account, or the fact that the lifestyle enabled
by this median differs context by context, region by region. For instance, in Toronto
median income is $78,373.25 Since I am writing from the context of Toronto, this is the
median income grouping I will be referring to as I situate ‘middle-income’ and ‘middle-
class.’

While I recognize the ambiguity of the term ‘middle-class,’ I think it is a useful
and essential position from which to reflect. Almost half of Canadians consider
themselves ‘middle-class’: in 2015, 47 per cent of Canadians identified as such.26 This
percentage has remained consistent over the last few decades.27 “Slightly more than half
of Canadians define themselves as middle class, and that generally means everyone
between the top 20 percent of median income earners and the bottom 20 percent.”28
Being in the middle has as much to do with material evidence of this position as it does
with one’s self-identification.

While almost half of Canadians would identify themselves as being in the middle,
the economic and political practices of neoliberalism have lead to a “hollowing out of the
middle-class”—that is, middle-income individuals and families are decreasing in Toronto

25 Ibid.
26 Erin Anderson, “The Middle-Class: Just Who Are They Anyway?” The Globe and Mail,
27 Ibid.
28 Nora Spinks, “Why Everyone feels like they’re in the middle class: What’s the middle class?
It’s as much to do with values as with income,” as interviewed by Julie Cazzin in Maclean’s, June 16,
and other major cities in Canada, as low-income and high-income groups are growing. It is this precarity of position, however, which renders the middle-class potential “allies in the struggle” for economic justice in the face of the socio-economic inequality rendered through neoliberalization. In light of the current (if not perceived) eco-social privileges of the middle-class (including occupying positions of power in relation to social and governmental institutions), and in recognition of the instability of the middle-class as a result of the practices of neoliberalization, mobilizing the middle-class could be an essential strategy for resisting the dominant ideology of neoliberalism (and the various injustices that it produces).

I use my middle-income bracket and self-understanding as being eco-socially middle-class not to make normative claims about what it is like to live in this city as middle-class, but rather in order to consider what is required of middle-class urban Christians in the context of urban economic injustice and the commodification of human life wrought by neoliberalization. I write with a commitment to critiquing and unmasking the materialized ideological practices that produce the conditions for growing poverty and increased wealth in Toronto and other neoliberalized cities, but I do not—and I cannot—write for people experiencing poverty. Rather, I write for other middle-class urban Christian inhabitants so that ‘we’—or what eco-feminist Christian ethicist Cynthia Moe-Lobeda refers to within the context of ecological and economic structural injustice as “the overconsumers”—might develop the moral vision required for “imagining, recognizing,

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30 Ibid., 388.
31 Ibid.
forging, and adopting ways of life that build equity among human beings” within neoliberalized cities.\textsuperscript{32}

I reflect from and for this eco-social position in order to examine critically the procedures, rationalities and social relations of neoliberal urbanization so that ‘we’ can conceive of what working towards building cities that are more economically just might entail from this eco-social position. I write with the hope that this work might participate in fostering liberative relations amongst urban inhabitants by focusing on what is required of middle-class people implicated within and impacted by the spatialized and structural dynamics that produce urban poverty and the commodification of human life. The moral agency of the middle-class is my primary concern.

This attention and accountability to middle-class urban inhabitants for the purposes of liberative ends echoes Sharon Welch’s feminist liberative commitments for cultivating communities of resistance by focussing on what is required of the middle-class.\textsuperscript{33} Attention to what is required of the middle-class in our pursuit towards right-relations is vital because the structural evils within which all of us as urban inhabitants are involved can seem impossible, and/or unimportant, to contest. In the face of this seeming impossibility and possible inconsequentiality, middle-class moral agents are at risk of experiencing a specific form of despair. As Welch notes,

the despair of the affluent, the despair of the middle class has a particular tone: it is a despair cushioned by privilege and grounded by privilege. It is easier to give up on long-term social change when one is comfortable in the present– when it is possible to have challenging work, excellent health care and housing, and access


\textsuperscript{33} Sharon Welch, \textit{A Feminist Ethic of Risk} (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 15.
to the fine arts…The cultured despair of the middle class is ideological: it masks the bad faith of abandoning social justice work for others when one is already the beneficiary of partial social change.\(^{34}\)

In order to participate in the work of justice and pro-social transformation, liberative theo-ethics produced from and for the middle-class must address this particular sort of cultured despair.

**Cultivating Moral Agency and Moral Vision**

To circumvent and/or surmount this despair, as middle-class urban inhabitants, we need to equip ourselves as moral agents. Moral agency is that which enables individuals and groups to be and act towards a vision of what is good, and towards an understanding of what justice entails.\(^{35}\) As Marilyn Legge notes, “the aim of ethics in a feminist mode is the deepening of moral agency understood as taking responsibility for our own lives within community.”\(^{36}\) Part of my liberative method includes attention to what is required for cultivating the moral agency of middle-class urban inhabitants so that we might resist with the hope to transform the structures that commodify human life and produce and maintain urban economic injustice.

For middle-class urban inhabitants to become moral agents who are able to do this work of resistance and transformation—and thereby become responsible for our irreducibly relational lives—we require *moral vision*. Moral vision, as Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen explain,

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\(^{34}\) Ibid, 15.
\(^{35}\) As Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen suggest, moral agency includes virtues, values, obligations, and it relates to moral vision. *Bible & Ethics in the Christian Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 38-65. I will explore moral agency more deliberately in Chapter Four.

is the vision of the good we hold, a part of which is how we perceive and regard ourselves and others. It is our integrated grasp of the moral realm... moral vision establishes the reference point for the other elements in the moral life. It sets the terms for that which will be included and excluded.\textsuperscript{37}

To address the problems of urban economic injustice and the commodification of human life spawned by neoliberal urbanization, what is required is moral vision that includes: attention to the spatialized, structural, interactional and institutional production of neoliberalism and economic injustice; consideration of the identities that are formed within these practices; and attention to what is needed in order to develop and exercise the moral agency to contest these practices through participating in liberative social movements of resistance and solidarity.

The moral vision that I develop, with attention to each of the aforementioned concerns, is a contextual extension of Cynthia Moe-Lobeda’s \textit{critical-mystical moral vision}, which she explores in \textit{Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation}. In seeking to foster a moral vision to encourage the overconsuming classes to \textit{resist structural evil} and to act for right relations thus living with respect to our connections amongst other humans and our planetary home, Moe-Lobeda indicates three interlocking moments within a critical-mystical vision for empowering such change.\textsuperscript{38} Moe-Lobeda’s critical mystical vision seeks to address the problem that “\textit{social structural sin makes monumental demands on the practice of faith and of morality, and many of those demands remain largely unacknowledged.”}\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} Birch and Rasmussen, \textit{Bible & Ethics in the Christian Life} 59-62.
\textsuperscript{38} Moe-Lobeda, \textit{Resisting Structural Evil}, 5.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 58. Italicized in the original.
Consistent with liberative theo-ethical method, Moe-Lobeda’s first movement is an investigation into the consequences of the problem being considered. Second, sustainable alternatives must be explored. And lastly, energy for being able to embrace these alternatives must be developed.\(^{40}\) That is, critical-mystical vision requires critical investigation into the consequences of “what is,” “what could be,” and the “moral-spiritual power” for moving towards these solutions.\(^{41}\) For the “overconsumers” to live towards a vision of the good that we hold—that is, in order to practice our moral agency—Moe-Lobeda suggests the necessity of these three measures. In each of these interlocking moments, Moe-Lobeda’s moral vision follows in tune with the hermeneutical methods of liberative theo-ethics in that she undertakes a teleological and praxis-based moral approach to a particular dynamic of injustice.

In this thesis, I apply Moe-Lobeda’s outline for a liberative moral vision for the specific context of neoliberal urbanization and the effects that this materialized ideology has on human life. Prior to her first movement however—or the formulation of the consequences of the way things are—I will explore ‘the way things are’ as such, and then follow in her framework’s trajectory. Thus, there will be four movements, articulated into the next three chapters, to my framework.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 5. ‘Moral-spiritual power’ is that which enables moral agents to pursue a vision of the good that they hold. As Moe-Lobeda defines it, moral-spiritual power enables us to imagine, recognize, forge and adopt “ways of life that build equity among human beings and a sustainable relationship between the human species and our planetary home” (Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 5).


I use ‘moral-spiritual power’ and ‘moral-spiritual energy’ alike, and will elaborate on my use of these terms in Chapter Four.

\(^{41}\) Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, 113-141.
My work builds also on her earlier work *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God*, where Moe-Lobeda more clearly examines *the way things are*, which is to say, wherein she turns to the neoliberal ideological roots of the global economic and ecological crisis. Thus, while I modify Moe-Lobeda’s critical-mystical vision as it appears in *Resisting Structural Evil*, this variation is accounted for in her earlier work.

In Chapter Two, I engage the movement that I am adding to Moe-Lobeda’s critical mystical vision—or an argument for *the way things are*—by examining the socio-historical conditions of neoliberal urbanization. Additionally, I attend to Moe-Lobeda’s first movement in *Resisting Structural Evil* of the consequences of *the way things are* by arguing that neoliberal urbanization produces the outcome of economic spatialized structural injustice. I address how neoliberalism commodifies, oppresses and dominates particular ethno-cultural ‘others,’ and I consider how this malforms all neoliberal subjects. In chapter Three, I attend to Moe-Lobeda’s second movement—alternatives—as I propose practices of socially responsible behaviour, and moral norms towards embracing these practices and behaviours. Finally, in Chapter Four, I adhere to Moe-Lobeda’s third movement by suggesting moral-spiritual resources for energizing this liberative action.42

Like Moe-Lobeda, whose critical-mystical method is oriented towards revealing “a future in the making,”43 the alternatives and moral spiritual powers for embracing the alternatives that I propose are recognized as concurrent threads within the landscape of

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42 Moral-spiritual resources are those tools/beliefs/examples/practices that might inspire moral agents to move towards just and sustainable alternatives in the face of current injustices. Moral-spiritual resources carry moral-spiritual power.

urban neoliberalism. I survey within the current landscape these other ways of being and doing, and the moral spiritual energy towards embracing these alternatives. I look to participatory planning and the right to the city movement as contemporary alternatives to the problems erected through neoliberal urbanization. Additionally, I critically engage specific works of participatory art as contemporaneous sources for moral spiritual power. Taken as simultaneous yet discrete aspects of moral engagement for creating shared good in common, this thesis applies and discovers public ways forward for the sake of liveable cities on earth in the world that God so loves.

**Thesis Statement**

In this thesis I will argue that a liberative Christian feminist theological anthropology of responsible relationality, in conjunction with a Christian feminist theo-ethical norm of neighbour-love (i.e. respectful and responsible love of diverse neighbours and strangers in heterogeneous publics\(^4^4\)), can provide a moral vision for Christians addressing urban spatialized economic injustice caused by neoliberal political economies. To contribute to this telos, I claim that participatory art can serve as a moral-spiritual resource and explore how it can function to empower and sustain the moral energy necessary to work towards the development of urban spatialized economic justice, that is, more just cities.

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\(^4^4\) I use the term ‘publics’ rather than ‘public’ here and elsewhere because, as Nancy Fraser suggests, rather than a singular public (which is based on “bourgeois, masculinist, white-supremacist” conceptions of the public sphere) it is more appropriate to consider a multiplicity of competing publics. For there to be “a public sphere in which interlocutors can deliberate as peers,” economic, cultural and sociosexual “relations of dominance and subordination” must be eliminated. Participatory parity is to be achieved by including the insights of “a multiplicity of publics” rather than by thinking and behaving as if the public existed as a singular, univocal entity. Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 69-98.
Materialist Methods

The methods I engage towards cultivating the moral agency and moral vision required to pursue the liberative goal of more economically just cities are within the materialist tradition. As Gloria Albrecht argues,

basic to a Christian liberative and material feminist perspective is an understanding that a just society requires a material basis: that is, basic conditions of material well-being achieved through a society’s commitment to all of its people are the precondition for meaningful political democracy.45

I consider the ways in which economic disparities are produced and experienced within the context of urban neoliberalism, and Toronto more specifically, because I believe that economic equality is, as Albrecht contends, a requirement for meaningful political democracy and ecological sustainability.

Effective political democracy requires the equitable sharing of resources, as well as meaningful participation in determining the shape and procedures of institutional government. As Moe-Lobeda suggests, “democracy is normative for Christian Ethics. That is, what corrodes democracy is suspect from a perspective of Christian Ethics.”46 The normative stance on democracy within this discipline, however, necessitates that democracy always be critically examined and resisted as a “mythological single and universally normative theory and form.”47 The primary democratic goods that ought to function as normative for Christian ethics are the meaningful participation of all who are included within its purview, and political accountability to all of those who are impacted by this form of governance. As Christians called to seeking justice-love with our

47 Ibid., 34.
neighbours, liberative responses to the problem of economic inequality ought to be a primary concern; in the public sphere, democratic participation, accountability to the most vulnerable members of the city, and shared power are the institutional means towards seeking the moral-norm of justice-love.

While my focus is on economic injustice as a key determinant within this city, I recognize the interlocking nature of all forms of injustices. Racialization, gendering, citizen status, dis/ability and age (amongst other processes of differentiation and systems of domination) all participate in qualifying how it is that economic disparities are made concrete in Toronto and elsewhere. Throughout, I pay attention to some of the ways that economic injustice overlaps with structures and processes of domination (including the processes of racialization). However, my focus is certainly more attuned to economic injustice, even as I recognize the interlocking nature of all forms of domination. Prioritizing my attention on economic disparities is an acknowledgement that “all economic activity is intrinsically and directly related to the overall cultural and institutional matrix of human social life.” Economic injustices within the landscape of urban neoliberalization are produced through the dismantling of the socially democratic state, through the socio-spatial peripheralization and construction of urban poverty, and through the lack of adequate representation and prioritization for people experiencing poverty within the structures that organize urban life in common.

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48 As Nancy Ramsay suggests, the analytical focus of intersectional analysis is “on interrogating hegemonic or asymmetrical structures of power in order to support groups experiencing oppression to develop strategies for resisting the injustices such asymmetries create and reproduce.” Nancy Ramsay, “Resisting Asymmetries of Power: Intersectionality as a Resource for Practices of Care,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology*, vol. 27:2 (2017): 83-97. I will explore intersectionality in Chapter Three, but my primary lens of analysis for difference and domination is through considering how structures interlock to produce relations of domination, not on intersectional characteristics or traits as such.

A key feature of materialist critique is ideological examination. I examine neoliberalism as a dominating urban ideology, which is to say, a “particular belief system that informs and shapes a political, economic...globalizing system or perspective.”

Ideologies include underlying worldviews that are “partially conscious and partially not.” Ideologies impact how contexts are interpreted and experienced, they inform what is considered to be possible and true, and they form the self-understanding of individuals in relation to one another, to the rest of creation and to God. Frequently, ideologies distort and mislead so that those with more power in relation to a given structural and spatial order can benefit. Ideology can serve as a “tool of mystification and production of false consciousness.”

The ideology of neoliberalism is created and maintained through geographic arrangements, institutional practices, interactional habits, and more. The ideology of neoliberalism is “a material force” that is produced and reproduced through daily life. The materialized ideological practices of urban neoliberalism malforms urban inhabitants; it renders urban inhabitants irresponsibly relational within the structural arrangements that produce economic injustices. As Henry Giroux notes, wedded to the belief that the market should be the organizing principle for all political, social and economic decisions, neoliberalism wages an incessant attack

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52 Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World*, 47.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 47-48.
55 Ibid., 48.
56 The relationship between geography and ideology will be explored more fully in Chapters Two and Three.
on democracy, public goods, the welfare state, and non-commodified values. Under neoliberalism everything either is for sale or is plundered for profit.\textsuperscript{58} Neoliberalism is a threat to the democratic and liberative values of accountability to multiple publics, and to care and concern for the most vulnerable members of society. I critique this ideology by examining the materialized and subjective arrangements of its procedures.

\textit{Sources}

In addition to dialogue with liberative theo-ethicists, in this thesis I use a range of interdisciplinary sources. I draw upon and integrate diverse fields of critical theory including: critical geography, feminist political theory, critical multiculturalism, and critical aesthetic discourse in order to gain insight into the problem of economic injustice, and in order to investigate possible (and concurrent) alternatives, and moral-spiritual resources towards embracing these alternatives.

Each of these theoretical sources are employed as a way to explore the impact of neoliberalization and the contemporaneous alternatives to this socio-spatial project on embodied moral agents in neoliberal cities. Embodiment is a heuristic thread that links each of these diverse critical theoretical methods. This emphasis on embodiment as a heuristic key for integrating interdisciplinary critical theoretical sources is in following with the tradition of Christian feminist theological ethics; as Beverly Harrison argues, all knowledge is body-mediated knowledge.\textsuperscript{59} What and how embodied moral agents feel

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and know is a central concern for feminist theo-ethics, and is a primary line of inquiry within this thesis.

Further, as I will argue throughout, any hope of destabilizing neoliberalism as a principal spatializing practice within this city strongly depends on the capacity—which is to say, on the moral agency of urban inhabitants—to act and feel differently with one another. If, as urban inhabitants, we want to change the shape of our cities, we will need to become responsibly relational as neighbours and as strangers who are accountable to one another and to the shared good of the city.

**Norms**

As Beverly Harrison notes, norms are “essential criteria for self-evaluation,” that emerge out of the struggle and respect for the “concrete, embodied needs that all human beings have.” Therefore, norms are required as “criteria of judgment about the sort of persons we ought to be and the sort of actions we ought to perform.”

To guide and assess moral agents’ responses to neoliberalism’s consequences of urban economic injustice, I develop these three norms as key: responsible relationality, public neighbour love as stranger love, and justice.

First, in order to become responsible for the relations within which urban neoliberalized inhabitants are always already involved – that is, to become responsibly relational – the structural and spatialized arrangements of neoliberalization must be

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60 Ibid., 254.
understood and responded to through liberative action and coalitions of solidarity, which is to say, through collective action amongst variously positioned moral agents.

Second, I develop the moral norm of public neighbour love understood as stranger love for middle-class urban Christians in work towards resisting with the hope to transform economic injustices and the commodification of human lives as produced through urban neoliberalization. What love is, what love feels like, what love does, what love insists upon, and where love comes from are all central concerns within the field of Christian theological ethics. While there are multiple ways to conceive of love within this broad discourse, this investigation is primarily concerned with the moral norm of neighbour love, or the injunction that disciples should “love your neighbour as yourself,” what is known in Christian life as the Second Great Commandment.

Thirdly, as interpreted through a theo-ethical liberative feminist lens, I recognize this commandment to neighbour love normatively to include seeking just conditions with and for those familiar and unfamiliar to us. Therefore, justice is pursued with and for strangers. And in recognition that justice is an inseparable corollary to love, I follow Marvin Ellison’s expansion of the norm of justice to be about seeking justice-love.

I understand justice to include the “basic conditions of material well-being,” but along with Iris Marion Young, considerations of justice are not limited to the distribution of wealth, income and other material goods. Justice also has to do with the capacity for

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62 Mark 12:31 (NRSV)
64 Albrecht, 23.
meaningful participation and adequate representation within the procedures, practices and
structures that organize life in common. While “the commons” and the “common good”
have a long and vital history within the fields of critical social theory and theo-ethics, I
will not elaborate on this vein in great detail.\footnote{For more on the common good see David Hollenbach’s The Common Good & Christian Ethics (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002).} However, I make note of life in common throughout this thesis, by which I am referring to what Mary Jo Leddy refers to as “the
goods that we share but nobody owns—or shouldn’t own.”\footnote{Mary Jo Leddy, “Interview With Mary Jo Leddy: The writer, theologian and founder of Toronto’s Romero House for refugees talks about faith in the public square.” Interviewed by Mardy Tindal. UC Observer, April 15, 2015, accessed April 27, 2018, \url{https://www.ucobserver.org/features/2015/04/maryjoleddy/}.} Here, I understand that the
goods we share in common include services like health care and public education, as well
as all of those materialized practices and arrangements that organize a city. That is, life in
common includes both material goods as well as spatialized structural processes.

Justice requires equitable access to the goods of life in common as well as
adequate representation and the opportunity for meaningful participation within the
processes that guide and shape our lives in common. When conditions are just in these
ways, there can be right-relationship—“relation in which all parties are empowered to be
more fully who they are as persons (or creatures) in relation.”\footnote{Carter Heyward, Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God (New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1989), 193.} Therefore, I use the terms
‘right-relationship’ and ‘in common’ as categories related to justice.

Injustice transpires when individuals and groups lack material well-being, as well
as within systems and structures that dominate (through “the institutional constraint on
self-determination”) and oppress (through the institutional constraint on self-
development”). Injustice can transpire through insufficient bodily well-being, through limitations caused by institutional conditions that impede the capacity for participation within the shape of our lives in common, and through structurally oppressive relations.

Procedure

In Chapter Two I explore the notion that every urban environment “expresses a view of the human (and) embodies an ethic.” I draw on the critical geography of David Harvey, Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore to argue that neoliberalism has been the primary ideological rationality and practice in the contemporary construction of cities, including Toronto. As surveyed in David Hulchanski’s *The Three Cities Within Toronto* report, neoliberal urbanization can be recognized in Toronto by the spatialized economic injustice within this city. In Hulchanski’s report, the geography of poverty and wealth and the increase of both poverty and wealth in Toronto are investigated.

Neoliberal urbanization, like all spatial strategies, has consequences for people’s sense of self as urban inhabitants. When cities are built and maintained with the priorities of wealthy urban inhabitants in mind and premised on a neglect for the needs of the most economically disenfranchised, people are scripted to think of themselves as responsible for their own (economic) well-being and not for the (economic and social) well-being of others. We learn to understand ourselves through what Michel Foucault calls “the grid of economic intelligibility,” where all social relations are swept up into the programme and

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70 Ibid., 15-65. Iris Marion Young’s “Five Faces of Oppression” offer a helpful way of conceiving of structural injustices. These include: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. These “five faces” help to situate and account for complexly produced social intersections and systemic injustices, Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 48-63.
values of neoliberalization. In short, in neoliberal cities, with neoliberal entrepreneurial priorities and atomistic anthropologies imperilling pro-social drives and desires, people are subjectively formed—that is, subjectivized. In order to understand this process of neoliberal subjectification and its effects on moral agency germane to this thesis, I will draw on Keri Day, a womanist theologian concerned with the project of neoliberalism.

In response to urban neoliberalization and neoliberal subjectivity, in Chapter Three I examine theoretical and practical alternatives to neoliberal practices that impact urban spatialized economic injustice and the atomistic anthropology that these processes and structures emerge out of. In line with feminist and liberationist theological ethicists who regularly argue that relationality is “constitutive of all beings,” I consider the relevant structural and spatial dimensions within which these relations transpire. In line with Iris Marion Young, I consider structure as the subject of justice, and in line with critical geographer Edward Soja, I argue that structures of injustice are spatialized, which is to say, they impact relations in and through the configuration of space. Spatialized structural relations produce unjust consequences for diversely situated urban inhabitants.

To address aspects of the complex problems of urban economic injustice, the neoliberal paradigm from which it emerges and the particular self-understandings which the ideology of neoliberalism as a socio-spatial practice and rationality gives rise to, I argue that moral agents must be equipped for responsible relationality within the spatialized structures that hold all urban inhabitants within relations of in/justice. Using

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73 I will explore the concept of subjectification and subject formation in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three I explore these terms in relation to moral agency.

Iris Marion Young’s “social connection model of responsibility,” I consider practical examples of what it looks like to exercise responsible relationality within urban neoliberal contexts. In exploring and assessing participatory planning and the right to the city movement as alternatives for “a future in the making.”

In Chapter Four, I argue that the moral norm of public neighbour love as stranger love serves as a “theological seed of hope and power” for transgressing the “tidal waves of cultural, political, and economic force pushing to maintain the way things are.” Public neighbour-love as stranger love includes moral obligations, moral values and moral vision for middle-class urban Christians in our efforts towards constructing more economically just urban environments. Public neighbour love as stranger love is a moral-spiritual framework for practicing responsible relationality. In order to reflect on love as a moral-spiritual resource, I turn to Sallie McFague’s metaphors of “the universe as God’s body,” and “God as Lover,” and to envision what this love looks like and feels like, I propose the model of the moral universe as made up of connective tissues of God’s love. Next, I consider salient aspects of the life and work of Jesus as a guide for practicing public neighbour love as stranger love.

Lastly, I propose that a key moral and spiritual resource for practicing public neighbour love as stranger love is found in participatory art. I discuss how and why participatory art has the potential to inspire the moral agency of urban inhabitants.

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75 Young, Responsibility for Justice, 95-122.
76 Moe-Lobeda, Resisting Structural Evil, 114.
77 Ibid.
79 McFague, Models of God, 130.
towards the creation of more spatially and economically just cities. Through the examples of two particular works of participatory art, and through the lens of aesthetic theories offered by Nicholas Bourriaud and Jacques Rancière, I argue that participatory art can help urban subjects feel and be inspired towards exercising public neighbour love understood as stranger love. First, I investigate face-to-face pro-social spaces of encounter as one possibility for encouraging this practice of love. Second, through what Rancière terms the phenomenon of *dissesnsus*, I investigate how participatory art can facilitate a sensible fissure that breaks open the capacity to vision for new possibilities by producing insights into the sensible and structural landscape of the current context.

To make these claims, I engage my own emotional responses as a middle class urban inhabitant. By turning to my embodied emotional reactions as experiences to examine and critically engage. As argued through the lens of my own emotional landscape (and the theo-ethical source of *experience* more broadly), partaking in participatory art can allow for urban inhabitants to encounter one another in ways that do oppose or hold potential for opposing the unjust social relations promoted through the procedures of neoliberalization. By examining the emotional responses that I experienced in making and in observing two works of participatory art, I argue that particular instances of this form of art practice hold potential for middle class moral agents to pursue stranger love by serving as a kind of field for transgressive emotions. That is, participatory art can function as a site for feeling differently in relation to the way things are.
In line with the norms of feminist social ethics, however, in turning to my emotions as a site related to moral agency, I recognize that experience is conditioned and contextualized always within complex and situated spatio-temporal relations and eco-social power arrangements. I engage my own emotional responses as a white, female, married, parent, and middle class urban inhabitant not to make normative claims about what can be or ought to be experienced in relation to these particular works of participatory art; rather, I argue more broadly that participatory art can be a site for feeling otherwise—that is, more critically and compassionately aware of those made other—within the individualized and irresponsible social relations that are created through the project of neoliberalization.

I claim that these divergent emotions can provide moral-spiritual energy for the work of stranger love, but I do not argue that these divergent emotions make clear the path forward. Rather, I maintain that these emotions have the potential to embolden transformative and justice-seeking action through paying attention to the eruptions of transgressive emotion that arose in my own body within these selected works of participatory art. Likewise, this project does not adequately investigate the difference these potentially divergent emotions make for complexly positioned moral agents or for the material relations within neoliberalized urban contexts.

I have not engaged in ethnographic research to assess the impact that participatory art (and the divergent emotions that may erupt within the experiences of particular art works) has for diversely situated urban inhabitants, and nor have I examined the possible social or material consequences of the divergent emotions that may arise through

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80 Footnoted on pages 6-7.
participation. Investigating the concrete and contextual particularities of how various persons and publics might engage participatory art—and what feelings (transgressive or otherwise) might emerge within the act of participating—is a question for future research. Likewise, the inquiry into how such experiences and emotions might lead to particular actions with particular social strategies and their material implications, is also a question for future research.

Instead, my claims that participatory art can surface transgressive emotions (that have the potential but not certainty of leading to transformative action) exist squarely within my own experience. This is certainly a limit to my project, but it is also a jumping off point for dialogue with the reader and other social struggles for right relations and community well-being. In using my own emotional field of experience as a site for theo-ethical reflection, I invite the reader to do likewise. This is, as Natalie Wigg-Stevenson suggests of autoethnographic method more broadly, an “evocative theology,”\(^{81}\) which is to say, a theology oriented towards arousing critical engagement and reflection in the reader.\(^{82}\) I invite the reader to examine what sorts of emotions lead to feeling and being able to resist with the hope to transform the project of neoliberalization, and further, what catalysts for such feeling might be.

In **Chapter Five**, I conclude by taking stock of the purpose and plan of this thesis. I revisit resources explored, key values upheld and claims made including sources of hope for the work ahead in relation to the ongoing project of constructing just cities. To


\(^{82}\)Ibid, 187.
conclude, I suggest contributions that this project has made as well as future directions for this research.
Chapter Two: Urban Neoliberalization and Neoliberal Subjectivities

The city, the noted urban sociologist Robert Park once wrote, is “man’s (sic) most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart’s desire. But, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he his henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself.” If Park is correct, then the question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, what kinds of social relations we seek, what relations to nature we cherish, what style of life we desire, what aesthetic values we hold.

-David Harvey, ‘The Right to the City,’ International Journal of Urban and Regional Design, 3-4.

The relationship between ideologies and the design and process of constructing material spaces has been a central concern within the fields of critical geography, and post-Marxist geography more specifically. One of the principal theorists in this investigation, Henri Lefebvre, argues that the shape and order of humanly constructed spaces is determined, in large part, by the ideologies operative within a given community, and correspondingly, that the shape of constructed spaces moulds those same ideologies. In other words, their effect is reciprocal. What is built, how it is built, and who building happens for all reflect socio-political beliefs, priorities and worldviews, which serve to inscribe, or re-inscribe, what we take to be true and possible.

In line with Lefebvre, theologian Timothy Gorringe argues that this “relation between space and ideology is dialectical: ideology is dependent on space, but our use of

space both expresses and affects our ideology.”\textsuperscript{84} The built environment concretizes beliefs and ideologies, and ideologies are bourne in and through material contexts.\textsuperscript{85}

Included within this dialectical relationship between ideology and space are views of the human person and the human community. As David Harvey and Robert Park propose above, there is a direct and circular relationship between the cities that are built, and the kinds of people that make and are made in this process. In light of this circuitousness, to reflect on the built environment of the city is also to reflect on what it means to be human, or more precisely, what it is that the city communicates about what it means to be human, and what the city makes possible for and between human lives. Following Harvey and Park, I concur that if we are to consider the context of a city and the possible transformation of urban landscapes, we must also consider ourselves as moral agents and thus also our own transformation.

Within the landscape of theological ethics, to consider the context of a city is, consequently, also to be thrust into the field of theological anthropology. To consider the context of a city from a theo-ethical perspective as middle-class urban inhabitants, we must also inquire into how and who the city shapes and makes us into—and what it is that we learn by critical investigation about being human by living in an urban context. In this chapter, I will argue that Toronto—and by extension, other neoliberalized urban contexts—constructs visions of the ideal human person as radically individualized, competitive, and responsible for only their own individual well-being. From a Christian liberative theo-ethical point of view, this subjective construction impinges and delimits

\textsuperscript{84} Gorringe, 27.  
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 29.
the capacity for urban inhabitants to exercise their moral agency towards pro-social and collectively responsible goals and practices. Neoliberalism malforms and economically stratifies urban inhabitants, and as such, it is a moral issue.

Critical geographers and urban theorists David Harvey, Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore have argued that neoliberal policies have been the dominant socio-spatial ideology operative within processes of city-building worldwide since the 1970s. In what follows, I consider the ideology and practice of neoliberalism as it shapes, and as I will argue, malforms both our cities and our subjectivities.

Neoliberalism can be interpreted in various ways, depending upon the lens and context through which analysis is being engaged; it can be understood as a political theory and movement, a set of economic practices, a cultural project, an arrangement of forces that shape all social relationships, and more. I proceed in exploring neoliberalism as a socio-spatial ideology that is developed in and through the built environment, and which has an impact on the moral subject’s formation and capacity for relational responsibility in the urban public sphere. I examine neoliberal strategies and practices in order to uncover what kinds of cities and people are made through its procedures as a first step in illuminating how middle-class city dwellers can fittingly respond.

For this purpose, I will investigate two intertwining streams of neoliberal criticism: first, the Materialist tradition of critical geography as articulated by David Harvey, Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, and second with Michel Foucault and womanist

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theo-ethicist Keri Day, in their description of neoliberal subjectivity. There are many other ways to engage in neoliberal critique. I have selected these routes because they pay close attention to the spatialization and urbanization of neoliberalism, and to the impact that neoliberalism has on our embodied senses of self. This critique of neoliberalism attempts to map the ways that this ideology and economic practice shapes spatial and subjective landscapes through comprehensive (and structurally exacting) procedures, interactional patterns and institutional technologies.

In relation to the structural frame of Cynthia Moe-Lobeda’s critical mystical vision, this chapter attends to both the movement that I am adding into Moe-Lobeda’s structure, or a description of ‘the way things are,’ as well as focussing on Moe-Lobeda’s first movement, or reflecting on ‘the consequences of the way things are.’ I argue that ‘the way things are’ results from a neoliberal political-economic order, and that the ‘consequences of the way things are’ includes urban economic and spatialized injustice as well as the production of urban neoliberalized subjectivities.

**A Partial History of Neoliberalism**

As Sherry Ortner argues, neoliberalism is essentially “late-capitalism made conscious, carried to extremes, and having more visible effects.”\(^{87}\) The periodization between capitalism and neoliberalism often hinges on two interrelated political/economic developments. First, there was the shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist capital/labour

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order. And second, there was a turn from a Keynesian to a post-Keynesian (or neoliberal) economic model.\textsuperscript{88}

Fordism, which is the labour model named after the unionized, centralized, assembly-line and mass-production practices developed in the Ford Motor Company of the twentieth century, gave way to the practices of post-Fordism, where labour became digitized, de-centralized from the North American context, and workers became dispensable, and employed typically on contract and part-time bases.\textsuperscript{89}

Keynesian economic theory, which was the dominant economic model employed in North America and Western Europe between the 1930s until the mid 1970s, promoted the conviction that government intervention into economic practices could stabilize volatile economies, and protect the citizenry from the vicissitudes of the capitalist economic system. Under the directive of Keynesianism, state intervention was required in order to moderate the booms and busts of particular economies. During economic downturns, Keynesianism advocated for the implementation of state sponsored and labour-intensive infrastructure projects in order to stimulate employment and stabilize wages.\textsuperscript{90} Keynesian economic theory (while not always in practice) supported the maintenance and safeguarding of the welfare state, where the social and economic well-being of the citizenry were proclaimed as objectives for governmental decision making and social program creation.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} David Harvey, \textit{A Brief History of Neoliberalism} (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 20.
The neoliberal shift away Keynesian economic and interventionist practice can be interpreted as a national/provincial/civic withdrawal from the socially democratic state.\textsuperscript{91} Neoliberal governmental tactics became popularized during the late 1970s as “a strategic political response to the sustained global recession of the preceding decade” that the practices of Fordism, Keynesianism and the welfare state that Keynesian economics attempted to construct, were believed responsible for.\textsuperscript{92} Neoliberal governments arose prominently with the leadership of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom, and Ronald Reagan in the United States during the 1980s. However, as Brenner and Theodore note, many other systems of neoliberal politics developed in countries that had traditionally practiced forms of social democracy, including Canada.\textsuperscript{93}

In Canada neoliberal practices emerged in the 1980s at the provincial and federal levels, and were accelerated with the leadership of Conservative Prime Minister Steven Harper (2006-2015).\textsuperscript{94} In Harper’s \textit{Rediscovering the Right Agenda} in 2003, he articulated that his platform would promote “individual freedom, private enterprise, free trade, and limited government,” which are each illustrative of neoliberal ideological practices, as I will examine more closely below.\textsuperscript{95} In Ontario, Conservative Premier Mike Harris introduced his Common Sense Revolution in 1995, which included a series of cuts to social assistance programs and the downloading of services from the provincial to the municipal scale, which are also characteristic of neoliberal practice. Under the provincial leadership of Mike Harris,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 23.  
\textsuperscript{92} Brenner and Theodore, \textit{Spaces of Neoliberalism}, 3.  
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 3.  
\textsuperscript{94} Marjorie Johnstone, Eunjung Lee, and Jo Connelly, “Understanding the meta-discourse driving homeless policies and programs in Toronto, Canada: The neoliberal management of social service delivery,” \textit{International Social Work}, Vol. 60, no. 6 (2017): 1443-1456  
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
employment equity legislation was revoked; labour legislation was weakened; social assistance payments were cut by almost one quarter; and education, public service and health care sectors underwent massive restructuring, with cuts to their labour forces.  

Each of these policy measures set up conditions for class/income groups to feel pitted against one another and competitive with one another.

Neoliberal economic theory, however, was developed much earlier, in the 1950s, with a group of economists known as ‘the Chicago Boys’ and with the Mont Pelerin Society. In the teaching and writing of Milton Friedman and his students out of the University of Chicago, as well as in the writing and teaching of Friedrich von Hayek and his supporters in The Mont Pelerin Society, the freedom of the individual was said to be best protected by liberating the market from state interference. Neoliberals embraced the notion that there was an inner logic, or a variation on Adam Smith’s invisible hand, at work in the market that if liberated from state intervention, would be able to curb “even the basest of human instincts such as gluttony, greed, and the desire for wealth and power for the benefit of all.”

Neoliberal economic theory posited that the problem with the economic and political liberalism and interventionism of Fordism and Keynesianism was that it unnecessarily impinging on the individual as well as the market by “extensions of arbitrary power.” With a ‘free market,’ individuals would be motivated to partake in innovative work and entrepreneurial initiative, and in this way, the cumulative wealth of

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97 Ibid.
98 Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism, 64-65.
99 Ibid., 20.
nations would rise, and would ‘trickle down’ through all social and class ranks in society, eventually eliminating poverty all together.\(^\text{101}\) All forms of intervention into the market were thus regarded as anathema to individual human freedom and social well-being.

**Neoliberal Spatialities**

The ideals and promises of neoliberal economic and political theory must be held in distinction from the actual project of neoliberalization.\(^\text{102}\) As Brenner and Theodore argue, neoliberal ideology always takes *place*; that is, it always happens in a particular time and space. The embeddedness of the practice means that neoliberalism never looks the same in two instances; each articulation of neoliberal governance is an example of what Brenner and Theodore call “actually existing neoliberalism.”\(^\text{103}\) As the ideology intersects with “inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles,” existing neoliberalisms concretely take shape.\(^\text{104}\) Even within this contextual specificity, neoliberal practice regularly reveals an unremitting prioritization for the needs of economic elites, and a sharp disregard for the well-being of all others. Within neoliberal practice, only some people are “true” individuals (which I will explore more later in this chapter). In the *name* of creating a free market to protect individual freedom, neoliberal governments and states have participated in

- the deregulation of state control over major industries,
- assaults on organized labour,
- the reduction of corporate taxes,
- the shrinking and/or privatization of public services,
- the dismantling of welfare programs,
- the enhancement of

\[^{101}\text{Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 64-65.}\]
\[^{102}\text{Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 20. Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, *Spaces of Neoliberalism*, 4-10.}\]
\[^{103}\text{Brenner and Theodore, *Spaces of Neoliberalism*, 4-6.}\]
\[^{104}\text{Ibid., 4.}\]
international capital mobility, the intensification of interlocality competition, and the criminalization of the urban poor.\textsuperscript{105}

In the various iterations of actually existing neoliberalisms, what is observable is a chronic concern for the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital.\textsuperscript{106}

These processes of deregulation, liberalization and state retrenchment have been enacted at every spatial scale; there is a global dimension to the spatialization of this ideological practice (i.e. neoliberal globalization), there is a national dimension, and there is a local dimension (amongst other spatial-specific arrangements).\textsuperscript{107} Amongst these various and intermingling scalar modes, Brenner and Theodore argue that cities have become “strategic targets” for neoliberal experimentation, and have become increasingly central to the “reproduction, mutation, and continual reconstitution of neoliberalism itself.”\textsuperscript{108} While the life and governance of cities in Canada is intimately connected to provincial, national and global decision-making and policy measures, the city has also been the site at which the political and ideological strategies of neoliberalization have been developed, transformed and maintained.\textsuperscript{109} The relationship between urbanization and neoliberalization is not just consequential of a more global effort towards neoliberalism, but rather the city itself is recurrently the scale where this ideology takes shape.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{106} Harvey, \textit{A Brief History of Neoliberalism}, 7.
\textsuperscript{107} Brenner and Theodore, \textit{Spaces of Neoliberalism}, vi.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., vii.
In the early processes of urban neoliberalization, the practice of discrediting Keynesian and welfarist models of city-building by issuing removals, or a “rolling-back,” of the regulatory arrangements and social services that had been in place at the municipal scale was common across urban contexts. Some of the ways this rolling back transpired in the urban context include: the downsizing of municipal public sector services, the imposition of fiscal austerity measures upon municipal governments, the razing of public housing, the destruction of working-class neighbourhoods, and the impractical downloading of service provision responsibility from the national or provincial scale onto the municipal scale.\textsuperscript{111}

Following this rolling back of government intervention, the next phase of urban neoliberalization was the “roll-out” phase in which city space was mobilized “as an arena for both market-oriented economic growth and for elite consumption practices” through municipal policy and building practices.\textsuperscript{112} Some of the ways this “rolling-out” have been articulated in the urban context include (with direct response to the above “rolling back” list): the privatization of what had previously been public services and goods, increased municipal reliance on user fees and private finance, the creation of new opportunities for speculative investment in urban real estate markets, the intensification of gentrification and socio-spatial polarization, and the expansion and expectation of community-based sectors to provide what had previously been public services.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 22-25.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 22-25.
Neoliberalism within The Three Cities of Toronto

These procedures and priorities of neoliberalism can be clearly observed in the City of Toronto; this city displays many of the “rolling back” and “rolling out” practices of neoliberalization. One of the most visible marks that demonstrate this city as a space of urban neoliberalization is the socio-spatial polarization that is now quite evident within Toronto’s neighbourhoods.

In David Hulchanski’s widely cited The Three Cities Within Toronto: Income Polarization among Toronto’s Neighbourhoods, the spatialized economic inequality in Toronto is explored and mapped in detail. Hulchanski’s study notes that in the years between 1970 and 2005, there was a drastic decrease of middle-income populations, a growth of high-income populations, and most alarmingly, a substantial growth of low and very-low income populations. What Hulchanski’s study also demonstrates was that these income population changes had been manifested spatially. That is, there had been a considerable shift in where these three tiers of income groupings lived.

While neighbourhoods in all cities are constantly undergoing subtle and not so subtle transformations, what Hulchanski’s study demonstrates is that in the city of Toronto, neighbourhood changes in the 35 years of his study occurred in direct relation to these three economic tiers (low/very-low, middle, and high/very-high) consolidating and migrating into three distinct geographic groupings.114 Accordingly, instead of conceiving of Toronto as a unified city of neighbourhoods that are all made up of diverse and

intersecting income groups, Hulchanski proposed that Toronto is better thought of as consisting of three (economically) distinctive cities.

City Number One is where those with a high-income have consolidated, and where incomes have risen 20 percent and more between the years 1970 and 2005. Income levels for those in City Number Two, the middle-income population, remained relatively static during this period, while income levels for those in City Number Three, the low and very-low income populations, have decreased 20 percent or more during this period.\(^{115}\)

The ways these three economic tiers have been spatialized has meant a dramatic reconfiguration of Toronto’s neighbourhoods in the past four decades. For example, in 1970, the inner city, or the areas surrounding the meeting points of Toronto’s two subway lines, was home to mostly low and very low-income people.\(^{116}\) In 2005, these same areas were now home to mostly middle, high, and very high-income people.\(^{117}\) The wealthy and middle-class of this city now occupy the city core and the north of the city, while low and very-low income people primarily inhabit the inner suburbs of the northwest and northeast as well as shrinking space in pockets of the downtown including Parkdale and Moss Park.

What is pointedly visible in this city are predominantly “two extreme lifestyles—one where people struggle to get by and another where every option in the world is open

\(^{115}\) Ibid., 7.
\(^{116}\) Ibid., 4.
\(^{117}\) Ibid., 5.
As I made note of in the introduction to this thesis, income inequality is growing at a faster rate in Toronto than in any other Canadian city; its growth is double the national average, and this growing economic disparity is being mapped onto the physical landscape of the city.

The transformation of Toronto’s neighbourhoods based on the consolidation of people of parallel incomes betrays other correspondences at work within each of the three groupings; there is more that each of these three groups have in common internally than solely their individual income levels. While this points to the intersectional nature of identity and is a much more complex issue than I have space for here (I will explore this more in the next chapter), it is worth naming some of the additional ways that demographic differences are mapped in Toronto’s Three Cities in order to appreciate the effects of this aspect of neoliberal urbanization.

In City Number One, people are more likely to be white (82%), to have a university education (61%), to live in smaller numbers (2.3 persons per household on average), and to be employed in white-collar environments. In the ever-shrinking City Number Two, citywide averages in relation to ethnicity and race, immigration, education and family size were noted. In City Number Three there are more single parent families.

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120 Hulchanski, The Three Cities Within Toronto, 10-12.
(23%), more children and youth (30%), more immigrants (61%), more visible minorities (47%), and more people employed in blue-collar environments.\textsuperscript{121}

What has essentially come to pass in the neoliberal materialization of these \textit{Three Cities} in Toronto is an urban landscape that is demarcated on the growing extremes of income by class, race, ethnicity, gender, family structure, and citizen-status. The current geography of these divides, and the future likelihood that they will be sustained and amplified unless different courses are pursued, are the consequences of building and organizing a city according to the values and practices of neoliberalization.

While Toronto is one of the most ethnically and racially diverse cities in the world (51.5\% of people living in Toronto identified as visible minorities as of 2017\textsuperscript{122}), 62 \% of non-white and non-Indigenous people in Toronto are living in poverty,\textsuperscript{123} and 87\% of Indigenous people in Toronto are categorized as low-income.\textsuperscript{124} As I have noted, this poverty is spatialized. Further, if most of the bodies that inhabit most of the dwellings in City Number One are made up of a fairly racially homogenous population (82\% of inhabitants are white), and most of the bodies that inhabit most of the dwellings in the diminishing City Number Two are also dominantly white (65\%), this participates in building ever-deepening socio-spatial and racial divides and inequities. Racial and ethnic diversity is becoming more and more elusive within the core of the city; indeed it would

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
be much more accurate to describe City Number Three as the most racially and ethnically diverse city in the world. While I will explore the complex nature of multicultural discourse more deliberately later in this chapter, as well as in Chapters Three and Four, it is worth noting here that neoliberal practice and policy look to diversity and multiculturalism as goods to exploit and profit from. The notion of a “multicultural Toronto” has been and continues to be employed for pursuing revenue by objectifying identities and groups of people—and for encouraging consumerism—all the while failing to adequately attend to the needs and desires of some of these same groups.

Even if Hulchanski’s study simply showed a shift in location (and not also the alarming display that poverty is growing exponentially in Toronto, middle-income populations are shrinking, and high and very-high income populations are on the rise), the change in where low and very low income people are located and where middle and high income people are located is not an innocuous occurrence. The geography of income disparity produces and reflects spatialized structural injustices, and thus it is a moral issue.

Spatialized economic disparities impact both present quality of life and have the tendency to re-inscribe future potentials for poverty and affluence. One of the causes behind this is the inequitable distribution of public services within these class disparate neighbourhoods. That is, the public services and infrastructures in the low-income neighbourhoods of Toronto are not equal to or equitable to those located in high and middle-income neighbourhoods, which is to say, this configuration of space and resources is unjust. The social infrastructures and services in City Number Three, where people who require these services in more pressing ways, are underfunded, less
developed and not reflective of or responsive to the current needs and desires of inhabitants.

A clear example of this is the disparity that exists within public education in the Toronto District School Board, where wealth and test scores show strong correlation. In short, high-scoring elementary schools in all areas of testing (reading, writing and math) are located primarily in high-income areas, while low-scoring elementary schools are located mainly in low-income areas.

One of the ways that neoliberalization participates in fostering the unjust overlapping and complex conditions for this phenomena is through the increasing reliance of public education in Toronto on the fundraising capacities of students and families. The top twenty elementary schools in Toronto, which are almost exclusively located in City Number One, raised $3.9 million in the 2012-2013 academic year, while the bottom twenty schools, located almost exclusively in City Number Three, raised a total of $43,249. As neoliberal provincial and municipal governments continue to decrease funding for public education, fundraising is increasingly being relied upon to augment educational essentials like computers, books, school infrastructure (including tables and toilets in some cases) and meal programs.

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126 Ibid.


128 Ibid.
Unlike other cities and provinces in Canada, Toronto requires that students attend schools within their geographic district, and are only able to attend a school outside of this district if there is space (and in high achieving schools, there is very rarely space).\textsuperscript{129} In light of this requirement, neighbourhoods with high-test scores have driven up real estate prices, making attendance at these schools the exclusive right of middle and high-income inhabitants.

Spatialized economic inequality is also directly linked to health and wellness. It has been estimated that social and economic circumstances, including where a person lives, accounts for 50\% of all health outcomes.\textsuperscript{130} In 2013, the American National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine published a report showing that in many American cities life expectancy varies by as much as 20 years between neighbourhoods within the same city.\textsuperscript{131}

While the context of universal health care makes the urban Canadian context different in crucial ways, Canadian research has also recently shown the direct correlation between neighbourhood, wealth and health. The mortality rate for low-income residents is 16\% higher than it is for those with a high-income in Toronto.\textsuperscript{132} There is, therefore, also a significant and growing health gap between the rich and the poor in this city. While

\textsuperscript{129} Caroline Alphonso and Tavia Grant, “A Tale of two schools: The correlation between income and education in Toronto.”
\textsuperscript{130} Toronto Public Health, \textit{The Unequal City: Income and Health Inequalities in Toronto} (Toronto, ON, 2015), available online: http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-79096.pdf.
there are a number of reasons for this correlation—such as the imbalanced access to healthy food available in high and low-income neighbourhoods for instance—the way that neighbourhoods are planned and occupied along socio-economic lines is also a direct cause.

For instance, poor walkability in neighbourhoods (neighbourhoods that are usually in City Number Three) has been directly proven to increase risk of diabetes, particularly among recent immigrants. The way a neighbourhood is designed and inhabited greatly determines how active residents within that neighbourhood will be; living close to the centre of the city, where infrastructure and incentive to walk are greater, increases the likelihood of health and wellness.

The constellation of factors that have led to the manifestation of three distinct cities in Toronto, with three very different levels of access to services and resources, can be interpreted as unjust effects of neoliberal urbanization. These factors include all of those listed above as examples of “roll-back” and “roll-out” neoliberal urbanization. More specifically, these influences include: the fluctuation in incomes due to changes in the nature of employment (more precariously employed people doing temporary jobs, or part-time employment, or employment without benefits), the intensification of gentrification in neighbourhoods that had once been home to primarily low-income people, the rise of the speculative real-estate investment market, the condo-boom, the decrease in affordable housing, the reduction of funding at the municipal level for

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services such as (and/or the downloading from the national/provincial scale to the municipal scale of) childcare, transit, social housing and temporary shelter.¹³⁴

**Neoliberal Urbanization in Toronto through the example of Gentrification**

In order to examine the emergence and continual development of the Three Cities within Toronto, I will explore the phenomenon of gentrification as an aspect of actually existing neoliberalization. Through the continuing waves of gentrification within the downtown core and the surrounding areas of downtown Toronto, most low-income people have been pushed further and further from the centre of the city, and this has clearly not usually been by choice.

Early literature on gentrification in Canada focused on the beneficial impact that the practice might have on all urban inhabitants, by submitting that it would unite diverse constituents within neighbourhoods.¹³⁵ Obviously this has not come to pass, as one of the primary impacts of middle and high income populations moving in to formerly low-income enclaves is that these low-income individuals and communities were eventually displaced, sometimes entirely, by increased property value, and the impacts that increased rent had on the housing market, community services, the area’s businesses and the shift all of this has on the affective and relational environs.¹³⁶

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¹³⁴ Hulchanski, *The Three Cities Within Toronto*, 3.
¹³⁶ To speak about affects is to enter a lively interdisciplinary territory that theorizes in various and sometimes contradicting ways. I refer to affect throughout this thesis, but I do not elaborate in great detail. The affective turn in critical theory and cultural criticism arose as a response to the limits of discursive and semiotic practices; the affective turn has been an attempt to challenge the conception of the body as a surface upon which “discourse is inscribed rather than as something that is known from within.”
In the development of many North American cities, and in the history of the city of Toronto, the suburban peripheries have had periods of appeal for middle and high income people, while downtowns have frequently languished and been evacuated by those with the resources to leave. By the late 1970s and into the present, however, the downtown of Toronto became a desirable place for middle and high-income populations.

Jon Caulfield cites the reason for this white-collar return to the centre of the city as an attempt to escape the “repressive institutions of suburban life”—evidenced to in the geographic distance between home, work, and leisure for instance.\textsuperscript{137} Caulfield reviewed some of the early literature on gentrification and describes the cultural caché that a return to the downtown represented for gentrifiers. City resettlement by the post-industrial white-collar class occurred as an effort towards “class-constitution”; by moving in to historical downtown neighbourhoods, middle and high-income populations could claim the identity of these enclaves, and in so doing, construct a romanticized spatiotemporal character that they felt the suburbs lacked.\textsuperscript{138} By moving back to the inner city, existential meaning might be made in providing inhabitants with a sense of \textit{place}, an embodied and “erotic sociability” by existing within the rhythms and characters of distinct neighbourhoods, and finally, for occasions for festival.\textsuperscript{139} The return to the city for the white-collar post-industrial class was not so much a desire to recreate the past, as it were, but rather demonstrated a longing for a “subjectively effective present,” where routine was not prescribed, and where there was a sense of freedom to manifest new yet

\textsuperscript{137} Slater, “North American Gentrification?,” 1195.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 623.
‘traditional’ ways of being and doing. These ‘traditional’ ways were of course slowly eroded with the arrival of gentrifiers and the displacement of the ‘traditional’ inhabitants.

Gentrification transpires through a dual practice of spatial control; occasionally, gentrifiers move into ethno-cultural enclaves on purpose in order to consume and class constitute as explored above. At other times, gentrifiers move into ‘affordable’ areas of the city, and slowly participate in supplanting and displacing people, ethno-cultural groups and businesses. In other words, gentrification is based on both the practice of displacement through the pricing out of low-income inhabitants, as well as through explicit attempts to commodify specific groups.

Gentrification, however, does not merely occur through the will of the wealthy as they live, work or play in formerly low-income neighbourhoods; it is a systematic process that municipal and provincial governments advance through policy and building practices. Gentrification and its correlate of displacement are directed by the real estate and development market, and at the same time, gentrification is a municipally and provincially managed exercise in neoliberal city-building.

One impactful example of provincial involvement in gentrification in Toronto and other towns and cities within Ontario was through the Tenant Protection Act, and in its later iteration of the Residential Tenancies Act. Amongst other actions, the Tenant Protection Act (often referred to as “The Tenant Rejection Act” as well as the Residential Tenancies Act removed rent control on vacant units within the private rental

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140 Ibid., 624.
market. In this way, landlords were able to increase rents after tenants left by will or eviction, and in so doing, slowly displace particular populations and begin to attract others by remodelling units and raising rent.144 Alongside other provincial and municipal influences, it was through the Tenant Protection Act and Residential Tenancies Act that specific buildings within neighbourhoods were able to gentrify. As of May 2017, however, rent control has been expanded for most private rental units in Ontario. It remains to be seen how this will impact the practice of gentrification in Toronto.

Another clear and pronounced example of provincially and municipally sponsored gentrification is the “condofication” of Toronto.145 The surge in condo development in Toronto has been a market-led phenomenon and has been made possible by provincial and municipal policy and planning measures, and sometimes by the ineffectiveness of these governmental checks and balances on the real estate and development market. The effect of condofication has been a redefinition of the social and cultural landscape surrounding these builds, and has often functioned in a gentrifying way by pushing out low-income neighbours, and the services and jobs which these communities had relied upon.

For instance, in November 2017, two mixed-use and high-end condominium towers were approved at the intersection of King St. and Dufferin St. in Parkdale, close to where I live. Despite the efforts and protest of current inhabitants of the neighbourhood (including protesting at a City Hall meeting and shutting down the intersection of King and Dufferin), the Toronto planning committee recommended the approval of Lifetime’s

293 high-end condominium units. The municipality, despite the strong and loud objection of many local constituents, tolerates the ongoing gentrification of Parkdale, one of the last pockets for low-income inhabitants within the downtown core. The municipal planning body has consistently disregarded the needs and desires of current stakeholders in the community in favour of development geared towards high-income urban inhabitants.

A final example of this blatant disregard for low-income and very-low income urban inhabitants, while perhaps not obviously a practice of direct gentrification but which certainly functions in the neoliberalization of this city and of neighbourhoods within this city, is the 2017 City of Toronto budget. In it, a $1 million service cut to the already overwhelmed temporary and emergency shelter system existed alongside a revoked $2 million cut to street sweeping. While these financial decisions are not necessarily analogously lined up in the budget, they do point to a trend in decision-making priorities within neoliberal city building; it is more important for the city to be clean and inviting so that capital will flow into and within the municipality than for the most vulnerable city dwellers to have their basic needs met. Budgets reveal priorities and have material consequences; their outcomes are moral concerns.

Each of these policies are practices in municipally sponsored gentrification and neoliberalization, and each reveal a prioritization for private property owners and economic elites and a disregard for the well-being and articulated interests of low-income inhabitants. This normative prioritization for wealthy populations within neoliberal municipalities is a moral problem and must be responded to on moral grounds through
norms that insist on prioritising and including vulnerable populations in the processes of city building.

**Neoliberal Subjectivity**

What are the consequences of neoliberal urbanization on the self-understanding of inhabitants? What does the neoliberal city teach and instil about what it means to be related to variously positioned fellow city-dwellers? If, as David Harvey argues, there is a direct correlation between the cities that are built and the senses of self of urban inhabitants, given the prior discussion of the structural injustices of spatialized urban life, what does the neoliberal city tell neoliberalized urban inhabitants about who they are?

Although Harvey points to this association between subjectivity and neoliberal urbanization, he does not expand on what an urban neoliberalized anthropological vision is and does. Next, I will explore some of the qualities of the neoliberal urban anthropological vision, or urban neoliberalized subjectivity.

While neoliberal subjects experience themselves uniquely in relation to interlocking structures (which I will explore more in the next Chapter), neoliberal subjectivity institutes a homogenous understanding of what a human person is and ought to be able to do and desire through the structures involved in the processes of neoliberalization. Individuals and groups are positioned and produced differently in relation to this generalized anthropological vision of the human person, but the same logic of what the individual ought to do and be responsible for is assumed for all subjects. I will highlight ways that different subjects are produced within neoliberalism, but my focus here is on the overarching vision of human success that this ideology promotes and
constructs. I will reflect on key aspects of what neoliberalized cities, and Toronto in particular, tells urban inhabitants about how human life and particular lives ought to be understood, and how inhabitants ought to engage with one another and particular ‘others’ in light of this self-understanding.

While neoliberalism is at once a political-economic ideology that shapes space, it is also, as womanist theo-ethicist Keri Day suggests, a “rationality” and a “cultural project” which functions in the construction of subjectivity.146 As middle-class urban inhabitants, in order to dismantle the unjust spatialities that neoliberalism constructs, we must also understand and transform the persons and groups we become in these processes (which I will explore more deliberately in Chapters Three and Four).

Theories of subjective formation, or subjectification, are multiple. Foucault suggests that subjectification has to do with “what the subject must be, to what condition he(sic) is subject, what status he (sic) must have, what position he (sic) must occupy in reality or in the imaginary, in order to become a legitimate subject of this or that type of knowledge.”147 The process of becoming a subject involves the internalization of notions about who the self is; subjectification has to do with how individuals come to understand themselves in relation to other subjects and in relation to the structural and spatial processes, or technologies, that arrange and determine life in common. Subjective formation has to do with “internal organization, goals, and cognitive frames and

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Likewise, the processes through which some people are made into social “objects” in relation to particular subjects—for example, “the poor,” “Indigenous,” and various iterations of objectifying specific ethno-cultural “others”—impacts subjective self-understandings and identifications of ‘others.’ The formation of subjectivity is an ongoing process that occurs at multiple sites, in interacting ways and is always complexly experienced.

As I am using it here, subjectivity, and subjective formation, is distinctive from moral agency and moral formation (which I will explore more deliberately in Chapter Three). A key difference between subjects and moral agents is that subjects are formed to function within a given (and in this case, an unjust) context, while moral agents are able to desire and pursue what they deem to be moral goods. These terms and positions are related and they can exist within an individual together at once. It is possible to be a subject and agent in different ways concurrently. For instance, while someone might function through their subjectification within a given set of circumstances, that same person might be able to agentially consider and act towards what is good and right in another sphere.

As a morally malforming practice, neoliberalism participates in the shaping of urban subjects through the ways that it orders labour and constructs and polices spaces, or through what Foucault calls “technologies of power.” However, neoliberal governmentality, which is to say, the “manner, or mentality, in which people are

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governed and govern themselves,” transpires through more than corporeal control. As a form of governmental practice,

neoliberalism operates on interests, desires, and aspirations rather than through rights and obligations; it does not directly mark the body, as sovereign power, or even curtail actions, as disciplinary power; rather, it acts on the conditions of actions. Foucault suggests that neoliberal governmentality transpires by forming particular desires. Through governmental practices that are based in the belief that subjects are inherently competitive, individually responsible and self-interested, neoliberal subjects develop and practice competitive and self-interested norms of being and doing together, and are filled with a desire for endless accumulation.

In The Birth of Biopolitics, Foucault offers an analysis of the subjectivity that neoliberalism communicates through the operative theory of homo oeconomicus that it promotes. In distinction from classical economic theory, where homo oeconomicus was conceived of as one of two partners in an exchange of goods/services and/or money, neoliberal homo oeconomicus is “entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of his earnings.” Neoliberal homo oeconomicus is individually responsible for producing their own satisfaction, which is based largely on the state of their own capital.

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150 Ibid.
152 Foucault, The Birth of Biopolitics, 226.
153 Ibid., 228.
Neoliberal subjectivity is rendered through the affective messaging that communicates to all neoliberal subjects that all of one’s relations, all domains of behaviour and all social experiences ought to be understood and given value by how much they contribute to each individual’s capital status, for which each of us is individually responsible. Even the parent-child relation is rendered within this schema; all of the active and passive time that a parent spends with their child is given its value by the impact this time will have on that child’s later earning capacity.154 All seemingly non-economic components of the individual’s life are understood through what Foucault calls a “grid of economic intelligibility.”155 This grid of economic intelligibility functions as a kind of rationality – through the practice of neoliberalism, good neoliberal subjects come to understand all conduct and ways of being through neoliberal market logic of competition and individual responsibility.

In line with this critique, Day expands on the social consequences of neoliberal subjectification. As all of one’s relations become incorporated into a grid of economic intelligibility, what arises is a distorted and alienated sense about what it means to be human, and what it means to exist in public.156 Neoliberal subjectivity crushes individual’s senses of social responsibility, while at the same time, claiming that the “blind trust in markets will help form virtuous individuals.”157 As it dismantles notions of social responsibility and care, neoliberalism claims it liberates each to be free and successful. As Cynthia Moe-Lobeda argues, the freedom that neoliberal ideology constructs is freedom “for doing as one pleases with one’s money and property, and is

154 Ibid., 244.
155 Ibid., 248.
157 Ibid.
therefore freedom from the demands of the widespread good and from public accountability, scrutiny, regulation, and responsibility.”\textsuperscript{158} The practice of neoliberalism clearly communicates that the corollary (of being individually free and liberated to be as wealthy as one can be) is that if this does not happen, the individual alone is responsible; “largely responsible for her own successes and failures, the individual’s well-being and development becomes the sole responsibility for the neoliberal entrepreneurial subject.”\textsuperscript{159}

For neoliberalized subjectivities, any incapacity to care for our self (and our immediate dependents) is construed as a personal failure, rather than a socially mediated and produced position. Neoliberal subjectivity encourages the belief that each of us is responsible for our own well-being, which we attain through competitive behaviour and by developing our entrepreneurial capacity for capital wealth. This rejection of social responsibility and emphasis on individual (market) freedom, personal responsibility and competition is clearly witnessed to by the destruction of the welfare and socially democratic state.

When people are valued, or not, based on their capacity to exist within neoliberal systems, and when profit-maximization and competition are turned in to primary social values, Day suggests that the consequence is a “thinning out of caring and loving relations.”\textsuperscript{160} Day argues that neoliberal subjects have a compromised ability to feel deeply and passionately about being connected to other bodies and communities, as the

\textsuperscript{158} Moe-Lobeda, \textit{Healing a Broken World}, 54.
insatiable drive towards growing individual human capital has taken over as the primary good to be pursued.\textsuperscript{161} As individuals come to understand themselves through neoliberal lenses, many come to accept that there is a “natural” competition that divides people from one another. Neoliberal subjectivity teaches “alienated ways of living.”\textsuperscript{162}

Neoliberalism imparts the belief that care and connectedness between individuals and within communities are naïve idealizations that cannot realistically organize our lives in relation.\textsuperscript{163} Through the grid of neoliberal economic intelligibility, instrumentality, marketization and commodification shape all relations. In this way, neoliberalization is as much a theological and religious question concerning how we speak about love of neighbor, care of environment, social trust among human beings as it is a material question about transforming structures and systems to reflect economic parity and justice.\textsuperscript{164}

In short, it provokes a moral crisis because the virtues, values, obligations and moral vision of the cultural, rational and geoeconomic project of urban neoliberalization fall in direct contradiction to the Christian vocation to pursue love and well-being of neighbour and creation. In this way, neoliberal subjectivity as it is formed within a context of neoliberalism is sinful.

This sin is both personal and collective, subjective and structural. As Moe-Lobeda suggests, “sin in its fullest sense refers to disorientation from right relationship with God, which then leads to disorientation from right relationship with self, others, and all of creation.”\textsuperscript{165} Neoliberal spatialities and subjectivities instil hyper-competitive and self-

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{165} Moe-Lobeda, \textit{Resisting Structural Evil}, 58.
centred values into both the processes of city building as well as within the bodies and subjectivities of urban inhabitants, which is to say, they instil sinful patterns of relationship personally and collectively. This sin is so intertwined into both urban inhabitants and the shape and order of cities that it is not something that can be changed through attention to only the self or only the city.

**Neoliberal Subjectivity in and through the Neoliberal City**

What does this sweeping inclusion of all relations, domains of behaviours and social experiences into the neoliberal grid of economic intelligibility, in conjunction with the decline of social responsibility, mean for the neoliberal individual’s role as urban inhabitant and neighbour within a city?

In line with Foucault and Day, I am suggesting that neoliberal subjectivity is a discursive cultural practice and rationality that shapes and orders self and self-in-relation through technologies of power and technologies of self, and is communicated through all aspects of life. In line with Harvey, Brenner and Theodore, I will turn to examine some ways that this grid of economic intelligibility takes shape in and through the organization of the built environment, and in the neoliberal urban landscape in particular— in order to resist, imagine and form alternative relational arrangements.

Through life in an urban neoliberal environment such as Toronto, all individuals are ordered to believe certain things about themselves and their relationship to their neighbours and fellow city-dwellers. This neoliberal subjectification and malformation does not usually occur through a dissemination of blatant propaganda about how to be and do. Rather all urban inhabitants are shaped especially through the everyday priorities
that are articulated in the building of spaces and through the configuration of resources and relations within material environments.

As discussed earlier, the sharp demarcations of space that Hulchanski’s *Three Cities* study depicts of a neoliberalized city such as Toronto, individuals live, move and become who they are within spaces where, amongst other consequences of neoliberal urbanization, rich and poor, white people and people of colour are distinctly separated (and often not by conscious choice). In the *Three Cities*, the centre and immediate surroundings of the city are accessible as a dwelling place to particular groupings of people (white, wealthy, university educated, white-collar work) and not others (people of colour, low income people, people who do blue-collar work). I turn now to the moral consequences of these divides.

The centre in City Number One, that is, the area in this wide metropolis that is home to municipal governance offices, arts and culture hubs (many of which had been low-income enclaves before they were gentrified), courthouses, major research hospitals, universities, many workplaces, a relatively robust education and health network, can be home to and, in this way, belong mostly to those who are positioned particularly in relation to class and race.

Inhabitants of City Number Three can certainly go to the centre, travelling on under-funded, over-crowded and time-consuming transport to get there. They can arrive in the centre to work, to play, to receive healthcare, and maybe to go to one of the universities or colleges. However, this peripheralization of home for certain bodies from the centre and immediate surroundings of the centre of the city renders these bodies
different in crucial ways within the central landscape. When certain bodies have more
direct and consistent access to the imaginaries and services of the city centre by their
sheer geographical proximity, this impacts collective understandings about whom the
centre belongs to and whom it does not.

If the centre represents finance, metropolitan and provincial government,
universities and colleges and the primary hospitals, the potential for lived and perceived
gradations within ownership or belonging to these institutions and systems is certainly
powerful. This divide has the potential to impact future belonging and leadership within
these spheres by inculcating a sense of displacement in some and ownership in others.
This divide also has the potential to be reinscribed through the inequitable distribution of
resources and services within each of these three cities, which I attended to in brief
above.

Further, within the practices of urban neoliberalization the insistence on
individual responsibility has far reaching consequences on the self-understanding of
inhabitants. When individuals are unable to fulfill and succeed in exercising their
individual (market) freedom, they are both disregarded and blamed for their failures. As
Marilyn Legge argues, when people are

subordinate to profit-making and cannot survive tough economic competition they
are abandoned as economically unnecessary, frequently blamed as useless or a
social liability, or morally disfigured in the drive to outperform their
neighbour.166

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166 Marilyn Legge, “Building Inclusive Communities of Life,” in Intersecting Voices: Critical
Theologies in a Land of Diversity, eds. Don Schweitzer and Derek Simon (Ottawa, ON: Novalis, 2004),
294-295.
This abandonment and blame of individuals who are unable to perform successfully within the competitive neoliberal paradigm is clearly witnessed to in national, provincial and municipal policies regarding poverty and homelessness. In Canada and in Toronto specifically, neoliberal institutional practices participate in constructing the conditions for growing homelessness in this city.\textsuperscript{167} Through the reduction in funding to social service provisions, including supportive housing and the shelter system, neoliberal urbanization in Toronto continuously expresses an embedded and sometimes articulated belief that individuals and families “should take more responsibility for their own care.”\textsuperscript{168}

This downloading of responsibility for care from the federal to the provincial to the municipal and finally to the individual and familial level—or what is referred to in social justice literature as the practice of “responsibilization”—has facilitated the construction of a homeless imaginary, where homeless bodies are \textit{bodies that fail} in their duties of personal care.\textsuperscript{169} Neoliberal discourse and practice produces the image of homeless individuals as personally responsible through a series of poor choices for their homelessness.\textsuperscript{170} In addition to this emphasis on personal responsibility, the Canadian discussion of homelessness has frequently focused on the predominance of mental health as causation for poverty and homelessness.\textsuperscript{171} Through both of these emphases, social and structural inequalities are ignored, and homeless bodies are pathologized and

\begin{footnotesize}
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produced as deviant and degenerate, disordered and disorderly. As failed neoliberal subjects within the practice of urban neoliberalization, they are uniformly constructed as *both pitiable and personally responsible.*

By pushing the needs of people experiencing poverty (which is always intersectionally experienced and produced in relation to gender, race, dis/ability and more) to the margins—both through socio-spatial peripheralization as well as through the promotion of policies that disregard the well-being of certain bodies—urban inhabitant’s senses of self, and senses of responsibility (or lack thereof) to their neighbours are being formed. Socio-spatial polarization and the discourse and practice of responsibilization communicates to all city dwellers that certain people do not matter as much as the needs and interests of the wealthy and predominantly white middle and high income population, and that neither the city nor the individual inhabitants within the city are responsible for one another.

The impact of the neoliberal city’s prioritization of the wealthy and disregard for models of social responsibility is that urban subjectivities are constructed with an embodied sense of radical entrepreneurial independence. The crucial moral issue here has to do with a lack of social accountability. For liberative theo-ethics, there is an express commitment to resist and transform structures that oppress and delimit. This rejection of responsibility and accountability beyond one’s self and immediate relations malforms urban inhabitants, and is in direct contradiction to liberative Christian praxis.

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172 Ibid., 120
Lastly, in the urban neoliberalized context, the lives, interests and relations of urban inhabitants are treated as commodifiable goods, which if used properly, said individuals can partake in building and belonging within a successful city. One example from the Toronto context from the contemporary wave of gentrification is notable: there is an overt link being made between the commodification of creative and ethno-cultural practices with the construction of a successful (i.e. profitable) city.

Richard Florida, specifically in his earlier work *The Rise of the Creative Class*, offers a primary example of this line of reasoning. Florida argued that post-industrial cities, Toronto included, might survive and thrive by promoting multiculturalism, sexually diverse cultures, and artistic industries.¹⁷³ In Florida’s work, including the civically sponsored *Toronto’s Culture Plan for the Creative City⁴* that it clearly inspired, the advancement and growth of culture (including arts, heritage, sexual minority communities and ethno-cultural diversity) is regarded as an essential economic development strategy.¹⁷⁵ Florida – and this line of thinking about the city – describe ethno-cultural practices and ‘difference’ as potential capital assets.

One of the implications of this breed of commodification of life is that urban inhabitants and urban planning strategies become encouraged to regard specifically ‘different’ neighbours as assets to exploit for profit. In order to survive and thrive as a post-industrial city, specific differences are turned into commercial products. Sexual and

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¹⁷³ Lehrer and Wieditz, “Condominium development and gentrification,” 150.
¹⁷⁵ Lehrer and Wieditz, “Condominium development and gentrification,” 148.
ethno-cultural minority groups in particular are regarded for their instrumental exchange value, and diversity is considered a key to prosperity.

This commodification of cultural and sexual minorities in the project of city building can be witnessed to in a 2017 Toronto municipal tourism video advertisement entitled “The Views are Different Here.” In it, Toronto is portrayed as a bastion of cultural diversity, where “the views are different here” because of the various and intersecting cultures that look to be effortlessly co-existing within this municipality. Same-sex couples kissing are cut next to Jose Bautista’s iconic baseball bat flip from the 2015 American League Division Series, which appears after a shot of a busy and bright Spadina Avenue in Chinatown, which is followed by footage of racially and culturally diverse restaurant kitchens in action.

These, amongst other images, are used to build a sellable imaginary of Toronto, so that possible consumers might buy into Toronto’s identity, and become part of Toronto as a body of difference while here. Sex, celebration, racial ethnicities and cultures—and more generally the notion of difference and diversity as such—are each used to build a promise of Toronto, so that it might be bought into and consumed as a desirable product.

The advertisement boldly claims that “in this city, it’s okay to let your guard down,” and later, that “all flavours are welcome” before it cuts to footage of Chinatown dumplings and spareribs. While the commercial could be interpreted as promoting the

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177 Ibid.
great variety of restaurants within the city, there is clearly an attempt to correlate the multiplicity of flavours in the food industry within this city with the diversity of racial and ethnic cultures that are available for consumption. As bell hooks suggests, this association with race and flavour is an attempt within commodity culture to “liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture.”

This argument recalls Caulfield’s suggestion that early practices of gentrification were an attempt for the post-industrial white-collar class (and most often racially white) to claim a subjectively effective present through the colonization and romanticization of the spatiotemporal identity of the downtown neighbourhood being gentrified. In both cases, there is an attempt to absorb the ‘flavour’ of the goods and spaces being commodified, so that the subjectivities of the white consumer/gentrifier might be enriched.

The overarching messaging of the advertisement is that all races, cultures and sexual identities are welcome in this city, which is why it ought to be visited. The presence of cultural, racial and sexual differences in Toronto are the attributes being peddled; these differences are available for consumption like food.

While the need for the city to develop capital wealth through tourism is understandable, this kind of campaign, and the creative city paradigm within which it operates, betrays a problematical commodification of life and certain lives, and reveals a disturbingly selective gaze. Toronto is certainly home to, and variously open to, sexual and gender diversity, racial diversity, cultural diversity, the Blue Jays, and to multiple

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Chinatowns (though the increasing property value and rising rents in the Spadina Chinatown are surely a threat to its subsistence as a predominantly Chinese business enclave, as major condo developments take shape in the area). However, there are countless ways that this city fails to protect and advocate for the populations that are being commodified in this advertisement, and for its most vulnerable populations more broadly. This is, after all, the city with the most drastic economic inequality in the country, and these inequalities transpire along ethno-cultural and racial lines.179

In notionally celebrating but effectively commodifying the various cultures within Toronto, it is critical that these counter narratives not be overlooked. While these concerning facts are certainly not those that would attract tourists, the commodification of (oftentimes marginalized) cultures within this city is yet another way of masking real needs and unjust arrangements.

Conclusion

Neoliberal subjectivity as it is rendered and conveyed within the urban neoliberal city forms all urban inhabitants to believe that there are gradations of ownership and belonging within the city, based on income/class, gender, race, ethnicity, family structure, work, age, dis/ability and more. It forms inhabitants to believe that they ought to understand and value themselves and their neighbours through the same logics at work in the neoliberal market; they are to know and treat themselves and their neighbours as independently responsible and competitive entrepreneurs, doing things and acting in

ways in relation in order to fill proverbial and actual banks. Life in a neoliberalized city shapes city-dwellers to understand that they are not responsible for anything other than this pursuit towards success, which is conceived of as independent wealth. Individuals are to understand their role and rightful stake in this city by virtue of being “taxpayers” and consumers rather than inhabitants and neighbours; within the practice of neoliberalization, there has been a shift towards “a new specification of the subject of government, whereby citizens are redefined as clients and autonomous market participants who are responsible for their own success, health and well-being.”\(^{180}\) In other words, life in a neoliberal city instils indifference between neighbours and anti-socialism more broadly; life in a neoliberal city instils sinful patterns of relationship.

The city colludes in this by commodifying aspects of particular identities so that it is attractive to potential investment, and by disregarding the needs of the most vulnerable in favour of capital accumulation. It does so by encouraging and supporting trends and policies in city building that have led to an increase in poverty in this city and have made it more likely for visible minorities and low-income people to be marginal as visitors rather than inhabitants of the city centre. The structural and spatial injustices rendered through urban neoliberalization are based on, produce, and reinforce a homogenized and white ethno-centric understanding of the human subject as someone able to succeed within the grid of neoliberal economic intelligibility. Further, neoliberal subjectivity manifested through neoliberal urbanization produces public understandings of failed subjects (poor, homeless and otherwise) rather than focussing on problematic social and

spatial structures that produce the conditions for poverty. Neoliberal ideology promotes misunderstandings of the social world through its emphasis on personal responsibility and radical individualism. In light of these tendencies for both commodifying and delimiting particular urban inhabitants, and because of the practiced denial within neoliberal subjetification that life transpires within networks of relation, there is the need to engage in critical social analysis of the material relations and lived consequences of urban neoliberalization.

In order to transform neoliberalized cities, neoliberal subjects will have to re-work and re-imagine what it means to be human and related; likewise, in order to change these subjectivities, the structures and procedures of neoliberal cities must be transformed. As Foucault suggests, in order to convert an economic order, “the type of individualization that is linked to the economy” must be the site of conversion.\textsuperscript{181} What is required is the promotion of “new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us.”\textsuperscript{182} This subjective transformation, however, is dialectical; what is also required are processes of urbanism and urban construction that foster and inscribe collective responsibility and pro-social care. In the next Chapter, I attend to this dialectical requirement for spatial and subjective transformation.


\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.
Chapter Three: Responsible Relationality

We human beings constantly need to correct our understandings of ourselves, our affirmations, and the certainties we have acquired. If we fail to do the work of rethinking both our thought and our image of ourselves, we can bring about disastrously unbalanced situations in our personal and social lives.


Given the ways that the neoliberal city generates vast economic inequalities between urban inhabitants – in part by forming subjects who relate and understand themselves in neoliberal market-oriented terms and through competitive and individualistic neoliberal values– building towards an economically just city will require the cultivation of different understandings and practices of what it means to be related and responsible in light of these relations. In order to change the shape of cities, urban inhabitants need to change how they understand themselves as a part of this process. As J.K. Gibson-Graham suggests, the transformation of the capitalist economic ordering of relations requires “cultivating ourselves as subjects who can imagine and enact a new economic politics.”\(^{183}\)

If, as middle-class urban inhabitants, we hope to contest the economic injustice in our neoliberalized cities, we will have to nurture our self-understanding as interrelated and interdependent inhabitants – and, most crucially, become responsible to these relations.

As examined in the previous chapter, neoliberal subjectivity is organized around the notion that all people are personally responsible for their (entrepreneurial) well-being. However, what this anthropology of radical individualism ignores is that neoliberal subjects are still relational. What is often eclipsed within the neoliberal fetishization of the individual and the emphasis on the freedom and personal-responsibility of the individual is that each of these individuals still operates within ecological, institutional and social arrangements that render them irreducibly relational (and very often exploitatively so for middle and high-income people). Further, what the generalized anthropological vision of neoliberal subjectivity fails to acknowledge is that not all subjects are positioned or produced equally or alike in regards do these social and spatial relational arrangements.

Neoliberalization and neoliberal subjectivity operate irresponsibly in light of the relational networks within which human life takes place. Neoliberalism operates by overlooking connections and the moral weight of these relations, instead stressing that morality, and the moral life, are private affairs. As Cynthia Moe-Lobeda recognizes, “collective human activity is shaping the material and cultural conditions of life. Yet, moral consciousness enacted in our society is, generally speaking, increasingly privatized.”184 Becoming responsible requires an acknowledgment of the fact that as middle-class neoliberal urban subjects, we are still irreducibly interdependent. Becoming responsible within this context of atomized and irresponsible neoliberal subjectification requires an examination of the ways in which we are related. Responsible relationality, I will argue, is a moral norm required of all urban inhabitants (and especially the middle-

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184 Moe-Lobeda, Resisting Structural Evil, 119.
class, given our eco-social power) in order to contest and transform the unjust structures of neoliberalization. In relation to Cynthia Moe-Lobeda’s *critical mystical vision*, this chapter attends to Moe-Lobeda’s second movement. That is, I turn to theoretical and practical alternatives to the problem of economic injustice and the commodification of human life spawned by urban neoliberalization.

**From Neoliberal Subjects to Moral Agents Contesting Neoliberalization**

As Christians committed to the practice of justice and love (norms I will explore more fully in the next chapter), we are required to contest our neoliberal subjectification and become responsibly relational *moral agents*. As I am proposing, a key difference between being subjects within neoliberalism and moral agents within a context of neoliberalization is the capacity to “to make difficult judgements and decisions about what is right and wrong and to modify our behaviour accordingly.”\(^{185}\) While as middle-class neoliberal subjects we are formed with the self-understanding of radical individualism (including individualistic models of responsibility) and with desires for endless accumulation, as moral agents—or as people who can decide to act towards what we deem right—within these contexts, we are called to respond in ways that protect and respect diverse life.

As moral agents, humans are those creatures “who are able to perceive various courses of action, weigh them with a view to various considerations, choose among the actions on the basis of the considerations, and act on those choices.”\(^{186}\) Moral agency has to do with both moral being and moral doing—or with character and identity, as well

\(^{185}\) Todd Peters, *In Search of the Good Life*, 23.

\(^{186}\) Birch and Rasmussen, *Bible & Ethics in the Christian Life*, 40.
as with action and behaviour.\textsuperscript{187} As moral agents, individuals have the capacity to ask what kind of city or community they think is ‘good’, and what qualities and traits— which is to say, what virtues—are essential amongst agents for making such a good city or community. This, as Birch and Rasmussen clarify, is the internal dimension of moral agency.

The external dimensions of moral agency have to do with both moral values—which are the “the norms by which we judge both actions and the structures of society itself”\textsuperscript{188}—as well as moral obligations—which have to do with what we deem to be “right and wrong, good and evil, given the matrix of relationships which register their claims upon us.”\textsuperscript{189} Moral obligations are the “ground rules”\textsuperscript{190} that are required for us as invariably relational and social creatures, while moral values are the “standards by which we judge the kind of society we aspire to.”\textsuperscript{191}

These external dimensions of moral agency—or the capacity for doing and acting—are separable from the internal dimensions only insofar as this partition enables theoretical consideration of these correlated elements of the moral life. The doing components of moral agency flow out of the being components, and likewise, acting morally generates moral character.

Moral agency also involves moral vision, which I attended to more fully in the introduction. Moral vision is “the vision of the good we hold, a part of which is how we

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 50.
perceive and regard ourselves and others.”192 As moral agents, we are able to consider what traits and actions are required of us as urban inhabitants in order to manifest a moral vision of a ‘good’ city.193 Becoming moral agents within the context of neoliberalism depends on both moral being and moral doing, or on character and identity, as well as on action and behaviour. Becoming moral agents transpires as inhabitants resist, transform and build cities that do not objectify, commodify, and delimit neighbours. We exercise our moral agency as we act responsibly relational within the spatial and structural arrangements that hold all life in common.

To get at the crux of these matters, I consider social structure and the ways that social structures are spatialized as the arena within which urban neoliberal subjects are bound up in relations of in/justice, as well as the arena within which they might become moral agents who can resist and transform these injustices. Subsequently, I investigate what responsibility for these spatialized structural relations entails. To do so, I employ Iris Marion Young’s “social connection model of responsibility”194 to conceive of responsible action in light of these relations. With a primary focus on what is required of the white middle-class, I ask what ought to be done in light of the various spatialized structural injustices produced and enacted through neoliberal urbanization.

Finally, I consider responsibly relational models for constructing cities by examining the practice of participatory planning and the right to the city movement that it emerges out of as practical and theoretical directions in efforts towards the construction of just cities, which is to say, towards the construction of just spatialized structures in the

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192 Ibid., 59.
193 Ibid.
194 Young, Responsibility for Justice, 95-122.
urban environment. Both participatory planning and the right to the city require urban inhabitants to exercise their moral agency; in each of these models, urban inhabitants collaborate towards a moral vision of a just city by acting responsibly relational—and thereby being and becoming responsible moral agents—within the neoliberal city. These collaborative practices are, as I will examine later in this chapter, a way to resist neoliberal subjectification by becoming moral agents who are able to work and build towards a liberative vision of what a city could be.

**Spatialized Structural Relationality**

Feminist and liberationist theo-ethicists regularly argue that relationality is “constitutive of all beings.”¹⁹⁵ Normative within these methods of theo-ethics is the supposition of the “inexorable and irreducible sociality of all reality,” and that the “social patterns of society” are “the matrix from which the individuation of human life and community life proceed.”¹⁹⁶ In line with this tradition, in arguing that relationality is inherent to human life (and that the individualist paradigm constructed through the procedures of neoliberalization promotes irresponsible, harmful, and false self-understanding), I will consider spatialized structures as the organizing fields within which individual lives and life in common are produced. Spatialized structures are the means through which our inherent sociality is materialized and experienced.

Structures, as feminist political philosopher Iris Marion Young argues, “describe a set of socially caused conditions that position a large number of people in similar

Social structures form patterned social arrangements that are enacted and produced through interactional processes and institutional policies and practices. These structures shape, impact and organize individual lives, family life, group life, and collective life. Structures are not merely a *part* of society, or a “small subset of its institutions,” but rather, structures refer to the background conditions within which and through which individuals and groups act.

Structures include social systems (such as resource distribution, decision making procedures, division of labour, division of culture, legal rules, institutional arrangements like education and healthcare) as well as interactional processes and arrangements (such as implicit and habitual rules, customary codes of conduct, social mores) that make certain actions and choices possible for some and less so, or not at all for others. Young argues that, as the organizing fabric of our interactional and institutional lives, “structures are the subject of justice.” All individuals in a given context participate within structures in varying degrees and in multiple ways; human life happens within and through structures.

While Young recognizes that structures form and mark all aspects of the material world, she does not elaborate on the notion that structures are spatialized. However, as

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198 Ibid., 62.
199 Ibid., 53-55.
200 Ibid., 43-74. The notion of structures as the subject of justice is in reference to John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005), which Young engages with throughout her treatment.
201 Although Young does not explore the spatialization of structures as a primary focus, her work does look at some of the ways that structures impact material choices and abilities within particular contexts. For instance, Young examines the hypothetical circumstances of Sandy (a single mother) as she searches for appropriate and affordable urban housing. Young considers the structural matrices within which Sandy and her family experience vulnerability to homelessness, *Responsibility for Justice*, 43-74.
I examined in the last chapter with the practice of urban neoliberalization, spaces bear the impact of ideologies and structural practices, and are themselves productive of ideologies and unjust structural relations.

In line with what is commonly referred to as ‘the spatial turn’ in social sciences, I understand space as a social product.202 Geographies do not simply evolve; they are produced in and through materialized structural processes, and take on specific meanings and significance for complexly positioned individuals and groups through these processes of production.203

There have been multiple ways for conceiving of how, exactly, social structures relate to spatial production.204 I am not concerned here with making claims about the causal primacy of social structure versus spatial process or about which is more important in relation to the various injustices that are experienced within space and through structures. Rather, I accept Edward Soja’s proposition that

space is not a separate structure with its own autonomous laws of construction and transformation, nor is it simply an expression of the class structure emerging from the social (i.e. aspatial) relations of production. It represents, instead, a dialectically defined component of the general relations of production, relations, which are simultaneously social and spatial.205

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203 Razack, Race, Space and the Law, 6-10.

204 While there are many examples of theorists engaged in this debate, David Harvey in Social Justice in the City (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1973) and Henri Lefebvre in The Production of Space, are two of the most influential.

Spaces are arranged and experienced through social structures and practices, and social structures and practices are manifested in space. The relationship is dialectical. Space is a given, but its organization, the way it is felt, the way it is used and the meanings of specific spaces are not.206

**Interlocking Structures and Produced Identities**

Young argues that social structures are the channels within which and through which identities and social positions are mediated, enacted are produced.207 Structures situate individuals and groups in relation to one another by guiding, enabling and constraining in varying degrees.208 Structures are the social field within which and through which the social systems of class, race, gender, dis/ability and more are enacted and shaped.209

These social systems inevitably and invariably interlock; the systems of class, race, gender, dis/ability and more cannot be organized as discrete categories, because they are never experienced, enacted or produced discretely. This interlocking of systems is often referred to within the discourse of intersectionality. First developed by Black feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectional theory recognizes that that the “systems of race, gender, and class domination converge” in particular constellations to shape multiple and varying experiences.210 Identity, as experienced and produced through various and complex systems, cannot be described through attention to one category of identification alone.

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208 Ibid., 53.
209 Ibid., 59.
Rather than focussing on the intersection of categories of identification, however, Canadian political philosopher Rita Dhamoon suggests that it is more helpful to conceive of interlocking processes of differentiation (such as “discourses and practices of gendering, racialization, ethnicization, culturalization, sexualisation, and so on”) as well as through interacting systems of domination (such as the “historically constituted structures of domination such as racism, colonialism, patriarchy, sexism, capitalism, and so on”) that lived experiences of subjectivity are produced. As opposed to intersectional analyses that pay attention to the various categories of identity overlapping to create concretely and contextually experienced differences of character, Dhamoon’s focus is on the ways that interactions are shaped through the “techniques of power” involved in processes, systems and structures. This focus on systems and processes of manifested power attends to the specific production and organization of differences as rendered through interactions, rather than attending to differences as categories that belong to the individual and/or group. Dhamoon’s analysis of produced identity “exposes the myth that identities naturally pre-exist and the fallacy that subjects have identities.” By focussing on interlocking processes and systems, rather than on intersecting identity categories, the production of differences and identities is illuminated; Dhamoon recognizes that subjects are formed as identities in relation to interlocking structures.

Interlocking structures, and the produced identities manifested within them, are dynamically made through micro (or interactional), macro (or institutional) and

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212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid., 234-235.
ideological means of production. Interlocking structures are not inert or objective arrangements that human life is subjected to and made subjects through without action or involvement; rather, structures and the identities that are produced in relation to structures are enlivened and shaped through processes of behaviour, emotions, affect, speech, belief, assumptions, and bodily comportment. Structures form what is possible within and between people in a given geographical space, but people also form structures by enacting processes.

Foucault describes the embodied and interactional understanding of structure as the discursive practices and circuits of power that “transform and create individuals on the local level.” Social structures, or what Foucault describes as power manifested through “matrices of transformation,” are enfleshed within and between individual bodies. Individual subject positions do not exist in fixed states in relation to these circuits of power/structures; rather, Foucault observes that identities are “a multiple and mobile field of force relations, wherein far-reaching, but never completely stable, effects of domination are produced.”

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218 Iris Marion Young makes this claim about the dialectic between structures and individuals in *Responsibility for Justice*, 60. Sherene Razack makes this claim with explicit attention to spatiality and intersectionality in *Race, Space and the Law*, 17
221 Ibid., 102.
As Foucault suggests, these structural matrices are practiced and produced within and through the configuration of space.\textsuperscript{222} Institutional and interpersonal structural relations are dynamically related to the organization of geographies; as I argued in the last chapter, neoliberal subjectivities are made in and through neoliberal spaces, and neoliberal spaces are made by neoliberal subjects. Through participation within neoliberal spatialized structures, all urban inhabitants are bound up in relations of power that delimit and privilege, oppress and advantage.

To consider spatialized structures as the organizing fabric of institutional and interactional life is to be concerned with what I term our \textit{spatialized structural relationality}. The insistence on relationality as “constitutive to all of life”\textsuperscript{223} must always emphasize that relation transpires in and through spatialized structures, which produce complex and shifting identities and experiences of being in relation.

While structures and spatialities are actively produced and maintained through individual human behaviour across socio-spatial landscapes, it is often the case that “individuals experience social structures as constraining, objectified, thing-like.”\textsuperscript{224} All structures, including those involved in neoliberalization, can feel like they are being imposed from outside of human agency and from beyond concrete space.

\textit{Structural Injustice}

Structures can instantiate various kinds of oppressions for particular individuals and groups. Social structures differently shape and impact human identities and interactions

\textsuperscript{222} Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” \textit{Architecture/Mouvement/Continuite}, 1.
\textsuperscript{223} Gebara, \textit{Longing for Running Water}, 83.
\textsuperscript{224} Young, \textit{Responsibility for Justice}, 56.
through unequal arrangements of power and privilege, domination and subordination.

Young contends that structural injustice transpires as large groups of people are put under systemic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them.225

These injustices emerge through the everyday and cumulative participation of individuals within the structural processes of interactions and institutions.226

The image of a matrix of domination—first proposed by Black feminist Patricia Hill Collins and elaborated by Dhamoon—is a helpful model for conceptualizing of how intersecting structural injustices are experienced and produced. The image of a matrix allows for the appreciation that structural injustices take place through “multilayered movements of difference making” that are impossible to predetermine or specifically identify by naming a subject’s position.227 Interlocking structural injustices are dynamically interrelated and produced through connections across multiple processes and systems.228 The model of the matrix allows for the understanding that each individual occupies “differing degrees and forms of privilege and penalty” rather than stable subject positions because “we are always and already implicated in the conditions that structure a matrix.”229 Domination and subordination produced through intersecting structural injustices do not refer to clear cut locations of privilege and oppression, but rather are experienced in various, shifting and complex ways.

225 Young, Responsibility for Justice, 52.
226 Ibid., 73.
227 Ibid.
228 Dhamoon, “Considering Mainstreaming Intersectionality,” 238-239.
229 Ibid., 239.
Structural injustices are different than the injustices involved between individuals on an interactional face-to-face level, but individuals are still involved (and, as I will discuss below, still responsible) in structural injustice. Structural injustice transpires as individuals collectively participate within institutions and interactional processes that create differing, complex and shifting degrees of constraint and privilege.230

**Spatialized Structural Injustice**

Structural injustices can manifest in unjust geographical arrangements. Injustice does not take place in idealized abstractions, but is socially produced in space through particular geographic arrangements; structural injustice relies on a form and a location.231 As Edward Soja argues, “whether considered consequential or not, every example of unequal individual or collective advantage and opportunity can be seen as spatial injustice.”232 Soja contends that all geographies “have spatial injustices and distributional inequalities embedded within them,”233 and he describes a *multiscalar view of the city* in order to analyze various (and interlocking) forms of urban spatialized structural injustices.234

At the *exogenous level* (or top-down), the governmental administration of a city can produce unjust spatialities. Examples of this type of urban spatialized structural injustice include the practices of gerrymandering (or the design of electoral boundaries with the purpose of favouring one political party over others) as well as through more directly violent measures as witnessed to in the spatial and territorial control within South

231 Ibid., 31.
232 Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 73.
233 Ibid., 72-73.
234 Ibid., 32.
African Apartheid.\textsuperscript{235} The \textit{exogenous level} of spatial injustice has to do with the political organization of space, which is to say, with the control and domination of particular bodies through state sponsored spatial design and technologies of power.\textsuperscript{236} Through segregation, boundary making, and the militarization and occupation of territory, the exogenous level of spatial injustice has to do with the governmental construction of hierarchical and oppressive geographies.

At the exogenous level within the Canadian context, the production of racial differences has transpired through the configuration and legislation of space.\textsuperscript{237} In each of the following examples, racialized bodies have been controlled and produced as racialized through the exogenous configuration of space: first, through the colonization of the first peoples of Turtle Island and through the continued conditions of ghettoization on Indigenous reserves, second, through the practices of police carding of particular individuals and groups, and third (but certainly not conclusively) in the banning of Muslim women’s Niqabs within specific provincial legislation. White settler society has a long and ongoing spatial history of control and domination of indigenous bodies and bodies of colour.

At the \textit{endogenous level} (or bottom-up), locational decision-making can produce unjust spatialities. The most obvious example is the phenomenon of distributional inequality. The unequal distribution of public services and resources, as well as the unequal distribution of private services such as access to appropriate food, housing and employment, participates in perpetuating and instantiating injustices for particular

\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., 37-40.
\textsuperscript{236} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{237} Razack, \textit{Race, Space and the Law}, 17.
individuals and groups.\textsuperscript{238} The endogenous level has to do with matters of emplacement—which is to say, with where “things are put in space.”\textsuperscript{239}

It is at the \textit{endogenous} level that many of the spatialized structural injustices rendered through urban neoliberalization can be observed. For instance, the distributional inequalities rendered through the process of neoliberalization (as explored in the last chapter) are a primary example of spatialized structural injustices within Toronto. Neoliberalization has entailed ongoing locational and spatial advantages for wealthy and private property owning urban inhabitants, and ongoing locational and spatial disadvantages for low-income populations. It has been through endogenous decision making that the city of Toronto has effectively been segregated into three economically distinct areas. Unlike the spatial segregation at the \textit{exogenous level} (i.e. South African Apartheid), the segregation of three class disparate cities within Toronto has transpired as an “oppressive by-product of unregulated ‘freedoms’ of choice operating within persistent spatial structures of advantage.”\textsuperscript{240}

Another example of \textit{endogenous} spatial injustice within the context of Toronto can be observed through the unjustly enforced regulations around land use zoning. As Engin Isin and Myer Siemiatycki contend, “struggles over space have been the most recurring conflicts between immigrants and local governments in the Greater Toronto Area.”\textsuperscript{241} For example, Muslim communities regularly encounter zoning and planning difficulties in their attempts to construct mosques in the GTA; through opposition from

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\textsuperscript{238} Soja, \textit{Seeking Spatial Justice}, 47-56.
\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid, 55.
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local residents and municipal officials, what are cited as ‘technical’ concerns frequently delimit racialized groups from constructing because of ‘local’ residents interests. Land use zoning is used for creating tiers of belonging within the urban environment.

Finally, at the mesogeographical level (or the regional level), various scales interact to produce injustice. For example, the global North’s imperialist and colonialist projects have engrained their spatial privilege onto the South by creating lasting structures and geographies that continue to delimit the global South.

At each of these levels, structural injustices are materialized through the organization, control and arrangements of power within space. Soja argues that the organization of space always produces variations and gradations of privilege and domination. Likewise, as explored within each of these three scalar modes, spatialized structures can cohere and manifest the interlocking systems of racism, classicism, colonialism, nationalism, and more.

**Spatialized Structural Evil**

Spatialized structural injustice occurs through interlocking constellations of interactional processes and institutional systems at variegated spatial scales, which produce benefits for some and harm for others. As matrices of domination, spatialized structures fuse together to produce differences that delimit and constrain in context and in relation. As

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242 Ibid., 198-200.
243 Ibid.
244 Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 56-66.
245 Ibid., 71.
such, spatialized structures can be violent, unjust, and in theological language, sinful and evil. As Marilyn Legge notes,

Social structures, such as economic globalization, shape human and ecological relations, for good and for ill. In theological terms, evil is the capacity and reality of destroying the very fabric of life; evil is the wrong that we do to each other and it plays itself out over time in the very way social systems develop. Social structures are the patterned ways communities and groups relate to one another that generate dynamics of power that shape our communal and personal identities, including our sense of self-worth and self-esteem.²⁴⁶

The spatialized structures of neoliberalism have destroyed low-income neighbourhoods through gentrification and speculative redevelopment, they have downsized municipal public sector services which has led to (amongst other consequences) an increase in poverty and homelessness, and they have, in the context of Toronto, contributed to three class disparate neighbourhoods with inequitable levels of access to resources and services, and much more.

These are structural sins and evils, spatially produced and experienced. These sins—which is to say, these conditions which disorient us “from right-relationship with self, others, and all of creation”²⁴⁷—are the fault of no one individual in a neoliberal city. Rather, collectively and cumulatively, and in abiding within institutional systems and interactional processes that are by and large legal, all urban inhabitants participate, and thereby, all are responsible for this evil. As Moe-Lobeda argues, “sin exists not only in the individual, but also in the social structural relationships that shape societies and their impact on eco-systems. That is, groups and societies as well as individuals may be agents


²⁴⁷ Moe–Lobeda, Resisting Structural Evil, 58.
of sin.”

The spatialized structures of urban neoliberalization implicate all urban inhabitants in this variety of spatialized structural evil.

Spatialized structural evils often transpire through steady, and often long-term and large-scale processes, involving multiple individuals and institutions. The constraint and delimitation that specific individuals and groups experience in relation to overlapping structures are often not of a direct nature, but rather, spatialized structural evil “occurs as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting to pursue their particular goals and interests, for the most part within the limits of accepted rules and norms.” Because of their indirectness, their interlocking matrices, and their enactment through long-term and often legal practices, unjust spatialized structures may often not appear to be violent or unfair. Structural violence and evil are produced by “thousands or millions of persons usually acting within institutional rules and according to practices that most people regard as morally acceptable.”

While inhabitants are variously positioned within the spatialized structures of urban neoliberalization in Toronto, for instance, all urban life takes place in relation to common spatial structures. The same city-building processes and structures are involved in promoting spatial advantages for high income populations and spatial disadvantages for low-income populations (I will attend to an example of this later in this chapter, looking at the housing system in Canada). In this way, the atomized subject promoted through the ideology of neoliberalism is a delusion; it fails to adequately take stock of

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248 Ibid., 59.
249 Ibid., 73.
250 Young, Responsibility for Justice, 52.
251 Ibid., 95.
and responsibility for the spatialized structural systems and processes through which some urban inhabitants (high-income, mostly white, and white-collar) are regularly prioritized through socio-spatial privileges and advantages, and others (low-income, mostly people of colour, and precariously employed) are regularly overlooked and oppressed through socio-spatial disadvantages.

Since all urban inhabitants are involved in producing and reproducing spatialized structural processes that privilege and delimit, and because they often do so without having an appreciation for how their participation contributes to privileging and oppressing themselves and their neighbours, structures are often experienced as invisible, unchangeable and inevitable. Spatialized structures, and the evils they can produce, can seem like metaphysical forces that are impossible to transform.²⁵²

**Responsible (spatialized-structural) Relationality**

In light of the spatialized structural relations within which urban neoliberal inhabitants are always already involved, individualistic models of responsibility must necessarily give way to a conception of collective responsibility for the spatialized structures within which life is experienced and produced if there is to be any hope of transforming the shape of cities. In order to consider how individuals might conceive of responsibility for the spatialized structures they participate within, I will employ Iris Marion Young’s “social connection model of responsibility” as a framework, and then proceed to investigate practices and models for city building that illustrate possibilities for becoming

relationally responsible moral agents within urban contexts for the spatialized structures which construct cities.\textsuperscript{253}

\textbf{Responsibility Ethics}

Etymologically, the word \textit{responsibility} comes from an obsolete French word “responsible,” itself coming from a Latin word “responsabilis,” the past participle of “respondere,” meaning, “to respond.”

As H. Richard Niebuhr suggests, “implicit in the idea of responsibility is the image of man(sic)-the-answerer, man(sic) engaged in dialogue, man(sic) acting in response to action upon him (sic).”\textsuperscript{254} To be human is to be a “responsive being” that in all modes of activity is involved in answering, or responding, to what exists outside of ourselves.\textsuperscript{255} Niebuhr begins with the conviction that becoming responsible within this unremitting state of response to other people is a precondition for being human.\textsuperscript{256} He argues that becoming responsible ought to be the central concern of the moral life and of ethical inquiry more generally.\textsuperscript{257}

As Darryl Trimiew notes, the ethical tradition of “ethical responsibilism” that Niebuhr’s understanding of responsibility helped to establish continues to offer liberative possibilities for social ethics. However, the patriarchal, white-privileged perspective that

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Young, \textit{Responsibility for Justice}, 96-120.
\item Ibid., 57.
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Niebuhr’s system arose out of creates significant limitations.\textsuperscript{258} Trimiew argues that Niebuhr’s responsibility ethics—in light of his white, male, mid-twentieth century contextual location—fails to observe that “responsible selves do not simply help the suffering with some aid and alms, but further ask why there are so many suffering.”\textsuperscript{259} Likewise, Niebuhr’s ethical responsibilism lacked an appreciation that those who experience domination and oppression indeed have the “moral competency… to fight for the liberation of all.”\textsuperscript{260} In short, while Niebuhr recognized that responsibility is and ought to be a central concern for all lives, and while he acknowledged that this responsibility included care for marginalized people, he did not consider responsibility within the framework of matrices of systematic oppression and he did not adequately consider the moral agency of those experiencing oppression.

Like Niebuhr, Emmanuel Levinas argues for an ethics of metaphysical responsibility for the unrelenting relation within which humans are involved as a kind of \textit{first philosophy}. Through the encounter with the “face of the Other…. the first word of the face is ‘thou shalt not kill.’”\textsuperscript{261} This encounter with an individual other carries with it the always-asymmetrical responsibility for all other ‘Others.’\textsuperscript{262} The condition of being human is a condition of being infinitely responsible for all ‘Others.’

\textsuperscript{259} Ibid., 134-135.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid., 135.
As Mayra Rivera and Sara Ahmed both argue, however, like Niebuhr, Levinas does not adequately take stock of the systems and structures that encounters with the ‘face’ of the ‘other’ transpire within.\textsuperscript{263} In Levinas’s work, the ‘other’ is conceived of as the stranger, “the weak, the poor and the marginal.”\textsuperscript{264} This understanding of the ‘other’ as the poor and weak stranger is informed by Jewish Scriptures’ “advocacy for the foreigner, the widow, the orphan.”\textsuperscript{265} Like Niebuhr, Levinas operates with a preferential concern for people who are marginalized. However, he does not consider the contexts and histories that produce ‘otherness’ and ‘strangeness’; he does not consider the categories of ‘the stranger,’ ‘the other,’ and responsibility as existing within socio-spatial situations.\textsuperscript{266}

In both Niebuhr and Levinas, responsibility is theoretically and symbolically centred around interactional exchange between humans, but neither of their ethics of responsibility take sufficient account of the contexts within which exchange emerges. While they both argue that their systems open expansively towards social commitment, the spatialized structural relations within which we are positioned within neoliberal urbanization requires a more specialized understanding of what responsibility entails. In light of the fact that spatialized structural relations are often intricate, overlapping, seemingly invisible and involve many agents at various spatial scales operating within accepted norms, an understanding of what responsible action looks like in response to this field of relation will have to account for this socio-spatial complexity. While face-to-

\textsuperscript{264} Ahmed, \textit{Strange Encounters}, 141.
\textsuperscript{265} Rivera, \textit{Touch of Transcendence}, 65.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 66.
face encounters (i.e. interactional and interpersonal) very well might impact the shape of our social ethics (which I will explore more deliberately in Chapter Four), it is not the most immediately galvanising model for how to conceive of responsibility—or act responsibly relational as moral agents—within neoliberal spatialized structures.

**The Social Connection Model of Responsibility**

Iris Marion Young’s ‘social connection model of responsibility’ provides a supportive understanding for responsibility within structural injustice. In Young’s model, all individuals who participate in a set of institutions and practices bear a measure of responsibility for these structures. Collective responsibility is not acquired through nationality or common political association, but rather is generated through “belonging together with others in a system of interdependent processes of cooperation and competition through which we seek benefits and aim to realize projects.”

Here, I propose that all who dwell within a city are collectively responsible for the city’s spatialized structures, and I use the term ‘urban inhabitants’ rather than citizens of the city in light of the fact that many who live in cities are not provincial or national citizens. The category of ‘citizenship’ is always fraught, while inhabitant allows for shifting and variously positioned belonging. One can *inhabit* a city illegally and temporarily.

At interactional levels of exchange, or in direct relationships, Young argues that responsibility can be gauged and judged using a liability mode of establishing degrees of guilt/innocence for harms caused to the parties involved. However, with spatialized structures, this is not the case since harms caused transpire though circuits and matrices.

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268 Ibid., 97-104.
that involve multiple agents at variegated spatial scales that can rarely be traced to actions of guilt or innocence to specific actors. In the social connection model, individual agents are not isolated for being singly responsible; rather, background conditions are put under evaluation, and responsibility for the action and futures of these conditions is shared between all those who either benefit, are delimited, or are both beneficiaries and disempowered in varying degrees at different times, from these spatialized structures.

In Young’s model, each individual who participates in a social structure bears responsibility for its impact and its future, but not equally or alike. The differences in social positioning that spatialized structures produce render the possibilities for each individual’s agency quite particular. Agents who occupy positions of power relative to unjust structures have greater responsibility than those who function on the margins of that structure. While institutional roles and produced positions impact how an individual agent’s responsibility can be expressed, all bear some measure of responsibility. All moral agents who participate in unjust social structures “ought to take action.” As Moe-Lobeda describes it, moral agency “is the power to live toward social structures, relationships, policies, and lifestyles that build communities characterized by ecological sustainability and social justice.”

Behaving responsibly in light of one’s relationality within spatialized structures requires a forward focus and a consideration of how one might “join with others who share that responsibility in order to transform the structural processes to make the

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269 Ibid., 145.
270 Ibid.
outcomes less unjust.” Unlike the liability model of responsibility that responds by looking into the past to determine individual guilt/innocence with regard to the direct harm that was caused, the social connection model of responsibility has a primary emphasis on transforming spatial structures through joint-action for a hopeful future. Since responsibility for structural processes does not belong to one agent alone, in order to act responsibly for the creation of better structures in the future, collective action is required.

The collective action that is to be undertaken in Young’s view is expressly political, which is to say, the action must be public, and “aimed at the possibility or goal of collective action to respond to and intervene in historic events.” What that action looks like is always personal and circumstantial, but the following qualities remain imperative in all contexts: the action must happen in the public square, others should be invited to join, and the ethos of the action must be directed towards positive structural change. What is required is for moral agents to take up political responsibility with various publics and in various publics.

Young’s model offers fruitful insights for becoming responsibly related as urban neoliberal inhabitants for the spatialized structures within which our individual lives and collective lives are materialized in publics. While as neoliberal urban inhabitants none of us are individually to blame for the impacts of this ideological, institutional and socio-spatial practice, we are also each responsible to seek the transformation of these

272 Young, Responsibility for Justice, 96.
273 Ibid., 109.
274 Ibid., 105.
275 Ibid., 88.
276 Ibid., 121.
structures within political arenas. By virtue of participating in the structures that make up urban life, we are each personally and collectively responsible for working towards just processes of city building, but, as Young insists, not equally or alike.

Middle and high-income populations within the city of Toronto are positioned with more eco-social power in relation to the structures that shape common life. For instance, through the ongoing practice of spatialized economic injustice, high-income and middle-income people bear more responsibility for contesting the building, planning and institutional practices that continue to gentrify the last of the mixed and low-income neighbourhoods within Toronto, including Parkdale. As a middle-income gentrifier within this neighbourhood, I bear more responsibility for advocating and working towards an equitable future for this neighbourhood than my low-income neighbours by virtue of the power my political, economic and social position affords me as a white, educated, middle-income inhabitant, and by virtue of the fact that my presence in this neighbourhood is a part of what threatens the potential for low-income people to be sustainably housed within this area in the future.

**Neighbourhood Responsibility**

I take courage and find inspiration in a recent neighbourhood exchange that demonstrates how middle-income gentrifiers might practice responsible structural relationality with low-income neighbours. Across the street from where I live in the neighbourhood of Parkdale there is a mid-rise apartment run by a notoriously exploitative landlord who is a
part of Gupta Realty Ltd. In February of 2018, nine families in this building (most of whom are Roma refugee claimants who fled from Hungary) were evacuated from their apartments after their basement flooded near major electrical outlets.

This flooding, however, was not the only problem with the building. My neighbours have made repeated complaints to their landlord about the dangerous and unacceptable conditions of their apartment over the past 1.5 years that I have known them (including crumbling ceilings, mice infestations, broken windows, missing windows, broken locks on main entry doors, a broken heating system, structural issues with stairs), but have repeatedly been told that it is not the responsibility of the landlord to care for the building in these ways. Gupta Realty has continuously, and illegally, insisted that tenants are responsible for the upkeep of property.

After the seven families were evacuated from their apartments, they were placed in a motel nearby. Home owning, white, educated and middle-income neighbours two houses down from where I live connected these families with the free services available through Parkdale Legal Clinic in order for them to file claims for damage to their property incurred during the flooding, and in order to contest an unlawful eviction notice that was issued to one of the individuals after the flood. These middle-income neighbours also contacted CityNews who interviewed some of the evacuated residents, and aired footage of their unsafe, and unlawful, housing conditions on cable news. The City of

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278 This information was ascertained through discussions with my neighbours. The details I have listed here can be confirmed through news coverage: Ginella Massa and Victoria Revay, “Flooding, falling ceilings and mice force families out of Parkdale Buildign,” CityNews, February 23, 2018, accessed March 31, 2018, http://toronto.citynews.ca/2018/02/23/flooding-falling-ceilings-dead-mice-force-families-parkdale-apartment-building/.
Toronto has since issued orders and a timeline for Gupta Ltd. to fix the 16 violations noted by City inspectors, and if they do not comply, the City will have its own contractors address the problems, which will result in increased property tax for Gupta (and likely, increased rent for tenants).²⁷⁹

My white middle-income neighbours were able to access and connect these seven low-income families with free legal services by virtue of their insider knowledge of the neighbourhood. Likewise, through a personal contact at City News, they were able to facilitate public attention to what might have been overlooked by the City. While the living conditions for my neighbours across the street breach multiple municipal laws, and as such can be traced to the illegal inaction of Gupta Ltd., this is also an example of structurally produced spatial injustice—it transpires within of the structures of an unjust housing system, which is a consequence of the materialized ideology of neoliberalization.

**Canada’s Housing System (as a neoliberal spatialized structure)**

David Hulchanski explains that Canada’s housing system has historically privileged those who are able to own homes (through patterns of mortgage lending created through federal and provincial government statutes), over those who are unable to pursue home ownership.²⁸⁰ Further, through the condominium form of owner-occupied housing developed in the 1970s, and through the loss of “rental-only” zoning in major urban centres in Canada, the supply of available rental units has diminished as the demand for

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²⁷⁹ Ibid.
rental housing has increased – all of which has resulted in increased rent for tenants.\textsuperscript{281} The growing gap between high and low-income populations in Canada and in Toronto is directly manifested in the housing system.\textsuperscript{282} There is an increasing need for subsidized and social housing, but through neoliberal policies, the wait lists for these units continue to grow.\textsuperscript{283} As Hulchanski explains, “while the social need for housing exists mainly among renters – tenants whose income (and lack of wealth) cannot generate effective market demand,” policy decisions since the 1980s (which is to say, within the neoliberal era), “have further privileged the ownership sector and helped exacerbate problems in the rental-housing sector, problems that include widespread homelessness.”\textsuperscript{284} Those most in need of housing assistance are renters but they are regularly overlooked in municipal, provincial and federal housing policy. In light of this lack of rental units, and in response to the increased rent that this has produced for tenants, low-income renters are increasingly only able to afford substandard housing. Additionally, 47\% of renters in Toronto spend more than 30\% of their income on housing, and this is projected to continue increasing.\textsuperscript{285} The 30\% rule, or spending 30\% or more on shelter expenses, is defined as “a housing affordability problem”; it is also a moral problem.\textsuperscript{286}

Further, even when there are available units within the limited rental market, applicants are not equally positioned; discrimination amongst would-be renters in

\begin{flushright}
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\textsuperscript{281} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid.
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Toronto is a common phenomenon. As the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (an Ontario-based N.G.O. dedicated to preventing eviction and ending housing discrimination) estimated in a 2008 study,

approximately 1 in 4 households receiving social assistance, South Asian households, and Black lone parents experience moderate to severe discrimination when they inquire about available apartments—discrimination that acts as a significant barrier to accessing housing. When the housing seeker has a mental illness, our research shows that more than one third will experience discrimination. This discrimination is sometimes veiled in a landlord’s response that the unit has been taken, but this study also noted many occurrences wherein the discrimination was blatant. For instance, one landlord—after receiving a potential renter’s application—responded: “I’m sorry. We don’t take anyone on social assistance.” People are regularly denied access to the fundamental necessity of housing based on “the colour of their skin, their accent, where they are from, their source of income or because they have children or are living with a disability.”

If my neighbours across the street wanted to move out of their unit, they would certainly not find another option for the rent they currently pay, and even if they did, as people receiving social assistance, as Roma refugee claimants (who are regularly stigmatized in the context of Toronto and beyond) and as people whose first language is not English, they very likely might experience discriminatory responses in the process. Since the two years that they have been in their unit, rent has skyrocketed for newly

288 Ibid., 16-17.
289 Ibid., 19.
290 Ibid., 20.
available units in the city. In 2017, purpose-built apartment rent (meaning mid and high-rise apartments and rental units in condos) soared to a 15 year high, while vacancy was at its lowest level in 16 years.\textsuperscript{291} Finding alternative housing that is not substandard would almost certainly entail increased rent. As refugee claimants, this is likely not an actual option.

My white middle-income neighbours exercised an increased level of responsibility for this spatialized and structurally produced injustice within which they are involved. By virtue of their position of political, economic and social power in relation to the services within this neighbourhood and to city media outlets, and in light of the fact that as gentrifiers themselves, their being in this neighbourhood is part of why rent continues to escalate for disappearing and substandard rental housing, they are implicated, and with good conscience of this contradiction they responded accordingly.

Through the social connection model of responsibility, I bear more responsibility than the seven low-income families across the street from me to seek conditions and practices for just neighbourhood processes and just conditions for renters within neoliberal Toronto, but together, we are collectively responsible. In the case of a gentrifying neighbourhood such as Parkdale, all inhabitants have a responsibility to ensure that the unjust spatialized structural processes that create the conditions for substandard housing (as well as the dislocation that gentrification necessarily involves)

are contested, but those of us with more power in relation to the common structures (i.e. to political institutions and policies) that produce these conditions are more so.

**Heterogeneous Publics for Collective Action**

Young’s social connection model of responsibility is pointedly forward looking. She is concerned with the formation of “a heterogeneous public composed of a full diversity of different groups where difference is acknowledged and where she believes justice can be enacted.” Young calls variously positioned groups of moral agents to participate together as heterogeneous publics in order to transform the structures that organize interactional and institutional life. However, we are not only responsible for addressing structural wrongs that we participate in by using whatever power we might have to address injustices within the current systems and processes that hold us in relation (as illustrated in the my neighbourhood’s political vignette above). Young is most adamant that what is also required is the development of alternative and responsibly relational collective action for new futures.

Likewise, Edward Soja argues that in order to challenge the spatialized structural injustices in the contemporary world, what is required are diverse coalitions and networked social movements that extend beyond the narrow and often essentialist channels of the past. In today’s world, separate movements for labour, against racism, patriarchy, or cultural domination or to achieve peace or respond to global warming or to promote local community

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293 As Elizabeth Bounds notes, Nancy Fraser offers a helpfully critical reading of Young’s understanding of what, exactly, constitutes groups collectivizing into heterogeneous publics. Young’s insistence on *difference* does not adequately take stock of intersecting group belonging, or the various ways in which difference ought to be understood, *Coming Together/Coming Apart*, 86-87.
development are less likely than ever before to be successful. Crosscutting alliances and coalitions are becoming increasingly essential.\textsuperscript{294} Soja maintains that because all inhabitants experience—in one form or another, and in varying degrees of gravity—negative effects of unjust geographies, coalitions with a spatial focus are a powerful source for collective action.\textsuperscript{295} That is, taking a spatial focus for collective work has the capacity to connect and bring together variously concerned and diversely situated urban inhabitants.

This insistence on the need for developing diverse networks of opposition is echoed throughout liberative theo-ethics. For instance, in response to the alienation and fragmentation created through the processes of capitalism, Elizabeth Bounds argues for the “development of communal forms based on participatory forms of democracy that seek to negotiate justice for different identities and heritages in ways requiring both interaction and cooperation.”\textsuperscript{296} Similarly, as Christopher Lind argues in response to the competitiveness and injustices created in rural communities through the crisis of globalization, what is required is building “a base for a different future. The way to that is very old fashioned. We do that by building community.”\textsuperscript{297} For Lind, community describes “personal relationships which involve history, identity, mutuality, and fellowship.”\textsuperscript{298}

Here, I will consider contemporary examples of collectivizing practices being employed towards responsibly relational city building, that is, toward just cities.

\textsuperscript{294} Soja, \textit{Seeking Spatial Justice}, 109.
\textsuperscript{295} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 91.
**Participatory Planning**

One such example being used across the globe is the method of participatory planning, an “approach to designing neighbourhoods on a human scale.” Participatory planning integrates the knowledge, insight and desires of the inhabitants and users of a given neighbourhood or space with the skills of professional planners, in order to plan and develop to the benefit of local, and diverse, stakeholders. Participatory planning frequently operates with values that seek to promote structural justice through the planning process itself and as a result of the process. In the *Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED)* Planning Project, for instance, the planning process emphasized four overarching values—diversity, inclusion, affordability and equity—which the process was accountable to at each stage, and which continues to guide the work of this organization.

At every step of the participatory planning process, the combination of inhabitant knowledge and expert knowledge is intended to interact. Inhabitant knowledge and desire has the capacity to provide lived-use data for the space or neighbourhood being planned, thereby enabling planning to better reflect real needs and wants. Participation does not necessarily mean that all stakeholders are involved at every step of the planning process; rather, each phase of a project’s development requires varying kinds of engagement, and at each phase of development, particular and appropriate stakeholders often function as

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representatives for wider groups. One of the basepoints for this method of planning is that the diversity of the given neighbourhood ought to be reflected in each phase of development.\footnote{Ibid., 22.}

At the beginning of the planning process, “citizens and local stakeholders are invited to develop the project vision collectively.”\footnote{Ibid., 13.} Understanding the use of the neighbourhood or space being planned occurs through qualitative and quantitative data collection. While this planning process is unmistakeably grassroots in nature, relationships with municipal officials and other relevant governmental officials are essential to the effectiveness of participatory planning.\footnote{Ibid., 19.} The participation of these elected officials and municipal directors is necessary to the planning process since “they are the ones who will decide on allocating the human, financial and material resources necessary for implementation.”\footnote{Ibid., 37.}

Once the vision is agreed upon (ideally on a consensus basis), and once the data on the usage of space has been collected, urban planning professionals then develop design scenarios that reflect the vision of these community stakeholders and governmental officials.\footnote{Ibid., 13.} These various planning scenarios are given back, in accessible language and images, to those involved in each of the preceding steps of the process, as well as any interested community members not yet engaged. At this point, decisions for best case planning scenarios are made (again, ideally on a consensus basis).\footnote{Ibid., 32.} The implementation of the plan is done gradually, “until all users and stakeholders are
satisfied with the final results,“\textsuperscript{308} and it is closely monitored. Once it is complete, there is significant energy spent on evaluating the process and the results.\textsuperscript{309}

The process of participatory planning outlined above takes seriously Jane Jacobs’s claim that “cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”\textsuperscript{310} When the design and implementation for cities and neighbourhoods is divorced from diverse citizen input, the observable tendency in the context of Toronto, including the ongoing gentrification and condoification of Parkdale, is an orientation for building towards neoliberal ideals.

Moreover, the process of participatory planning is unavoidably and likely frustratingly, connective; it brings together various stakeholders and inhabitants, as they learn how to and how not to make decisions collectively. The process of participatory planning extends the role of democratic decision-making beyond participation in elections and statutory public consultations,\textsuperscript{311} and in so doing, this process has the potential to form disparate neighbourhood or city dwellers into vital collectives of resistance and transformation. Participatory planning is thus the antithesis and a threat to measures that construct the neoliberal city because it rebels against the commodification and atomization of urban human life. This planning model demonstrates respect for inhabitants structural and spatial interconnection, and is itself an attempt to rebuild these relations along just lines. Participatory planning is an attempt to respond to the fact that diverse city dwellers have a right to partake in visioning and building the urban

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{311} Parkdale Community Economic Development Planning Project, \textit{Parkdale Community Planning Study}, 24.
environment, because as urban inhabitants, we are responsible for the spatial structures of the city.

_The Right to the City_

Participatory planning is part of a wider philosophy of the city that urban inhabitants have ‘a right to the city’—a term that was first used by Henri Lefebvre—312—and both are effectively efforts towards becoming responsible for spatialized structural relationality by developing diverse coalitions and collectives to re-construct cities and spaces towards living in right relations.

In response to the phenomena of spatialized economic injustice, Lefebvre advocated for the right for all city dwellers to participate in producing the spaces of urban life.313 The right to the city was ‘like a cry and a demand”; it would include a right to information, the right to the use of multiple services, the right for inhabitants of the city to make known their ideas on the organization of urban space, and the right to occupy and utilize the centre of the city.314 Additionally, the right to the city included “a right to housing: a place to sleep, a place to urinate and defecate without asking someone else’s permission, a place to relax, a place from which to venture forth.”315 Through each of these rights, Lefebvre argued that the use-value of the city—uses determined by various

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312 Henri Lefebvre developed the term and philosophy of ‘the right to the city’ in response to the urban conditions in Paris in the 1960s. Within this context, working classes and migrants were isolated in the outskirts of the city in the banlieus (translated into English as “banned places”). This ghettoization was France’s post-war attempt at dealing with unprecedented housing shortages and the influx of foreign-born workers. Banlieus limited inhabitant’s access to the centre of the city; these neighbourhoods “led to the social and spatial peripheralization of immigrants/workers,” Henri Lefebvre, “The Right to the City,” _Writings on Cities_, ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 158.
313 _Ibid._
314 _Ibid._, 159.
and diverse inhabitants—ought to be the central guide for planning space, not, as was the case in Lefebvre’s context and within contemporary neoliberal cities, by its exchange value.\footnote{Ibid.}

David Harvey suggests that the right to the city includes the right to “change and reinvent the city more after our hearts’ desires.”\footnote{Harvey, Rebel Cities, 18.} This right to vision and participate in building cities is not an “exclusive individual right,” but rather a collective right that seeks “unity from within an incredible diversity of fragmented social spaces and locations.”\footnote{Ibid., 1323.} The right to the city is an “enabling right,” which is to say, it is a right that maintains that all inhabitants of a city ought to have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in public life.\footnote{R.W.J. Boer and J. de Vries, “The Right to the City as a tool for social movements: the case of Barceloneta,” 4th International Conference of the International Forum on Urbanism, (2009), 1327.} The right to the city attempts to facilitate a deep democratization of decision-making within the production of urban spaces, which would shift the control and design of cities “away from capital and state and toward urban inhabitants.”\footnote{Ibid, 10}

The right to the city seeks to expand who is considered, consulted and active in the production of cities; it seeks to create processes and collectives for city building that include people who are variously positioned in relation to the intersecting and dominating spatialized structures of neoliberal urbanization. The rallying cry offers an alternative vision for how a city might be produced that is distinctively counter to the values and practices of neoliberal urbanization; the right to the city is steadfastly an ideal/movement that privileges the well-being and agency of diverse urban inhabitants over capital
growth. It seeks to dismantle dehumanizing and unjust processes of city building, which shape our lived urban environments into places that engender unjust social relations, including spatialized economic injustice.

The right to the city has become an organizing slogan for urban-based social movements around the globe. As this philosophy is articulated in the Right to the City Alliance (RTC), it offers an umbrella for multiple concerns. RTC’s platform includes: land for people vs. land for speculation, economic justice, indigenous justice, environmental justice, freedom from police and state harassment, immigrant justice, participatory democracy, rural justice, and a focus on constructing reparations for working class communities. Through each of these focuses, RTC is attempting to build “municipal power to create just, democratic, and sustainable 21st century cities.”

The right to the city and the practice of participatory planning are instances of what Young’s social connection model of responsibility can look like in practice and in relation to the spatialized structural injustices involved in neoliberal urbanization. As middle-class urban inhabitants, if we have any hope of contesting the conditions that are produced through neoliberalization, we will have to become responsible for the spatialized structural relations within which all urban life transpires. As collaborative activist undertakings, the right to the city and participatory planning reflect possibilities for variously concerned urban inhabitants to participate in efforts to create a just city. As Iris Marion Young suggests, “for a social condition to be just, it must enable all to meet

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their needs and exercise their freedom; thus justice requires that all be able to express their needs.” If we are to create a just city, all inhabitants must have the opportunity to express their needs and wants so that the city can be constructed with these needs and wants in mind.

Coalitions of Solidarity

In theo-ethical language, these efforts towards the construction of urban spatialized justice can be understood as partaking in the work of liberation, which is made possible through theories and strategies of solidarity. For Christian Mujerista activist Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, solidarity is “grounded in common responsibilities and interests, which necessarily arouse shared feelings and lead to joint action.” Day notes that efforts of solidarity are about “attempting to heal the fissures, divisions, and separations in society through concerted action.” For middle-class urban inhabitants to become responsibly relational within the spatialized structures of urban neoliberalism, we must join with those—and be led by those—who are rendered the most vulnerable in relation to the spatialized structures of neoliberalization including people experiencing poverty. Coalitions of solidarity are necessary for constructing a just city and, as Sharon Welch notes, they develop out of the recognition that the “lives of the various groups are so intertwined that each is accountable to the other.”

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323 Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference, 34.
325 Ibid., 89.
327 Sharon Welch, A Feminist Ethic of Risk (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 133.
The internal life of coalitions themselves facilitate opportunities for feeling against the habits and desires of neoliberal subjectivity. The work of solidarity promotes empathy – the capacity to listen and be affected by one another’s experiences and concerns. Empathy, as theologian and educator Johanna Selles notes, is a cognitive and affective skill (rather than a personality trait) that “can provide a way to approach difference and interact meaningfully with the other.”

Coalitional resistance makes pathways for responsible relationality through the experience of empathy, care and compassion. As Day suggests, the practice of empathy stimulated through coalitions of solidarity encourages “non-alienated action in that the listener must go outside of herself (her own conceptions, views of social life, etc.) in order to understand the plight of the other person, who may be radically different from her.”

By joining together with people who are variously situated in relation to the spatialized structures of neoliberalism, participants within coalitions of urban solidarity are afforded the opportunity to engage with one another, and come to know one another in ways counter to the practice of urban neoliberalization.

Coalitions of solidarity can also be vital training grounds for reorganizing relationships towards a fair sharing of power. New social movement theorists argue that contemporary post-industrial and advanced capitalist coalitional groups tend to emphasize participatory structures, horizontal models of leadership and consensus-based decision-making. Through collective decision-making processes, participants in

329 Ibid.
330 Suzanne Staggenborg and Howard Ramos, Social Movements (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2016), 27.
coalitional resistance groups must together determine norms for working through sometimes opposing and conflicting opinions and visions. Of course it is true that in the face of such conflict members might leave the group—and/or the group might dissolve entirely—however, coalitions of resistance can also be places for practicing empathy in and through the process of conflict transformation.331

To be faithful to their vision, effective urban coalitions struggle against internal differences of class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability and more. Collectivizing practices ought to value the particularity of its members. Therefore, solidarity also requires investigation into the conditions under which differences are produced and experienced. Organizing for collective actions of solidarity will continually learn to refrain from essentializing identities; differences of class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, national origin, religion and more must be critically reflect upon in coalitions for change, because many of the material implications of these differences are produced through unjust social arrangements.332 As Himani Bannerji argues, what is required is seeing that common social conditions produce oppressive relations, “rather than an essentialized version of cultures.”333 This capacity to see situated and identities as socially mediated and produced “is an act and task of political conscientization” that is necessary to the work of coalitions for transformative action.334 Solidarity requires the participation of variously positioned moral agents as well as critical-inquiry into the

331 As John Paul Lederach presents it, the term “conflict transformation” is distinctive from “conflict resolution” (where there is a potential for getting rid of conflicts that raise important and legitimate issues). Conflict transformation has to do with “constructive change” that goes beyond the “resolution of specific problems” and towards the construction of healthy relationships and communities, John Paul Lederach, The Little Book of Conflict Transformation (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003), 3-5.


333 Ibid.

334 Ibid.
production of these differently situated experiences in order to contest and transform unjust relations.

**Conclusion**

Efforts at contesting the unjust conditions constructed through the neoliberal city can seem small or even futile in light of the interlocking and sometimes diffuse procedures and matrices through which this ideological practice is variously spatialized. The examples of participatory planning, the right to the city, and coalitions of solidarity explored as vehicles for urban change can also seem inadequate to the task. However, as Sharon Welch notes, the despair, cynicism and moral-oblivion of middle-class people in relation to various structural injustices (in Welch’s case, nuclear dis/armament) is related to a faulty concept of what responsible action entails.\(^{335}\) Welch suggests that middle-class people have erroneously assumed that being effectively responsible entails securing certain and permanent results. Instead, she suggests that

> the extent to which an action is an appropriate response to the needs of others is constituted as much by the possibilities it creates as by its immediate results. Responsible action doesn’t mean one individual resolving the problems of others. It is, rather, participation in a communal work, laying the groundwork for the creative response of people in the present and in the future.\(^{336}\)

Collective and seemingly small efforts for creating just structural processes for just geographies “toss us into the terrain of the possible.”\(^{337}\) Efforts at being responsibly relational through coalitions of solidarity do not secure or create a perfectly just urban context in themselves. By constructing networks of variously positioned urban

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\(^{335}\) Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, 23.
\(^{336}\) Ibid., 75.
inhabitants through coalitions of solidarity, other ways of relating and being responsible in cities than those being promoted through neoliberal urbanization are materialized now and made possible for the future.

Given the complexity and power of unjust spatialized structures of neoliberalization however, working to create just cities requires various movements and different approaches to galvanize various urban inhabitants. In particular, more effective representation of—and deliberate prioritization for—low-income populations within national, provincial and municipal policy, governance and decision-making is also required. Although grass roots and participatory democratic collectives themselves cannot instantiate these policy shifts, they can advocate for such changes. Participation alone is not the remedy, but organizing effective collectives of solidarity committed to practicing and pursuing just spatialized and structural relations within neoliberal cities can fight for truly socially democratic municipal governance and policy. That is, coalitions of solidarity can be agitators for the production of socially democratic institutions that are accountable to the most (economically) disenfranchised amongst us. When open to the meaningful participation of all of those who are impacted by such governance, coalitions of solidarity can contribute to building the conditions for social democracy from the ground up. Why such action matters theo-ethically—why we ought to care about those with whom we are connected through the spatialized structures of neoliberalism—is the topic of the next chapter.
Chapter Four: Public Neighbour Love as Stranger Love

One of the scribes came near him and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Mark 12:28-31, NRSV

In order to live responsibly in light of our spatialized and structural relationality, and in order to construct urban environments that respect this social interconnection by developing (amongst other possibilities) collectives for liberative actions of solidarity and justice, we require the moral-spiritual power to enliven us in these demanding directions.

‘Moral-spiritual power’ is a term used by Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, who describes it as promoting moral agency in the face of potential moral oblivion. Moral-spiritual power is that which energizes neoliberal subjects to become moral agents who can do and be what they discern they ought; it emboldens us to resist spatialized structural evil through the recognition of the “sacred Spirit of life coursing throughout creation and leading it—despite all evidence to the contrary—into abundant life for all.”338 Moral-spiritual power has to do with belief and hope that suffering and alienation, sin and evil, are not the final words as the presence of sacred power which flows throughout creation curves towards

338 Moe-Lobeda, Resisting Structural Evil, 114.
Moral-spiritual power enables urban inhabitants to cultivate the capacity to act in resistance to neoliberal subjectivation by becoming agents of other ways of being and doing together. Moral-spiritual power is that which energizes the transformation from being a neoliberal subject to becoming an inspired moral agent equipped for the work of structural and spatial liberative transformation, that is, in this thesis for the work of constructing just cities. Attention to moral-spiritual power coheres to Moe-Lobeda’s third movement in a critical-mystical vision.

In seeking to construct a more responsibly relational city, middle-class urban inhabitants require the moral-spiritual power to inspire us to feel and behave differently. We need to feel morally motivated and emboldened in our bodyselves to build relationally responsible cities, discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I argue that neighbour-love—translated in various ways as stranger love—offers a vitalizing moral norm that ought to awaken moral agents towards the construction of just cities, and that particular examples of participatory art have the capacity to serve as moral-spiritual resources for this work.

I argue that neighbour-love can be understood as a way of feeling, being and doing that seeks the well-being of all of those with whom we are in proximate and distant relation within the spatialized and structural arrangements of neoliberal cities. Neighbour love includes the affective sensations of love as well as justice-seeking actions of love; it includes an appreciation for, and a critical investigation of, love as a sensuous and mystical feeling that we might experience in publics with the various strangers with whom the city is shared, as well as a critical appreciation for what it means to behave

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339 Ibid., 138.
lovingly in publics. I understand love as a discipline for disciples of Jesus that includes loving people and groups who will always remain strangers. That is, this is a moral injunction towards stranger love.

After investigating the contours and complications of neighbour love as stranger love, I propose the practice of participatory art in public as an already existent site within neoliberalized cities for provoking the affective sensations of neighbour love and for encouraging the character of neighbour love. Heeding the call to love our neighbours (who include strangers as I will examine more fully below) as ourselves ought to dispose us towards the construction of just cities, while participatory art in public has the potential to perform as a sensuous, energizing force along this path. The insights into love facilitated through participatory art encourage attention to what wells up in the body. These embodied and affective valences offer sustenance for the moral discipline of love.

One of my primary dialogue partners as I examine the potentialities of participatory art are Nicolas Bourriaud and his propositions for a relational aesthetics. I explore this through critical analysis of a thick description of a participatory art piece within which I was involved, entitled Dr. Cat. With Bourriaud and Dr. Cat, I examine the relational potentials of participatory art as they intersect with the affective sensation of love for strangers who temporarily become familiar (or momentarily known) through face-to-face interactional encounters.

Subsequently, I turn to Jacques Rancière and his notion of dissensus, and the participatory work Nothing to See Here (Dispersal) by Australian artists Catherine Ryan and Amy Spiers. Here I investigate how participatory art might contribute to the
discipline of stranger love through a confrontation with the affect of patience. Through both of these examples and both of these theoreticians, I explore how participatory art offers windows into other ways of being, feeling and doing within the effects and practice of neoliberalization. These openings have the potential, but not the predictability, of emboldening moral agents towards re-organizing the practices and structures that hold us in relation, or towards the disposition of neighbour love as stranger love.

**Neighbour-Love as a Discipline for Discipleship**

Discerning what it is that neighbour love is and asks in a particular context is “the great moral question permeating Christian history.”\(^{340}\) As Moe-Lobeda suggests, neighbour love is the central moral norm of Christian life, and this norm is always sensitive and responsive to circumstance. Love necessitates different responses in light of where we might find ourselves in relation to particular ecological and social systems. Nonetheless, Moe-Lobeda maintains that there are cross-contextual qualities for what it is that neighbour-love means and entails. Some of these cross-contextual qualities include: the conviction that God’s love is the “foundation or root of human love for God, self, others and Earth,”\(^ {341}\) the belief that love transforms towards justice,\(^ {342}\) and the understanding that love seeks “the well-being of whomever is loved.”\(^ {343}\) As I proceed in this investigation of neighbour-love as a discipline vital towards the construction of just cities, I will explore and elaborate on these cross-contextual qualities of love. I will consider neighbour love as it transpires within an interconnected universe, our

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\(^{341}\) Ibid., 169.

\(^{342}\) Ibid., 170-171.

\(^{343}\) Ibid., 171.
metaphorical one-Earth-home. I will also inquire into what neighbour love is and asks of moral agents in neoliberal cities (where neighbours will always include strangers). In so doing, I will construct an understanding of neighbour-love as inclusive of stranger love.

**Metaphors for God’s Love in and of the World**

God is present in the world that God so loves, and the shape of this presence is love. God’s love animates and joins all of creation together into one dynamic body. Human life transpires as a part of “earth’s articulation” as participants within this interconnected universe, we partake in a “permanent dance of energy and elements” in a “vast communitarian chain that embraces the entire cosmos.” God’s love exists as an actual and indwelling presence within this interconnected dance of all of creation. It is this gift of love present throughout the cosmos which is the “foundation or the root of human love for God, self, others and Earth.” God’s love is present and active in the cosmos; this love binds all of creation together, and draws humans towards responsible relationality. This understanding of God’s concrete presence in creation, binding the world up together in love operates within the tradition of panentheistic theologies, where God is present within creation and at the same time, is more than this presence.

Here, I will explore this concrete, interconnecting and inviting presence of God’s love through the use of metaphor. God’s love indwells within all bodies and between all bodies in creation, and can be imaged through the anatomical classification of connective tissues, which I explore below. The metaphor of connective tissues of God’s love

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throughout the universe builds on Sallie McFague’s metaphor of the universe as God’s body, and on her metaphor of God as lover. In order to locate my metaphor, I will trace prominent threads within McFague’s metaphors of God’s body as the universe and God as lover.

Even though “no single metaphor can be privileged as the truth,” metaphorical theology can offer “seeds of hope and power” for becoming responsibly relational and neighbour loving. Imagining the universe as God’s body, picturing God as lover, and conceiving of God’s love as the connective tissues that bind all of creation together, surface rich and important qualities for what it is that love is and asks of us. These metaphors are not intended as ontological descriptors; rather, through cultivating relationships with God and the rest of creation through living and praying with and through these images, moral agents within the neoliberal urban context can cultivate moral-spiritual energy for the work of responsible relationality and neighbour love to which Christian disciples are called. These metaphors remind disciples that while all of life is materialized, produced and re-produced through the spatial structures that organize interactional and institutional life, all of life also emerges through our mutual participation within the body of God. In remembering ourselves as participants within God’s loving body, we gain moral-spiritual energy for constructing just structural and spatial relations between all urban inhabitants.

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McFague’s metaphor of the universe as God’s body offers “a model that unites us to everything else on our planet in relationships of interdependence.”\textsuperscript{349} In this metaphor of the universe as God’s body, all living and non-living parts of the universe are imagined as partaking in the body of God, a body that is “enlivened and empowered by the divine spirit.”\textsuperscript{350} Divine incarnation is evident in every body; God’s body transpires in “the mud and the mystery,” in the “guts and the glory.”\textsuperscript{351} We are bound up together with all living and non-living parts of the universe through our common cosmological belonging. Because we exist, we are inescapably relational. All of creation lives, moves and breathes within the body of God, but God is also more than creation.

In the model of God as lover, God feels this intimate involvement within creation passionately.\textsuperscript{352} McFague investigates the theological tradition of naming God as love, which is accompanied by the resistance (but not complete absence) of adding the noun lover to this theological proposition. When we conceive of God as lover of and within creation, a number of divine attributes arise:

God as lover is the one who loves the world not with the fingertips but totally and passionately, taking pleasure in its variety and richness, finding it attractive and valuable, delighting in its fulfillment. God as lover is the moving power of love in the universe, the desire for unity with all the beloved, the passionate embrace that spins the living pulsing earth around, sends the blood through our veins, and draws us into one another’s arms.\textsuperscript{353}

\textsuperscript{349} McFague, \textit{The Body of God}, x.
\textsuperscript{350} Ibid., 142.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid., 135.
\textsuperscript{352} McFague, \textit{Models of God}, 130.
\textsuperscript{353} Ibid.
God as lover within the divine body of the universe experiences passion as we feel passion, feels desire for creation’s pleasure, and knows creation to be beautiful and valuable because of who we are, not in spite of who we are.\(^{354}\)

Drawing on these two metaphors for God, I am proposing the image of connective tissues of love to describe, in more detail, how God’s loving body behaves and desires as an interacting organism. In line with McFague, I am suggesting that the whole living and nonliving universe is related through mutual participation in the body of God, a body that is vitalized and infused by the Spirit. Similarly, in line with McFague, I am suggesting that God can be imagined as a lover who feels passion and desire within this interconnected body. Like McFague, who constructed the metaphor of the universe of God’s body in dialogue with what she calls the “scientific view” of 20\(^{th}\) century evolutionary biology and molecular biology (which she interpreted as gesturing towards the understanding of an interconnected and interdependent universe),\(^{355}\) I am engaging emerging knowledge and research into connective tissues (and the category of fascia more specifically) to provide a contemporary imaginary for how the universe as God’s love-filled body works. Like McFague, I am taking gestural cues for considering God’s body from contemporary scientific/medical research into how particular bodies within the universe function and fit together.

Adding the metaphor of connective tissues of love to this cosmological picture of relationality and to this model of God as lover offers a fresh imaginary for contemplating how this body works. The metaphor of connective tissues of love does not aim at

\(^{354}\) Ibid., 125-155.  
\(^{355}\) McFague, The Body of God, 27.
dogmatic pronouncement. Metaphorical theology is always contextually determined; it cannot be true all the time and in all ways. Imagining God’s body as a universe full of connective tissues of love allows for experimenting with what this image articulates, as I consider the moral norm of neighbour love.

Connective tissues are diverse tissues found in all animal bodies; this anatomical category includes fibres, fascia, cells, and ‘ground substance,’ which is the “clear, colourless, vicious fluid that fills the spaces between cells and fibres.” Connective tissues branch out as collagen and elastic fibres within the body. As ground substance, connective tissue holds the space between organs, muscles, bones and cells in a liquid that can transport substances (both vital as well as hostile to the body’s system) through a vast and interconnected viscous network. As cartilage and tendons, connective tissues attach bones and muscles together to form joints and facilitate pliable movement.

As fascia, the discourse around connective tissues has only recently emerged, and there is no agreed upon definition of what this term includes. The etymology of the word fascia originates from Latin, and it means “to bundle, bandage, strap, unification, and binding together.” Manual therapist and anatomist Tom Myers explains that fascia is what organizes the fluids of the body into cells, groups of cells, and into membranes such as muscles and organs. Fascia wraps around organs, bones and muscles, and in

doing so, supports the internal arrangements within mammal bodies; through this wrapping, muscles are attached to bones, and organs are held in place.\footnote{Sarah Berry, “Cinderella Tissue: the most critically ignored part of the body?” \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, August 12, 2014, accessed March 26, 2018, \url{https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/health-and-wellness/cinderella-tissue-the-most-critically-ignored-part-of-the-body-20140806-100xz3.html}.}

In mainstream medicine, “fascia has been extensively overlooked,” and its “contribution to many areas of biomechanics and physiology has been underestimated.”\footnote{Schleip, Jager, and Klinger, “What is ‘Fascia’? A review of different nomenclatures,” 501.} One of the reasons for this neglect is that the preferred method for research into anatomical structure in Western anatomy has been the practice of dissection, where the body is sectioned into fragmented pieces to be counted, examined and named.\footnote{Ibid.} As recent research has shown, however, fascia cannot be counted or divided:

> the fascial body seems to be one large networking organ, with many bags and hundreds of rope-like local densifications, and thousands of pockets within pockets, all interconnected by sturdy septa as well as by looser connective tissue layers.\footnote{Ibid.}

While it is often imaged through the metaphor of layers of saran-wrap like tissues covering individual muscles, there is in fact no discontinuity within this fascial fabric; fascia works as an irreducibly connective system.\footnote{Ibid.} Although fascia responds locally, which is to say, although it responds in movement and in support to particular muscles and organs of the body, it also responds systemically, which is to say, it responds through its connection to and constitution through the whole biomechanical net.\footnote{Ibid.} It has even...
been suggested that fascia ought to be understood an “organ of communication” that transfers information and sensation throughout the body via this single network.\textsuperscript{366}

The functions of connective tissues (including fascia) include enclosing, binding, separating, protecting, transporting, supporting, and forming stable structures within the body. Connective tissues fasten, join, and mesh the various parts of mammalian bodies together as a whole, encasing our insides through a single and complex sheath of fascial fabric. All 70 trillion cells that a human body is made up of are bound together in their proper placement through this fibrous, gluey, elastic, plastic and responsive system.\textsuperscript{367}

The universe as God’s body full of God’s love can be imagined through these binding, separating, protecting, transporting, supporting and stabilizing behaviours. The universe as made up of connective tissues of God’s love allows for the understanding of God’s love like the wrapping and all-pervading fascial fabric that holds and draws creation together. God’s love exists within and between all bodies in creation as a binding material source as well as the fluid and elastic longing that exists between bodies.

Imagining the universe as made up of connective tissues of God’s love allows for the consideration of ways in which particularity and unity within God’s body are together true. God’s connective tissues of love exist within and between all living and non-living parts of the universe like a fascial net. Through this wrapping, we are held together as individuals, while at the same time being netted together as a whole cosmic system constituted through love. God’s love protects the separations within creation because the

\textsuperscript{367} “Fascia,” Anatomy Trains, accessed March 26, 2018, \url{https://www.anatomytrains.com/fascia/}
particular configurations that emerge out of this fabric are essential to the stability of the system. Moreover, God as our lover takes pleasure in this diversity.

This fascial net of God’s connective love within and between us is responsive. When there is pain or vitality in one region of the body, the whole system is impacted. When a tendon is pulled, the muscles and bones surrounding the injury react through the fascial net that holds the system together; compensation and disregulation within the rest of the fabric transpires when one particular strand is injured. In the body of God, what happens to our particular bodies is held within dynamic and responsive fascial netting; whatever hurts or joys one member within this fibrous connection of love relates to the whole and is held within the system.

God’s love exists between all bodies, covering and holding all of creation together like fascia; the space between particular living forms in the universe is held in common vitality. God’s love circulates like a humming fullness between our bodily distinctions; all bodies in the cosmos are supported and nourished together through love as fascial connection and responsiveness. This fascial netting of love extends throughout creation, living and non-living. God’s body binds the whole cosmic body together through connective, responsive and energizing love. As Pope Francis reflects in *Laudato Si*, “the entire material universe speaks of God’s love.”\(^{368}\) God’s body exists within and throughout creation as creaturely fibres of affection. Love wraps around and throughout the whole universe; love moves and connects through atoms and particles, through our

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cartilage, fascia and cells, and throughout the earth, sea and sky. The whole universe, living and non-living, is endlessly wrapped up within this body that protects distinctions, facilitates pathways between parties, covers and permeates creation like a whole and responsive netting.

As I have conceived of it here, connective tissues allow for a model of God and God’s love; however, I am not arguing that this aspect of “nature” offers a “blueprint for morality.” Fascia is not moral; it does not make distinctions between right and wrong behaviour. Rather, as I have drawn out the metaphor, the workings of connective tissue can be used as an analogy for the behaviour of God as well as for the behaviour to which we are called as disciples. I am not suggesting that we ought to act as fascia acts, but rather, we can take the behaviour of fascia and connective tissues as poetic and prayerful cues for the moral action required in neighbour love.

God’s connective love abundant throughout creation endures within us not only so that each body might sense and be supported by this love independently, but also for the sake of the world that God so loves. The presence of God’s love is not stagnant or fruitless, rather, it “re-forms human love in response to where and how the world hungers for love’s healing and liberating hand.” This indwelling and encompassing presence of God’s connective love draws us towards supporting the matrix of love that already binds us up by seeking to love as if it were our sole/soul’s objective. God yearns for creation to become lovers. God’s love is freely given and exists within and between all bodies regardless of our behaviour, but still, it calls humans towards ways of being together.

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370 Ibid., 200.
God’s indwelling love bids us to perceive this connective love abundant and to seek the well-being of the beloved creation as a loving response.

All manifestations of love erupt and transpire within this connective tissue. All of the love that we feel and share is bound up with the love that God loves into the flesh of our particular bodies, and into the spaces between us, holding the whole cosmos in common relation. This love fills us and stretches between us like elastics, weaving us into a fabric made through connection. Loving our neighbours, as in all forms of loving, takes place in and through this erotically entangling and sustaining love. Love felt between two bodies creates a hinge like cartilage; two bodies connected through love can move and become in new ways.

As we respond to other bodies within the fascial netting of God’s love, we must seek to protect the integrity of all bodies involved, even as we draw towards loving connection. Love between bodies does not mean obliterating distinctions; as fascia holds us together, it also embraces us in difference. Love between bodies ought follow this lead. Some of the differences that develop within this connective tissue, however, are not differences that God takes pleasure in. Many differences, as Nancy Fraser argues, are “artefacts of oppression,” and consequently, ought to be transformed through the work of love. God values the internal diversity within creation, but some of the differences that are constructed sinfully between us through our socio-spatial lives pain God’s body as well as particular bodies.

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As Christians living within the context of urban neoliberalism, the felt recognition of belonging together within the connective tissues of God’s body ought to dispose us towards becoming partners with God in “helping creation to grow and prosper in our tiny part of God’s body,” and in this case, within neoliberal cities. If every living and non-living creature partakes in the body of God, then responsible action within this body entails accountable and right-relations with all of the humans and other-than-human life and life systems that make up a city. Our participation within the body of God requires that urban Christian inhabitants cultivate and practice sacramental attention and care for all that a city includes.

Recognition of our belonging together in and through the body of God cannot be cultivated through the metaphor of connective tissues alone. Like all metaphors, this one has the potential to offer an imaginative bridge into belief, and therefore, into the lived consequences of belief. The metaphor of connective tissues of love is not, in and of itself, capable of contesting the deeply ingrained consequences of neoliberal subjectivity and its relational arrangements. However, in considering and praying with this metaphor— that is, in making this metaphor a part of the structure of Christian faith (through prayer and liturgy for instance)—the imagistic and conceptual impact of its reach could and ought to dispose us towards liberative praxes of love in an urban context where the disparity between those experiencing poverty and the “super-rich” continues to widen.

Being Critical of Love as Theo-Ethical Norm

While we are loved by God, made up of connective tissues of God’s love, and joined through love to all that is living and nonliving in the universe, we must remain constantly curious and critical of the practice of love. Like all emotions, the feeling of love is complexly culturally produced; love is contextual while at the same time being the physical/mystical binding within and between us. Although love is a gift with which God fills creation, our experiences and expressions of love also arise from a distinctly formed neoliberalized subjectivity, which leaves fleshy traces within our love practices. If neoliberalism functions by turning all social relations and pro-social emotions such as love, friendship and care into market relations “wherein persons are nothing more than material means toward the ends of another person’s goals (individual financial success, social status, etc.),”374 then it is essential that we recognize that not all articulations and experiences of love are tantamount to loving as God loves, or loving towards the benefit of the fabric that holds us in common.

The practice of love must always be critically examined. When love is cited as a motivating force in personal, public and political life, this does not immediately suggest that pro-sociality or responsible relationality are at play; claiming that actions and opinions are ways of loving can overlap with racist, classist, sexist and ableist ideations (amongst the countless other social ills that we all to varying degrees enflesh). For instance, Sara Ahmed scrutinizes the ways that love of race and love of nation function as

organizing moral norms for white supremacists and white nationalists.\textsuperscript{375} Naming love as love does not indicate the actual practice or presence of love.

As explored in Chapter Two, neoliberal urbanization and neoliberal discourse often look to particular ethno-cultural and sexual minority groups with interest and sometimes even with an articulated affection for these different others. In fact, this expression of desire or love for different others is often used as a discursive tool in the practice of gentrification – within this practice, ethnicity and culture are frequently promoted in order to sell real estate and attract tourists to specific ethno-cultural commercial areas.\textsuperscript{376} While specific cultural and ethnic commercial spaces “are framed as an organic expression of immigrant culture on the landscape,” these spatialized ethno-cultural identities are frequently commodified and promoted for tourist and gentrifier consumption.\textsuperscript{377} As Hackworth and Rekers argue, while the function of ethno-cultural commercial enclaves are complex and multifaceted (including serving as commercial centers for specific ethno-cultural communities, even after these communities are displaced through the practice of gentrification as was the case in Toronto’s Little Italy), these neighborhoods are frequently also packaged and deployed by city officials, Business Improvement Associations (BIAs), and developers “who understand the profit potential of these landscape identities.”\textsuperscript{378} Interest, affection and articulations of love can be ways of masking the neoliberal practice of the commodification of human life.


\textsuperscript{377} Ibid., 230.

\textsuperscript{378} Ibid., 232.
Relatedly, Ahmed examines the proclaimed affect of loving others as it is utilized in the discourse of multiculturalism. Ahmed suggests that nations who profess multicultural goals often do so in order to generate a self-understanding of goodness; nations often seek to become multicultural in order to believe themselves to be practitioners of neighbour love. The “love for difference” that multicultural discourse employs is often based on the desire for producing a national subjectivity that is perceived to be good and loving. Multicultural discourse and policy is frequently employed for the purpose of (national) subject formation.

While multiculturalism declares love for different others, this love often requires that others live up to “an ideal to enter the community”; incorporation is often based on making others like itself. Using the example of Britain, Ahmed argues that the political promotion of multiculturalism operated with demands of adaptation for those being welcomed; that is, the multiculturalism that was endorsed required that “incoming others meet ‘our’ conditions.”

The love of different others as a galvanizing political force is routinely built on this forced reduction of differences in order to enter the “welcoming community.” The professed love of different others often “conceals the investment in reproduction” that the ‘welcoming’ nation harbors; that is, in seeking to be welcoming to others as a way of practicing love, the “multicultural fantasy” requires that others submit to ideals and

380 Ibid., 138.
381 Ibid., 139.
382 Ibid., 135.
behaviours that frequently infringe upon or make identity-shifting demands of their character.\textsuperscript{383}

In reflecting on the ideological discourse of diversity within the Canadian context, Himani Bannerji argues that the national project of becoming multicultural (a project that transpires in all socio-spatial spheres including all interactional and institutional levels) is productive of a homogenous national core—or a synthesized national “we”—of Canada that decides on the degrees and terms for incorporating “multicultural others.”\textsuperscript{384} Bannerji argues that the discourse of multiculturalism was created as a state apparatus that obscures the power relations involved within the Canadian context by focusing on the notion of ethnic and cultural difference, not the historical production and maintenance of different ‘others’ as a concrete phenomenon with material implications.\textsuperscript{385} The language of multiculturalism is an “interpretive code” that relies on the construction of difference as a reference to what is other than “European-Canadianness”; difference is produced as an abstract quality detached from matters of colonialism, capital and slavery and from the “historical and present power relations, perceptions, and systematized ideologies” involved in setting up who is \textit{really} Canadian (white “European-Canadians”) from who is \textit{obviously not}.\textsuperscript{386}

By making multiculturalism all about \textit{culture} (which is understood as difference from Euro-Canadian whiteness), the socio-spatial conditions which produce differently positioned racial and ethnic ‘others’ is obfuscated. The Canadian multicultural fantasy of

\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., 139.  
\textsuperscript{385} Ibid., 555.  
\textsuperscript{386} Ibid.
diversity as a national (and commodifiable) strength—or the ideological notion of Canada as a place of loving co-existence amongst variously positioned different others—masks and de-politicizes the violent history and material effects of structurally produced differences.

Further, as Ahmed suggests, love of different others is often directed towards, and productive of, specific others as abject and hopeless. Multicultural discourse and practice is frequently accompanied by the rationalities of liberal charity, where the loving subject is enabled to feel good and loving by having “given love to someone presumed to be unloved, but which sustains the relations of power that compel the charitable love to be shown in this way.”387 This offering of love to the unlovable at once creates the subjectivity of the good and loving nation and maintains power differentials within the nation where some are the charitable givers of love and others are the fortunate (and at the same time pitiable) recipients. In light of these propensities, Ahmed is suspicious of pronouncements of love deciding the direction of politics.

When love is named as a politically motivating emotion, it can be accompanied by racist, sexist and ableist ideologies, it can reinscribe hegemonic power relations, and it can turn differences into subordinated and absorbable commodities. Feeling and doing love in public can be ways of maintaining power arrangements and the status quo; politicizing love can construct the discursive and material conditions for sexist racism, colonizing imaginations and more. In other words, love as a politically motivating emotion can perpetuate and generate sin. Because of these potentials, it is necessary to be

clear about what love is (which I have attended to with the metaphor of God’s body as connective tissues of love) and what love requires (which I will turn to now).

**Jesus and the Discipline of Love**

Through the life and work of Jesus, Christians are provided with a model for what God’s connective love requires. Images and understandings of Jesus are constantly evolving in context; “every community evolves its own understanding of Jesus responding to its own cry for life. And because life changes Christologies change too.” Understanding Jesus through the metaphor of the universe as God’s body that is made up connective tissues of love offers particular Christological possibilities within the context of urban economic injustice and neoliberalization.

Jesus’ body, like all bodies, was made up of God’s love and loved by God’s love. Like all bodies, Jesus was held within the fascial netting of God’s love, but unlike most others, he was distinctively motivated towards a disposition and discipline respectful of this connecting love. In John’s Gospel, Jesus describes his ministry as transpiring within and through God’s indwelling love:

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love… This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 389

Jesus invited his disciples to practice love, and in so doing, come to dwell (or abide) within God’s love as he had through his life and work. Through Jesus’ ministry, “God is

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389 John 15:9-12, NRSV
experienced as all-inclusive love.” In following Jesus’ example, disciples were—and continue to be—welcomed into deliberate participation and ministry within this all-inclusive and connecting love. As Jesus’ life and work make clear, God’s indwelling and enveloping love summons disciples to make a habit of love, which is to say, love within and between us directs us towards a discipline of abiding in love.

Love as a discipline to be exercised includes sacramental sensitivity to the endlessly connective divine love that binds all of creation together, as well as action towards supporting these fibrous passageways of love. Feeling the presence of love within and among us, we are opened towards acting in love, and likewise, by seeking to act into love, we are more likely to be opened towards the feeling of love. Nevertheless, just as the feeling and doing of moral agency are not polarities, the feeling of doing of love are not separate; rather, they are both “only metaphors for conceptualizing our world.” The immersive sensation of love and the doing of love are part of the same movement; as Beverly Harrison proposes, activity is the mode of love. Feeling love, being in love and practicing love are arranged like the fascial net; there is no disconnect between these instants and modes of love, and they continue to ceaselessly feed back in to one another as source, sustenance, and consequence. Jesus was wide open to what God’s loves feels like in and through his capacity to abide by what this love asks; likewise, by feeling God’s love as connective source and sustenance, Jesus was passionately capable of acting in love.

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392 Ibid., 8.
Through Jesus’ life and work, insights into the discipline of love are illuminated. As a Jewish man living amongst people oppressed by the conditions of Roman rule (through the practices of requisite and exploitative tribute, taxes and temple tithes), Jesus knew first hand the economic injustices of his community. Within this context, “he encouraged radical generosity, debt relief, and aid to the sick, prisoners, the hungry and the naked.” As feminist New Testament scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues, Jesus, and the vision and praxis of the movement that his life inspired, sought out the “well-being and freedom for all in the global village.” Jesus and the Jesus movement were committed to a vision of tikkan olam (or the restoration of the world), which was understood as “as the social, political and religious transformation of kyriarchal structures of injustice and domination.” Schüssler Fiorenza’s notion of kyriarchy (or the “domination of the lord, slave master, husband, elite freeborn educated and propertyed man over all wo/men and subaltern men”) is an analytic category that refers to the interlocking ideologies, systems and practices through which complexly situated and intersectional experiences of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, dis/ability are more are produced. Jesus and the Jesus movement envisioned a world beyond kyriarchy; they anticipated a “world free of hunger, poverty, and domination” and they enacted this

394 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation (New York, NY: Continuum, 2000), 173.
395 Ibid.
396 Ibid., 95.
vision into the present through concrete manifestations of all-inclusive love as exemplified in table-sharing, healing, and in “domination-free kinship community.”

As God’s love made manifest in an exceptionally (but not exclusively) full and conscious way, Jesus’ example of anti-kyriarchical tikkun olam in life and work points to the purpose and goal for creation as the pursuit towards “inclusive love for all, especially the oppressed, the outcast, the vulnerable.” In Jesus’ example of radical, persistent and concrete expressions of love—a love for his neighbours that led to his violent death—we glimpse and are inspired towards what it is that God’s love within us and between us longs for us to pursue.

**Justice-Love**

The love within us desires for us to exercise unrestricted love for all creation, particularly for the most vulnerable amongst us. The action that the discipline of love invites disciples towards is the work of (social) justice. As Moe-Lobeda argues, love is neither contrasted to justice, or distinct and complementary to justice. Rather, “love seeks the well-being of whatever or whomever is loved,” and accordingly, the “norm of neighbour-love includes the norm of justice.” In recognition of this inclusion of justice in love, Moe-Lobeda proposes the terms “justice-seeking love” and “justice-making love.” As Jesus’ life and ministry make clear, the presence of God’s love within creation dynamically draws

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398 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, 170.
each of us towards seeking just relations. The discipline of love includes seeking justice as an inseparable corollary to feeling love.

Another term for this justice-seeking love is “justice-love.” As Marvin Ellison suggests, justice-love requires “mutual respect and care and a fair sharing of power.” In reference to Ellison’s consideration, Marilyn Legge proposes that justice-love has to do with the “human longing for psycho-spiritual and bodily well-being” and to right-relatedness with others. Justice-love pays “explicit attention to the intersection of personal and public, body and mind, intimate and social relations.”

The anti-kyriarchal justice-loving actions that this connective love inspires disciples of Jesus towards can be costly, just as it was for Jesus. As Dorothee Sölle reflects,

Love has its price. God wants to make us alive, and the wider we open our hearts to others or the more audibly we cry out against the injustice which rules over us, the more difficult our life in the rich society of injustice becomes. Even a small love of a few trees, of seals, or of schoolchildren who cry at night in torment…is costly. Many cannot afford even a small love for creatures and prefer not to have seen anything.

As we become sensitive to the presence of God’s love within and between us, and as we respond to Jesus’ invitation to participate in the discipline of justice-loving actions, the shape and order of our lives in relation will likely be upended. In becoming attuned to the

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402 Moe-Lobeda, Resisting Structural Evil, 6.
403 Ellison, Same-Sex Marriage? A Christian Ethical Analysis, 142-3.
405 Ibid.
connective love that networks and webs throughout creation, other people’s pain and suffering ought not feel like distant or disconnected realities.

Within the neoliberalized urban context, the discipline of love insists that we struggle towards just structural and spatial relations. Love is full of passion and pleasantry, but it also insists on ways of being, feeling and doing that contradicts how we have been formed to relate as neoliberal subjects. As middle-class urban inhabitants, acting into the liberative, justice-seeking love that Jesus modeled will require us to go against what we have been formed to desire and believe through the project of neoliberalization. Most crucially, we will have to re-assess our understandings of to whom and to what we are responsible.

Jesus’ anti-kyriarchical justice-seeking-love continues to invite disciples to live into responsible relationality in recognition that suffering, domination and deprivation in one part of God’s body matters for every member. The Apostle Paul writes, “if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.” Paul’s understanding of common suffering and common honour garnered through mutual participation in Christ’s body can be explored through the image of connective tissues of God’s love as this metaphor relates to my inquiry into what is required of urban inhabitants in response to the moral problems of economic injustice and the commodification of human life.

As bands within the fascial network overstretch in one area in the body through overuse, the impact is communicated to other locations, in a phenomenon known as

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407 1 Corinthians 12:26, NRSV
‘referral pain.’ Within the fascial net, an over-flexible hip joint might begin to cause pain in the lower back. While it might feel possible and even pleasurable for this body to continue to open widely through the hip joint, eventually, the pain this over-flexibility triggers in the lower back will likely become problematic, and even intolerable. Although the pain is stored at the site of the lower back, it was caused in and through the relationship with the opening at the front of the hip; consequently, relieving the pain in the back requires attention to the system within which it functions.

While the harmful consequences of the economic disparity produced through the practices of neoliberalization can certainly be felt more acutely in Toronto’s City Number Three, relieving these conditions will require that high-income residents in City Number One, and middle-income residents in City Number Two participate in addressing the spatialized structural sins which lead to and perpetuate economic injustice. As Paul suggests of the body of Christ, and as Iris Marion Young suggests through the social connection model of responsibility, the whole system is responsible for contesting and transforming dis-ease. Within the spatialized and structural procedures of neoliberalism, all members are responsible, but not equally or alike. Those who have more eco-social power in relation to the institutional structures within the urban context bear more responsibility, even if the most acute symptoms of neoliberalization are felt elsewhere. Just as the fascial net requires that pain relief be understood and treated within a holistic understanding of the body, the economic injustices within the context of neoliberalization requires a connective approach.

Becoming attuned to the presence and implications of God’s connective love within and between us is one resource towards transformative action. As middle-class
urban inhabitants feel love within and between all living and non-living parts of the universe, it ought to become very difficult to continue existing within the grid of neoliberal economic intelligibility that delimits many of the body’s members. As we feel the presence of love within and between us, the commodification of social relationships, and the disregard for the articulated needs of the most vulnerable members within this fascial netting should feel intolerable.

However, in order to mobilize middle-income populations, it will be crucial that we employ logics different than those involved in liberal models of charity. That is, we will require more than appeals to the demands of love as inclusive of care for people who are experiencing oppression and domination, since this very understanding is itself productive of marginality and othering. Part of mobilizing the middle class to contest neoliberal urbanization will have to include consideration and attention to how middle-income people are also negatively impacted by this urban and political strategy.

Through the dismantling of the socially democratic state, middle-class urban inhabitants are far from unaffected by the logics and material consequences of neoliberalization. While nearly half of Canadians identify as middle-class, middle-income populations are decreasing in many urban centres in this country, and the earnings of much of those who identify as middle class have been significantly reduced through the practices of neoliberalization.408 What is required is critical investigation and questioning into the conditions that we have come to accept as inevitable, and likely, a reassessment of the category of middle class as being inapplicable to many who identify as such. Part of mobilizing the middle class will have to include encouraging critical

408 Curry-Stevens, “Building the Case for the Study of the Middle Class,” 384.
investigation into what we accept as common practice. As Ann Curry-Stevens notes of the Canadian neoliberal context,

Individuals today carry more personal economic risk to withstand economic fluctuations, accompanied by reduced expectations of employers and governments, and increased expectations of individuals to survive unemployment, health crises and old age. Policy examples of these transitions in Canada include rapidly deteriorating unemployment coverage, the end of family allowances – replaced by a targeted child tax benefit, and the growing reliance on a personal retirement savings plan whose favourable tax treatment flows primarily to the wealthy.\(^409\)

The whole body is negatively impacted by the practices of neoliberal urbanization, and the more members that resist this materialized ideology based on the recognition of such, the greater the possibilities for liberative transformation. While the moral norm of justice-love can certainly equip and inspire urban inhabitants in this work, as Curry-Stevens argues it will also be vital to construct class-based analyses from and for middle-income populations so that we might begin to recognize the pain that neoliberalization causes as also our own (and not only through the model of God’s connective love, but also within our very particular lives).\(^410\)

For middle-class urban Christian inhabitants, as we seek to live justice-love into the spatialized structures of our lives in common, it is imperative that we remember that while we will never be able to love as God loves—we are not God, but we can live into our existence as God bearing creatures—this expansive, connective, liberative, and generous love that exists within and between us ought always remain as our gauge to assess the work love. As Jesus’ life made clear, God’s love invites us to practice love abundantly, and God’s love forgives us when we fail, just as we ought to forgive one

\(^{409}\) Ibid., 380.
\(^{410}\) Ibid., 385.
another when we fail in love. Because of the extensive demands of what this love asks, we are forgiven for our breakdowns in love. The fibrous and binding love that we are made up of and within holds us in our particularity, even when we fail to respect and respond appropriately to the fullness of these relational and fasical bonds.

Who is our neighbour?

Jesus commanded his followers to “love your neighbour as yourself.” Loving our neighbours as ourselves is best understood as both a personal as well as a public vocation, even as these categories blur into one another at every turn. The spheres of personal and public are not distinct—as liberal political theory and neoliberal structural practice suggest—but are intimately involved and co-influential. Although these categories can be misused by rendering them binary, I propose—in line with Moe-Lobeda—that it is helpful to conceive of a distinction between personal and public love in so far as these categories refer to different levels of proximity and intimacy in relation to what it is that the commandment to love our neighbours as ourselves entails. If love entails justice, personal articulations of neighbour love includes seeking just relationships with those we know, while publicly loving our neighbours necessitates that we recognize and challenge spatial and structural causes of injustice, and envision and act towards alternatives.

Our neighbours are thus doubly conceived; God’s indwelling and connective love calls us to love those with whom we come into direct contact, as well as those with whom we are linked through intricate and often invisible spatial, structural and ecological

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411 Mark 12:31, NRSV
413 Ibid., 165.
systems. In this public manifestation, loving our neighbours includes seeking just
relations with and for those whom we will likely never know. Intimate connection and
face-to-face knowing are not the qualities that describe public love. Love is at once an
intimate experience as well as a political vocation that does not rely on familiar
connections as the defining force. This is not to say that the experience of public love is
antithetical to personal love or to deep feeling; only that love includes and is more than
the world of our intimate relationships.414

Public neighbour love, or what I term stranger love, requires that we take
responsibility for, and try to unravel and counteract, the history, geography and ongoing
practices of neoliberalism, settler-colonialism, kyriarchy, racism, sexism, heterosexism,
ableism, environmental violence, speciesism and more. As Moe-Lobeda suggests, love as
a public vocation includes the moral work of seeking to structure society in such a way
that the well-being of all is honoured.415 Loving strangers as neighbours is the most
extensive commandment imaginable; we will never be finished, and we will always need
to discern what it means to practice the discipline, context by context.

Neighbour Love as Stranger Love in Cities

Parker Palmer suggests that what makes cities unique as living environments is the
constant interaction with strangers that it entails.416 Palmer argues that in encountering
strangers in public, while we “may look strange (even ominous) in each other’s eyes,” we

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414 Ibid., 178.
415 Ibid., 184.
have the opportunity to admit “we occupy the same territory” and “belong to the same human community.” He suggests that it is this constant interaction between people who will likely forever remain unknown that renders cities as incubators for feeling into relationality as a cosmological condition. Here, I want to suggest that this ever-presence of unfamiliars renders life in cities full of opportunities for practicing the discipline of public neighbour-love as stranger love.

Stranger love in all cities entails an appreciation for structural, spatial and cosmological relationality, and taking responsible action in light of these interrelations. Stranger love in cities requires, amongst other engagements, that disciples pursue the construction of increasingly just cities, where the well-being of all who call the city home is sought. In the context of Toronto, part of what it means to love strangers as neighbours is to resist the practices of neoliberal urbanization, which leads to the rise of spatialized economic injustices and to the segregation of the city along income and racial lines. Part of what it means to practice stranger love in this city is to undermine that which produces some bodies as strangers— or as visitors rather than inhabitants as exemplified in the Three Cities of Toronto— to the centre.

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417 This term *territory* is certainly complicated in the context of North America/Turtle Island. This thesis does not pay adequate attention to this complexity.

418 Palmer, *In the Company of Strangers*, 43.

419 As Sara Ahmed suggests, there is no ontology of the stranger; rather, it is the “histories of determination” that produce certain forms of embodiment as strange. Reading another body as strange, or being able to recognize someone as a stranger, occurs only in and through historical and geographic webs of relation. Interpreting someone as a stranger, while it might appear to be a reading of another that occurs in the present moment, is in fact produced out of past encounters; the particular encounter always carries with it traces of the past, and traces of broader relational webs. Accordingly, a stranger is recognized and produced as such based on a pre-existing category or set of categories within the perceiver’s knowledge. That is, a stranger is recognized because of what the perceiver knows about who operates inside and who operates outside of a given social sphere; the stranger is not produced out of an absence of knowledge. A stranger is thus not simply “one we simply fail to recognise”; a stranger is not “any-body whom we do not
Acting towards stranger love as justice-love resembles the commitments required in being responsibly relational. As middle-class urban inhabitants, the recognition of the responsibilities that our spatialized structural relational ties necessitate requires a moral leap; as I explored in the previous chapter, our social relationality is not immediately an ethic, but rather a basic fact of structural and spatial interconnection that binds up the world in layers of eco-social relations. Iris Marion Young’s social connection model of responsibility offers methods and criteria for becoming responsibly relational within the neoliberal urban context of unjust spatialized structural relations. Neighbour-love (including love of strangers) as justice-love modeled through the life and work of Jesus operates as a vitalizing moral norm for being responsibly relational within a social connection model of responsibility.

_Hopelessness and Stranger Love in Publics_

Given the extensive reach of whom our neighbours include, and in light of the holistic understanding of love as a discipline of affect and action, feeling and doing, the demands of public neighbour love as stranger love can certainly feel overwhelming. Within the context of neoliberal urbanization, as middle-class urban inhabitants we are at risk of experiencing “cultured despair” and a kind of privileged hopelessness about eradicating economic injustice, amongst other ills that arise through the practice of this way of city building, unless we also begin to recognize that we are also impaired by the procedures of neoliberalization.420 Stranger love is hard to practice within neoliberalization because the

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420 Welch, _A Feminist Ethic of Risk_, 15.

spatialization and subjectification of this materialized ideology can be experienced as totalizing. Within this monetization of all of life, urban structural and systemic evil can feel naturalized, and the lack of responsibility between diverse urban inhabitants can seem inevitable.

As middle-class urban inhabitants, even when we are able to understand that neoliberal urbanization is a result of social, historical and spatial practices, and both small scale and large scale decision-making about the shape and structure of our cities on interactional and institutional levels, it can feel ‘thing-like,’ and like someone else’s fault and duty to reform. Practicing stranger love and responsible relationality can seem like naïve, impractical and impossible moral directions within the spatialized and structural relations that construct neoliberal cities.

The disposition of love, including efforts towards contesting neoliberal urbanization, requires resources and energy. A deepest supply of this energy is the source of this love. The discipline of love is fuelled by God’s gift of love, indwelling as connective tissue within and between us, and strengthened through practicing the discipline of love as modeled in the life and work of Jesus. If God’s love is the foundation for all other love, then this is a love that is fearless, generous, creative and knows no bounds. If it is God’s love that fills our bodies and the spaces between our bodies as we are driven towards seeking justice-love, including justice-love in cities, then this love is the most powerful source imaginable. As the life and work of Jesus exemplifies, God’s love accompanies each of us as we struggle towards justice and right-relations, especially amongst our most vulnerable neighbours.
While our love for one another participates in the deepest love imaginable, we still need to cultivate moral-spiritual energy to love in publics. As middle-class urban inhabitants, we require a felt opposition to the unjust spatialized structural arrangements which present as inescapable, so that we can become moral agents who live responsibly in light of our relationality, and so that we can become lovers of strangers as we construct just spatial structures to organize life in common. The disposition of neighbour love as embracing responsible love of strangers is one theoethical framework for Christians addressing urban spatialized economic injustice; neighbour-love as stranger love offers a vitalizing moral norm for our efforts at becoming relationally responsible in diverse urban publics.

In light of the complexities and extensive demands of public neighbour love as stranger love, and in response to the hopelessness which we are all at risk of conceding to, we require resources and practices that assist in living into what it is that loving our neighbours as strangers in public entails.

Participatory Art

To become able to love our neighbours in public, we first need to feel up against the naturalization of neoliberal urbanization. We require the energy and space to be critical of what is, so that we can collaborate for what might be. Alternative spaces that can create such shifted forms of recognition are often facilitated in cities though participatory art. While religious and spiritual communities that promote moral imagining and formation into responsible relationality and stranger love should also be such places, we ought always be on the look out for additional sites where this kind of discipline is facilitated,
since the way forward and otherwise is so demanding: it will require cooperation from within and beyond religious communities to pursue. I am suggesting that the experiences provided within some participatory art works have the capacity to serve as spaces for touching in to different and hope-inducing practices of self-in-relation, and to the embodied criticality required for building with responsible relationality and neighbour love in mind for the future.

In order to explore this potentiality, I will focus on my own lived and imagined experiences of particular works of participatory art. I use my own particularity as a middle class person involved in making participatory art and in viewing a recording of a participatory art piece not to make overarching claims about what these particular works might do for any or all middle class urban inhabitants, but rather, I stay with the transformative and loving experiences generated *in me* through participating and watching in order to begin to uncover and name prospective emotions and felt experiences of shifted recognition that I believe may be helpful for becoming a moral agent able to experience and practice stranger love.

I use my own subjectivity and experience to do this work not as a research end in itself, but rather as a jumping off point for considering how particular emotions (in this case love and frustration) generated through participatory works can interrupt the relational and dispositional technologies promoted through neoliberalization. I thus extrapolate from personal experience to invite others to do likewise. As Sara Ahmed argues,

*Emotions do things*, and work to align individuals with collectives – or bodily space with social space– through the very intensity of their attachments. Rather
than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective.421

I turn to the emotional responses incurred in my participation and observation because this is the affective data that I have access to. What I am suggesting more broadly is that participatory art is a resource capable—in some instances—of, as Ahmed suggests, doing things; some works of participatory art can foster emotional resistance to the project of neoliberalization and can generate sustenance for the work of stranger love.

Participatory art is artwork that requires the active involvement of the audience/spectator.422 While all art arguably relies on spectator participation, participatory art makes explicit demands and requests of audiences, and in so doing, aims at re-positioning spectators as co-producers of art.423 There has been much theoretical reflection on the nature of participatory art, with a vibrant and ongoing dialogue about the limits, promises, failures and possibilities of participatory artworks.

The contemporary art-critical discourse around participatory began with the arguments of Nicholas Bourriaud, and what he termed ‘relational aesthetics.’ While Bourriaud’s aesthetic theory has received much criticism (which I will attend to below), elements of his analysis about the form and function of participatory art proves a helpful companion as I explore participatory art as a moral-spiritual resource towards practicing neighbour love as stranger love.

422 The terms collaborative art, socially engaged art, community-based art, relational art, dialogic art, and interventionist art are also used to describe this practice, although each of these designations holds particular emphases and operative assumptions.
Bourriaud describes relational art as “art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context.” Bourriaud describes relational art as “art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context.” Relational art “takes being-together as a central theme,” and in so doing, it seeks to create “free areas, and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the communication zones that are imposed upon us.”

Drawing on Levinas’ notions of the face, the third and the responsibility that arises in coming face to face with an “other” that invokes the presence of, and responsibility for, other others, Bourriaud contends that relational art forms create modes of sociability that function as “micro-utopias,” where participants might encounter one another for the sake of encounter, and be exposed to the social commitments that arise from such meetings.

Bourriaud suggests that relational art offers participants the opportunity to experience encounters that have no function other than the encounter itself, which invokes a sense of responsibility amongst participants. I will proceed in examining a piece of participatory art of which I was a co-producer, with Bourriaud as the interpretive lens. I will also assess it through the moral norms of responsible relationality and stranger love.

**Dr. Cat**

In 2014, as part of Nuit Blanche’s all-night art crawl through the city of Toronto, the intentional community that I was living in at the time created an exhibit entitled ‘Nuit Blanche Hospital.’ While this was not an official Nuit Blanche supported site, we benefited from the traffic of this event organizing body, and from the movement that this organizing body funnelled through the park adjacent to the Church—Grange Park.

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425 Ibid., 16.
In 2015, the year that the community I was living in at the time participated in Nuit Blanche Hospital, it is estimated that there were over one million participants in Nuit Blanche Toronto. From my observation of attendees at our site, participants were diverse in age, race, gender, dis/ability and spoken languages, however, there is no official data for this diversity. Although attendance at Nuit Blanche’s hundreds of installations is free for all participants, Nuit Blanche Toronto produces a significant economic impact for the city of Toronto’s hospitality industry: in 2015, $41.5 million was generated from both local and out of town audiences.

In order to appreciate the consequences of Nuit Blanche Hospital’s location within the art festival, it is helpful to consider Grange Park and St. George the Martyr’s courtyard socio-spatially. St. George the Martyr courtyard is very much an extension of Grange Park, and thus my analysis of this locale will treat these spaces as a unit (although there is much more that can be said about the relationship that this church land has to the public, and to the park more specifically). Located in downtown Toronto, just North of Queen Street, Grange Park and St. George the Martyr’s courtyard are situated in a stretch of the city that is overwhelmingly populated by fast fashion brands, bars, sit-down and fast-food restaurants. The Art Gallery of Ontario, OCAD University, and the University Settlement (which is a community centre that offers programming for new immigrants amongst others) border the park on its Northeast ends. To the West of the Park is Chinatown, and further Kensington Market. To the East of the Park is University Avenue and Bay Street, where major research hospitals, as well as legal, financial and other

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427 https://nbto.com/about/event-history.html
428 Ibid.
corporate offices are located. In other words, this Park is right in the centre (or one point amidst intermingling centres) of Toronto, in Hulchanski’s City Number One.

Grange Park and St. George the Martyr’s Courtyard are one of the few green spaces in this part of the city, which makes these areas exceptionally crowded (even when there are not art festivals taking place) by diverse constituents. For instance, The Grange is where a sizable population of street involved people sleep and pass waking hours during all four seasons, for, amongst other reasons including its location in the middle of City Number One (where a higher concentration of social services and shelters are located), the presence of a sizable sheltering awning as well as, more recently, free public bathrooms. It is also a Park that is close enough to the Bay Street business corridor that it is a popular lunch hour spot for the business community during the warmer months. The Park and courtyard is nearly always full of children, elderly, students, low-income and wealthy inhabitants, as well as tourists; various urban inhabitants and visitors use it, in innumerable ways.

In this church courtyard, we set up various tents featuring playful interpretations of alternative healing practices. There was a tent where participants could receive haircuts from a dirty clown, an apothecary tent where free food and drink could be enjoyed, a tent featuring hypnotic lights and sardonic self-help listening stations, and a ‘death therapy’ installation, where a man wearing a balaclava with white x’s taped over his eye holes danced endlessly in the entry of a run down bell tower to electronic dance music.
As part of this Nuit Blanche Hospital, I dressed up and performed as a hybrid between a pink cat and a female therapist with an exaggerated Brooklyn accent. My tent had signage indicating services provided by Dr. Cat, Cat Therapist. I wore a large pink cat mask, a maroon blazer and skirt, a pink tail and leopard-patterned velvet gloves. The tent was set up with a chair upon which I sat, a sofa, a side table with a box of tissues, a collection of cat related literature, a cat brush, and a standing lamp that cast a warm light. Throughout the twelve-hour exhibit, participants entered Dr. Cat’s tent and sat down or laid down on the therapy couch.

Dr. Cat’s tent was nearly always occupied. The diversity of Grange Park and St. George the Martyr Courtyard users—as well as the diversity of Nuit Blanche’s over one million attendees—was certainly evident amongst participants in our installation. A handful of seemingly street-involved people came and sat on the therapy couch at various points in the evening, but more often ostensibly middle class and racially diverse individuals and groups spanning in age were in attendance. As each new person or group entered, we established together what the shared time in this space would look like. Some people entered with the approach that Dr. Cat was more cat than therapist, in which case, they engaged with me as a feline to speak to in English. Often, these conversations revolved around concerns and curiosities that participants had about their own feline companions. Other people entered with the belief that Dr. Cat was more of a human therapist than a cat, in which case, they engaged with me as a person in a cat mask with whom they might share something about their lives, as they might in an actual therapist’s office.
My tactic was to wait and see what role I might lean into based on how participants greeted me, but I consistently used my exaggerated Brooklyn accent throughout our exchange, and I often prescribed collective meowing as a technique for emotional release. While these aspects of the performance were certainly fun, I also thought of them as a way to continuously remind people that this was play, not a genuine therapeutic environment. I will now reflect on one particularly evocative encounter within this participatory art space in order to examine the kind of stranger love that I experienced while playing Dr. Cat.

One of the first groups of people to visit me as Dr. Cat was a family of three, who presented as middle-class in dress. Two adult and a three-year-old child came in to the tent, and sat down side by side on the couch. It quickly became clear that this was a family. The parents told me that their daughter was a cat-lover, and had been eyeing Dr. Cat’s tent for quite some time before feeling bold enough to walk in. The child sat at the end of the couch that was closest to my chair. At first, she did not say very much, and so the parents and I spent the first few minutes discussing their cat’s behaviours and quirks. After about two minutes, the child proceeded to pick up one of the cat books on the side table, and solicited me to read it to her by placing it in my hands and saying something to the effect of “cat, read this please.” A few minutes into my reading, she began meowing and petting my mask. Her parents seemed happily surprised by her response, informing me that this openness was unanticipated given that she was typically a shy child.

After about fifteen minutes of cat-related reading, playing and mutual meowing, the parents got up to leave, conceivably in hopes of partaking in other installations. However, they could not convince their daughter to follow them. The parents conceded,
and sat back down beside their daughter. This family spent another twenty minutes in the tent.

Since the child had settled in quite comfortably, her parents and I were invited into waves of interrupted discussion. They told me a remarkable story that I have since thought about many times. They had been trying to conceive a child for about ten years, when they had given up on the possibility of birthing a child after they had turned forty. The woman had been experiencing stomach upset for a few months, but she thought it was due to her history of stomach discomfort. When the pain got worse, she visited her doctor, who told her with great joy and shock that she was 8 months pregnant, and that she would need to be hospitalized immediately because of concerns with the baby.

The woman wept as they told me about the community of support that arose around them, and about the baby that they lovingly welcomed a month later. They told me about friends and family who set up a baby nursery for them at their home while they lived at the hospital, and about employers who accommodated impromptu parental leaves. Throughout the encounter, it was clear that they loved their child with an abandon that was hard won; her presence in their lives still filled them with great surprise and joy.

As we shared time in this space where there was no business to attend to, no resources to discern how to share, no one buying or selling anything, we were opened to the possibility of affecting one another in non-instrumentalized ways. Bourriaud’s proposition that relational art operates like an alternative “social interstice,”429 as a place

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429 Ibid., 16.
for a “hands-on utopia”\textsuperscript{430} where strangers might encounter one another in ways that “tighten the space of relations,”\textsuperscript{431} echo my experiences as Dr. Cat, particularly as I performed the role with this family of three. We came to know each other in a particularly close way that I believe was made possible because we were connecting without any goal or purpose to achieve in the relation.

As we played into the mock therapeutic space, which was chiefly facilitated by the young child’s earnest interest and ease with me as a pink cat, we bridged into a way of relating that exceeded our unfamiliarity with one another. Assisted by an environment in which playfulness and meeting one another were the evident intentions, we were opened towards the possibility of cooperating into intimate sharing and friendliness. In this space, we temporarily became familiars while at the same time maintaining many of the boundaries of our strangerhood; I never learned the parent’s names, and likewise, they never saw my face without the giant pink cat mask on. I have not seen them since, and it is unlikely that we would recognize one another even if we did happen to cross paths.

And yet, in the hour that we spent together in the centre of this neoliberalized city, I felt appreciation and love for this family. This love was a kind of friendly love; it was a love made possible through playfulness. As the child opened up through play in this space, and as they shared their story of infertility and pregnancy, their joy was contagious; in being with them, in listening to them and in watching them relate lovingly with each other, I experienced a sense of gratitude for their company, and for their love as

\textsuperscript{430} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{431} Ibid., 15.
a family. I also experienced a kind of falling in love with them, these strangers who were sharing intimacies with me as a masked cat therapist. This falling in love transpired as a feeling of gladness for their being and their being together. I felt a loving appreciation for this strangely intimate exchange.

I have carried their story with me since, and in so doing, I have carried them with me. My understanding of this city and of who it is that lives in this city includes this family. They hover on the line between strangers and familiars, and in so doing, my love for them functions like a fibrous bridge of potential love for other strangers. My love and momentary familiarity with this family opened me up afresh to the always-present possibility that we might support the fibres that already bind us up by falling in love with one another. This valence into possible felt love was humbling; like walking into a library and knowing you will never come close to encountering all the beauty and knowledge in the pages. As I came to know of these significant moments in their lives, and as I felt affection for them within the exchange, I was opened anew to the simple but staggering recognition that there are real and full lives for each stranger in this city; as I sat with them, I felt open to the actuality of subjective fullness for all unfamiliars. It was not as though I was suddenly conscious of what all these real and full stranger lives were made up of, but rather I felt awake to the reality that all unfamiliars are bursting with specificities, intricacies and love stories, and that all these strangers are simply unfamiliars that could in fact be intimates.

While it is an obvious fact that all strangers lives are full of details and particulars, through these moments of familiarity with this family, I felt viscerally exposed to the weight of this always present and overwhelming circumstance. In this exchange of love
with this family, I experienced a kind of decentering through waking up afresh to the notion that I am only one fibre within this complex and boundless fascial net of God’s love. In the exchange with this family, I felt unguarded to the sensation that all the strangers in the universe are particular centres of action and love within the love that binds us all up.

Although this encounter did open me up afresh to the felt belief that strangers beyond this family are similarly teeming with particular love stories and might in fact be potential loved ones, I have not been consciously compelled to act differently in light of this exchange. This brief mystical connection of love functioned like an opening into another way of feeling, but it did not prescribe the way forward. My experience of love for this family has not knowingly invited me to love in publics. The impact of this experience on my capacity to practice stranger love is fairly impossible to track. The influence of art, participatory art included, is always difficult to trace. We do not always know if or how (participatory) art has transformed or compelled us differently into the future.

The impossibility of effectively tracing the impact of this exchange points to the non-commodifiable nature of participatory art – the consequences of this play into love cannot be pinned down. Further, propositions around art’s function, utility and political efficacy often subvert and overlook vital potential impacts that art can and does have on our lives in common in the here and now. Because this love has not compelled specifiable actions into the future does not negate the significance of this fissure into love as it emerged in the moments of the exchange. Falling in love with strangers, even if it is a temporary love that leaves us looking and being much the same afterwards, offers
valences into other ways of feeling, being, and doing within the edifice of neoliberalization. Falling in love with people who are positioned as competitors functions as a counter-narrative within the grid of neoliberal economic intelligibility.

While falling in love with one another as fellow strangers within the ‘micro-utopias’ of participatory art may momentarily destabilize the domination of neoliberalized relations, neighbour love in public can never rely on all strangers becoming familiars. We will always need to discern how to love people we do not intimately know. As Sallie McFague recognizes,

The individualist paradigm does not suffer from a lack of love; rather it suffers from the direction of its love, not simply to the needy person whose plight makes headlines in the news or goes viral on the internet, but inclusive of the less attractive neighbour the color of whose eyes is not known, or who (which) does not even have eyes, such as a threatened river about to be dammed to provide water to keep lawns green.432

We cannot lovingly encounter all of the people, creatures or systems that our life is bound up with, and the differences and particularities that exist between these living and nonliving parts of the cosmos matter for cultivating the discipline of justice/love. Stranger love requires more than face-to-face (or face-to-mask) encountering.

Participatory art’s capacity to embolden the practice of neighbour love does not only reside in bringing people face-to-face, and moreover, these face-to-face encounters that some relational art works facilitate are not always or everywhere full of love. In order to discern alternative ways that participatory art might energize the work of love, I will investigate another instance of this aesthetic practice. Through the example of the

432 Sallie McFague, *Blessed are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 131. The individualist paradigm can be understood in much the same way as neoliberalized subjectivity.
work Nothing to See Here (Dispersal), and through the aesthetic and political philosophy of Jacques Rancière as my dialogue partner, I will argue that particular works of participatory art do have the potential to contribute to the cultivation of a discipline of public love through the experience of dissensus (which I will explore below) and more specifically, through the affectual experience of frustration in relation to the posture of patience that it had the potential to invoke.

**Dissensus**

In the *Politics of Aesthetics* and in *Dissensus*, Jacques Rancière proposes that some art works have the ability to function *dissensually*, which is to say, some art works have the capacity to create a sensuous divide within affective and cognitive landscapes. *Dissensus* is the process of rupture that some art works are able to present between “what is seen and what is thought, and between what is thought and what is felt.” Given the ways that neoliberalism has so thoroughly subjectivized urban inhabitants, this potential for a felt rift within the neoliberal grid of economic intelligibility is crucial for the work of stranger love.

In order to explore the notion of dissensus further, I will put Rancière’s theory into dialogue with Catherine Ryan and Amy Spiers’s participatory piece *Nothing to See here: Dispersal* to determine if it might have had the capacity to perform dissensually, and towards the cultivation of stranger love.

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First, however, it is necessary to position how Rancière conceives of artwork before exploring how artworks can disrupt the sense landscape. Rancière examines works of art as “specific distributions of space and time, of the visible and the invisible.”  

Artistic practices operate as one of the material strands in the fabric of common sense experience including spatialized structural relations, or what Rancière refers to as “the distribution of the sensible.” He argues that the shape our lives in common are comprised of a sensory system that presents itself as a series of self-evident facts of perception. The distribution of the sensible consists of a seemingly closed order of what is visible and audible, as well as what can be said, felt, thought, made or done.  

Artworks create a specific sensible experience within the existing structural, spatial and sensible frameworks of a given time and space, that is, within a particular distribution of the sensible.

Most artworks function consensually, which is to say, they present a material and sense experience that does not breach the sensible framework in which it was created. Works that can be said to effect dissensus are those that are able to “change the existing modes of sensory presentation” by facilitating a disagreement between what can be seen and what can be thought, and between what is thought and what is felt.  

Dissensual works contribute a felt novelty, scepticism, or innovative insight into what is sensually common between us.

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435 Ibid., 141.
436 Ibid.
438 Rancière, Dissensus, 141.
In this way, some artworks can be politically potent in their ability to alter and potentially challenge the self-evidence of the sensible frameworks that they emerge out of. Rancière argues that art can impact the sensible realm of our lives in common not by directly revealing injustice, not by educating for transformative action, and not by facilitating spaces for civically persuasive face-to-face encounters. Rancière contends that art does not serve as a direct cause for political education or action, and is not best conceived of as a site to form new revolutionary ways of relating.439

Artistic practices can contribute to an innovative sense landscape that makes room for different ways of perceiving, saying, feeling and doing.440 It is within a new sense landscape that political change becomes thinkable, imaginable and possible, yet not inevitable. It is up to political bodies to make use of disensual artwork; the context that the art piece exists within and is received and engaged by will determine whether or not that piece is potentially politically potent. Because of contextual engagement, art that becomes politicized towards transformative ends does not have this effect in all contexts and at all times.

Rancière discounts art practices and artworks that intend to function disensually, arguing that the rupture of disensus can never be calculated.441 Works that function disensually are always a surprise, for any strategy oriented towards this result would be tantamount to re-articulating and likely re-inscribing what is already evident within the sense landscape of a given time and space. Art that functions disensually acts like a fissure in what can be apprehended by the senses and what can be thought and felt, which

439 Ibid., 134-151.
440 Ibid., 149.
441 Ibid., 143.
has the potential but not the predictability of becoming a politically disruptive sensual opening.

The proposition that participatory art is capable of *dissensus* is something that Rancière directly refutes. He rejects this mode of artistic presentation for effecting *dissensus* because he argues that it obscures a number of artistic goals and theoretical stances.\(^\text{442}\) Most pertinent to the exploration here is Rancière’s critique that the working intention in much participatory art is towards forming bodies for particular insights and ends deliberately signified in the work. Since seeing something depicted in an artwork does not have a direct causal effect on the behaviour of the audience, Rancière argues that the artistic and social objectives of participatory art are irreparably flawed.\(^\text{443}\)

However, while much artwork included in the wide frame of participatory art is oriented towards very specific pedagogical, relational and political goals, not all of it is. Although I do not want to discount the possibility that artistic intentions might truly be effective in particular participatory works (which Rancière adamantly does), I am interested here in the ways that participatory art that leaves space for undetermined consequences might perform *dissensually*. That is, I am interested here in art that is not participatory for the preconceived purpose of education, relationship building or political/social edification. I am interested here in examples of participatory works that do not try to make us be or do differently as a matter of course.

Claire Bishop (who employs Rancière’s theory) offers a related critique of participatory art; she suggests that art forms that engage spectator’s bodies in order to be

\(^{442}\) Ibid., 134-151.

\(^{443}\) Ibid., 136-151.
more widely accessible operate with problematic assumptions. The deliberate deployment of spectator’s bodies in participatory works betrays the speculation that those who exist outside of the artworld (where, she suggests, participatory works are often performed) have limited critical capacities, and thus require more carnal means for connecting to art. Frequently, participatory arts are specifically aimed at engaging marginalized populations. Bishop reads the explicit engagement of marginal bodies in participatory art practice as a re-inscription of class, gender and racial prejudices that depict poor people, women, and people of colour as requiring more deliberate bodily engagement for aesthetic understanding.

While I agree with both of these arguments—that seeing does not immediately lead to acting differently, and that there is a danger in arguing that particular populations need art to be more rudimentary thereby using the body in calculating and involving ways in order to make sense of it—I contend that participatory art’s engagement with the embodied selves of spectators does lend itself to especially disensual possibilities, and to a bearing vital to the discipline of stranger love.

The use of the body that Bishop warns against does not need to be identified as a denigration of the audience’s capacities for thought. While the practice of isolating particular populations as requiring the use of the body for artistic engagement is most certainly problematic, participatory artistic engagement creates specific and unique possibilities for sensual fissures for any audience.

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445 Ibid., 37-38.
In participatory art, sensory engagement is deliberately widened beyond vision and hearing, which are typically the two principal sensory modes of aesthetic engagement. Sometimes this expansive sensual engagement is facilitated because of pejorative assumptions, but not always or necessarily. As the participant joins in enlivening and enacting a particular art piece, the various intermingling senses involved in the act of doing, or not-doing as the case may be, become central to spectatorship. In this way, a wider spectrum of feelings and affects are potentially facilitated.

Critiques of the use of the body in participatory art like Bishop’s and others can serve to reinscribe body/mind dualisms that fail to appreciate that all of us think and feel with our whole sensuous particularity. Just as feminist philosophers, theologians and ethicists have emphasised the need to overcome the body/mind split in our intellectual and social lives, instead recognizing that all knowledge is body-mediated knowledge, so too have theorists working in the area of feminist aesthetics. Rather than the idealization of aesthetic distance as necessary for apprehending artwork, or the supposition that true appreciation of art requires that the audience be removed from connecting their own experience to the work of art, feminist artists and aestheticians have increasingly emphasized embodied and particular erotic desires, bodily sensations, a wide range of affects, and sexuality as central to aesthetic discourse, art making and artistic experience.446

In Spiers and Ryan’s *Dispersal*, which I turn to now, it is the limitations and restraint on spectators bodies, and the way that spectators react to these measures of

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direction and control, that acts as a place for critical sensuous contemplation, makes room for potentially *dissensual* ends, and is conducive towards the disposition of public neighbour love as stranger love.

**Nothing to See Here (Dispersal)**

In 2014, Australian artists Catherine Ryan and Amy Spiers presented the art piece *Nothing to See Here (Dispersal)*,\(^447\) hereafter referred to simply as *Dispersal*. The piece included twenty-two performers who were paid to execute various choreographed crowd control techniques on attendees. The performers were dressed as and portrayed the bodily comportment of security guards. At other times, they moved in synchronous dance-like movement, although even then, their movements were tough and commanding in style.

Over approximately forty-five minutes, participants were shuffled and funnelled by these security guard dancers into various spaces demarcated by barrier tape, and were denied opportunities to assemble freely. One by one, attendees were removed from the performance space, until about only ten from the original seventy-five were left. The final few attendees were kettled by the performers, which is to say, they were forcibly grouped together by the security guards encircling them, and were then caged in by fencing, with tape reading ‘nothing to see here’ wrapped around the enclosure. After being kettled, these final few were also removed from the space and escorted out to the street. At the end of the performance, all that was left were security guards watching the cleared out areas with barrier tape.

\(^{447}\) Catherine Ryan and Amy Spiers, *Nothing to See Here (Dispersal).*
I will break down the event of *Dispersal* into three areas of inquiry. First, I will briefly examine the context that this work reflects. Second, I will look to the bodily responses of participants and to my own embodied reactions as I reflect on the work. And lastly, I will examine how this piece might have functioned *dissensually* and towards the discipline of stranger love.

Spiers and Ryan’s work *Dispersal* portrays the “practice and production of division” that state and police forces utilize to control citizens, mixed with the absurdity and choreographed dance of paid performers. The work points to the disappearing of unfettered spaces for public gathering that is evidenced to in neoliberalized spaces including the Australian context. The piece also portrays the relationships within a bifurcated citizenry, where some are paid to control and guard the commons, and others are subjected to being policed within the commons. *Dispersal* shows the quality of citizenship within a globalized neoliberal context, where many of us find ourselves inertly participating in systems and structures that have the feeling of being external, massive and impenetrable, and which we do not know how to adequately contest. The work is both contextually reflective and practices a relative autonomy from direct representation. It works as a concrete representation and critique of the policing of public space and a bifurcated citizenry, and it is open to interpretation beyond what is directly depicted.

According to the footage, spectators were outwardly patient with the relational and spatial arrangements that they were a part of enacting. They appear to have done

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what they were instructed to do, and gone where they were told to go, even if that meant leaving the gallery space after waiting in line to enter and experiencing only ten minutes of being held in an over-crowded taped off area, or being shifted from barricaded area to barricaded area for half an hour and then being evicted from the space, or being one of the last spectators left, only to be caged and kettled and then made to leave.

In my observation of the footage of the piece, and as I imagined myself present in the work, the affects that were conjured included boredom, irritation, and even the sensation of suffocation as I envisioned being stuck in overcrowded security-taped blocks for unspecified amounts of time. In my imaginings of participating, however, I also experienced the feeling of anticipation. As I watched the unfolding of the piece, I waited in eagerness for some kind of resolution to the highly controlled space to be made evident. I imagine that, like the audience I watched in the recordings of the work, I too would not have stepped out of the tight order that the performer guards composed.

The audience’s compliance and my own imagined obedience can be interpreted in multiple ways. Maybe their amenability stemmed from the simple desire to remain polite and deferent to someone else’s artistic creation. Maybe they were being good audience members by allowing the work to unfold, as decent spectators ought. Maybe they did what they were told because they were anticipating some great crescendo that might help to make sense of the security guards’ spatial control—something that might make all of their waiting seem worthwhile. While these possibilities could be true at once, I want to examine this last option, this docile patience that emerged out of the posture of waiting for something to happen, because I think it is this dynamic that had the potential to function dissensually.
Dispersal had the capacity to function dis sensually not necessarily because it displayed control and symbolized violence, but because it made space to feel the embodied sensation of waiting for changes to come that never arrive. By sensuously encountering what it feels like to wait for irritating, controlling and symbolically violent practices to rectify themselves, a sensible fissure within this posture of patience was potentially facilitated. That is, the attitude of anticipation for exasperating and unjust conditions to change was possibly illuminated. This confrontation with waiting for changes that never appeared in Dispersal had the potential to help participants feel anew into the contours of patience within the participatory piece, and potentially beyond the piece.

For white middle-class neoliberalized urban inhabitants, who are both harmed by and benefit from the procedures of urban neoliberalization, many of us require prompts and felt inroads for contesting the neoliberal grid of economic intelligibility. While many of us are impaired and destructively formed by this way of city building and this frame for thinking about human being and (ir)responsibility, the extreme damages that urban neoliberalization causes are at a distance. Because of this relative security, it can feel like there is no pressing urgency to oppose the shape of our lives in common.

In light of this comparative ease within the way things are, the confrontation with the posture of patience facilitated by Dispersal had the affectual potential to surface a familiar passivity that keeps many middle-class people obedient and productive within systems that delimit our relations, and harm many of the strangers who are our neighbours. Dispersal had the capacity to facilitate a disensual fissure within this routine bearing of patience.
What emerged out of these encountered sensations within *Dispersal* after its Australian showing is unclear. No obvious avenue for resistance or inkling into what social transformation in the face of controlling and dominating forces might look or feel like was provided in this participatory work. While participants could have conceivably made connections to other systems of unjust control outside of this space (including the project of neoliberalization as I have suggested above), I am not arguing here for a direct applicability between what was affectually encountered within this piece, and what participants might go and effect afterwards. *Dispersal* made space to see and feel the posture of waiting for change afresh, but it did not prescribe a way forwards.

*Dispersal* did not necessarily make participants love their neighbours in public by provoking them to feel, imagine and act into the challenges required for contesting senselessly dominating forces, just as *Dr. Cat* did not necessarily provoke me to act justly in light of the love I felt, and felt opened to, with this family of three. Art does not inevitably or immediately provoke responsible relationality and stranger love. However, like the un-traceability of the love I experienced within *Dr. Cat*, I believe this momentary encounter with frustration—with waiting for something unknown to happen that might make the current arrangements make sense and feel legitimized—to be politically weighty in and of itself. These valences against waiting within the way things are and these moments of love within the neoliberal grid of economic intelligibility add up. What they lead to is unclear. Participatory art does not offer participants the know-how for responding differently or liberatively to the way things are, even if some works do break open the sedimented sensory landscape between us.
Conclusion

Seeing and feeling differently within a system that attempts to totalize and monetize all relations, even if only momentarily, is vital to the discipline of stranger love. Through these moments of opening to something else, something more can be imagined as possible between us as urban inhabitants.

As explored through my own emotional responses to participating in Dr. Cat and observing *Dispersal*, I am claiming that participatory art can facilitate experiences of intimacy amongst strangers (which neoliberalization works against by concealing), and even experiences of falling in love with particular strangers who temporarily become familiars, through a kind of face-to-face exchange that can gesture beyond itself. Some works are able to stimulate disruptive bodily and imaginative insights into the sense landscape within which we function, even if these insights are temporary, and even if we cannot adequately trace their applicability beyond the work itself.

Through these breaches into stranger love, hope and care for what might be can be cultivated. The emotional responses that I have traced here in examining my own participation and observation have offered cues for the consideration of how participatory art could function as a field for transgressive feeling, which might instigate transformative doing. As love and frustration with waiting surfaced within my middle-class neoliberalized self, these affects had the potential, but not the predictability or certainty, of energizing me towards responsible relationality and stranger love. This is not to say that all middle class participants will come to experience this same sort of love or a similar sense of frustration with the way things are. However, those of us who have been
subjectively formed to ceaselessly compete, relate irresponsibly within the spatialized structures that bind us together, and understand all spheres of relationship through the grid of economic intelligibility may be particularly affected by art that invites face-to-face relation (as in Dr. Cat) and by participatory works that offer embodied encounters that illumine afresh the dis-ease of urban neoliberlized life.

The affects of love and frustration within the participatory art pieces I have examined here had the potential to facilitate embodied sensual fissures into the control and distribution of the sensible; it is within these spaces that feeling love for strangers as neighbours and conceiving of work towards stranger love as justice-love can be desired into. If, as Foucault suggests, neoliberalism functions by forming the desire of subjects towards endless accumulation, the redirection of desire is crucial if we are to become moral agents committed to the practices of responsible relationality and stranger love. Participatory art has the capacity to facilitate this redirection of desire through non-monetized encounters, and through sensibly confronting neoliberal affects such as patience within the current spatial and structural arrangements.

Like the participatory democratic practices that I suggested as alternatives in the making within the procedures of neoliberalism, participatory art is not the only, or most suitable, moral-spiritual resource in each and every context. Cultivating the discipline of stranger love will certainly require more than participatory art. However, the experiences described here within the field of participatory and dissensual art made way for fresh habits and new longings within my own neoliberalized subjectivity; they offered energy—but not certainty of strategy or clarity for action—for acting responsibly and lovingly in light of the interpersonal, socio-spatial, cultural, political connective tissues.
that bind us up in a divine fascial network of love. I am suggesting that a similar potentiality exists for other neoliberalized middle class urban inhabitants. Participatory art can aim to offer moral-spiritual energy for the discipline of neighbour love precisely because it can function as a field for transgressive emotions—emotions that do things, as Ahmed suggests—that contradict the hegemonic hierarchical lines of class, race, gender, nation, etc. within neoliberalized urban contexts.

What wells up in the body, even in an instant, has the potential to shape political possibilities, but how these transgressive emotions get translated into concrete action is unclear and ambiguous. What welled up in my body while being Dr. Cat and as I envisioned participating in Dispersal surfaced feelings of love and frustration that my subjectification as a neoliberal urban inhabitant regularly obscures. However, what emerged from these feelings is uncertain. Therefore, while I found such emotional resources to provide moral-spiritual energy for working with others for cities where justice is the basic moral ligament, and while I noted past and ongoing actions that connect to this moral vision, this thesis is a bridge into future research beyond its scope.

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Chapter Five: Conclusion

This liberative feminist theo-ethic has engaged in a reflection arc that has sought to cultivate the moral vision required for middle-class moral agents to respond to the problem of economic injustice and the commodification of human life within the context of Toronto, and within urban neoliberalized contexts more broadly. I have embraced Cynthia Moe-Lobeda’s recognition that the capacity to resist evil and sin is found in seeing what is, becoming aware of alternatives, and acknowledging the “sacred powers at work in the cosmos enabling life and love ultimately to reign over death and destruction.” As I have proposed, the movements towards more just cities has hinged on these interlocking elements of moral vision.

Within this liberative feminist theo-ethical materialist method, I have utilized interdisciplinary sources. I have explored the ideological, discursive, and spatialized structural project of neoliberalization with overt attention to the ways that neoliberalization ignores, restricts and commodifies low-income people as well as ethno-cultural ‘others.’ I have argued that the moral-spiritual consequences of these economically unjust procedures on middle-class urban inhabitants has involved the absence of a sense of social responsibility for these neoliberal procedures and material relations within which all urban inhabitants are involved and related.

I have argued that in order to transform these spatialized structural sins, all urban inhabitants are responsible, but not in equal measure. Middle-income and high-income

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450 Moe-Lobeda, Resisting Structural Evil, 114.
urban inhabitants bear more responsibility for contesting the economic injustices and the commodification of human life created through the project of neoliberalization within urban centres because we are positioned with more eco-social power in relation to the interlocking spatial-structures that hold all urban inhabitants in particular eco-social relations.

This thesis has been an invitation for white middle-class Christian communities to take up relational responsibility and stranger love on city streets, in neighbourhoods, in particular places in the city, and through involving ourselves in liberative structural and spatial processes of city building. This has been a summons for middle-class urban Christians to work towards the construction of just cities. To provoke this summons, I have created a framework for practicing responsible relationality within the neoliberal context through the moral norm of public neighbour love as stranger love, and by examining my own emotional responses as offering cues for wider possibilities, I have presented the case for participatory art as a moral-spiritual resource towards these efforts.

In Chapter Two, I considered the dialogical relationship between neoliberalized space and neoliberalized subjectivity. I examined the economic injustices that urbanized neoliberalization in Toronto has produced, and I considered the subjectivizing impacts of these neoliberal practices and procedures. Through my examination of The Three Cities Within Toronto report, I proposed that the emergence of socio-spatial polarization ought to be understood as an outcome of neoliberal urbanization. I explored the phenomenon of gentrification as a prime example within the context of Toronto of neoliberal spatialization.
I reflected on some of the ways that neoliberalism imparts the belief that care and connectedness between individuals and within communities are perceived to be naïve idealizations that cannot realistically organize life in common. Through the prioritization of the needs and desires of economic elites and the neglect and/or commodification of the needs and desires of low-income people and variously positioned ethno-cultural ‘others,’ neoliberal urbanization forms neoliberal subjects who experience themselves to be atomized and individually responsible for their failures and successes within the neoliberal grid of economic intelligibility.

In Chapter Three, I developed an understanding of structure and spatiality as the interacting fields within which urban inhabitants are connected in relations of in/justice, including those involved in the practice of neoliberalism.

I considered what responsibility for these shared arrangements entails for middle class urban inhabitants within the context of urban neoliberalism, and Toronto more specifically. I considered participatory planning and the right to the city, as well as coalitions of resistance more broadly, as responsibly relational alternatives to neoliberal practice. I framed these coalitional efforts as attempts towards solidarity, right-relatedness and liberation from structural sins.

In Chapter Four, I developed an interpretation of neighbour love as stranger love, which I discerned as an appreciation of love as a discipline for disciples of Jesus that includes the feeling and doing of love amongst familiars and strangers. To construct this interpretation of neighbour love as stranger love, I developed and deployed the
metaphor of God’s body as made up of connective tissues of love, which draws this interdependent creation towards the practice of justice/love.

Next, I put this moral norm of public neighbour love as stranger love into dialogue with the moral-spiritual resource of participatory art. I examined two particular works of participatory art in order to discern what kind of transgressive emotions that these creative environments opened up for the discipline of public neighbour love as stranger love. I surfaced face-to-face non-monetized relational exchange and the occurrence of *dissensus*—or the experience of a sensuous and affective disruption within the current distribution of the sensible—as goods that are potentially, but not certainly, relevant for the work of stranger love. In turning to the material of my own embodied emotional responses, I argued that participatory art can serve as a field for transgressive emotions in relation to the edifice of neoliberalization, which have the potential, but not predictability, of providing moral-spiritual energy for the work of stranger love. By engaging my own emotional landscape, I attended to but one manner and means of subjective transformation required for resisting neoliberalization. Participatory art can open pathways for feeling differently within the project of neoliberalization, which, I have claimed, is essential to the work of constructing more just cities.

**Towards Just Cities**

In a discipline such as liberative theo-ethics, the orientation of thought is often towards what can and ought to be made possible for the future in light of a given context. That is, this is often a discipline where the direction of critique is for normative, practical and hopeful ways of being and doing. Further, utopic thought has a long history as it relates to
urbanism and urban planning. Utopian dreams often point to what is absent within the current distribution of the sensible, and function to help a given community imagine possible futures of spatial and structural justice.

The process of translating ideals into reality, however, or utopian dreams into concrete plans, is certainly not straightforward or very often directly feasible. While this is not the aim of utopic visions as such, the materialization of utopic plans—particularly into the design of cities—has a history of “failed” aims. As is clear in the alternative visions of the ‘good city’ that planners such as Ebenezer Howard dreamt of in the early twentieth century, the institutionalization of utopic urban plans frequently comes at the cost of the ideals themselves.\footnote{451 Peter Hall, \textit{Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of urban planning and design in the twentieth century} (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 3.} Howard dreamt and designed the plans for a city that could exist outside of and beyond capitalist modes of relation and foster the co-operative nature of the human person, but as his proposals for Garden City developed and materialized, the same economic injustices that he sought to respond to had emerged within the alternative city that had been founded.\footnote{452 Ibid., 110-141.}

This is not to say that utopian urban plans are dreamt in vain, only that this has not been my project. As a theo-ethicist, I am certainly not trained to develop another well-intended, but most likely impractical, utopic urban schema, and yet theo-ethics is a discipline rooted firmly in the faith and hope that something better is possible based on a the belief that the power of God, or as I have explored it here, the love of God, exists
“with, in, and among human beings and other creatures and elements of Earth,” and encourages and inspires the universe toward the practice of justice-love.453

What theo-ethics can offer to this process of urban transformation is a consideration of the moral obligations required for this effort, an examination of values to guide this imprecise process, as well as the moral vision for this work. As Timothy Gorringe argues in relation to the built environment (including the built environments of cities), the problems that exist “are not primarily technical but spiritual, that is to say, they are fundamentally a question of values, of our understanding of the whole human project.”454 I have sought to respond to the problems of urban economic injustice and the commodification of human life wrought by urban neoliberalization by cultivating these necessary requirements for moral agency.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, there is a dialectical relationship between the way cities are built and the kind of subjects/agents that are generated through these processes. From a theoethical lens, the inquiry into what kinds of cities we ought to build has led to inquiry into what kinds of people—or moral agents—that we ought to be. In order to construct cities where economic inequality is not reinforced and intensified through the process of urban neoliberalization, but rather where the well-being of all inhabitants might guide the practices and process of city building, a significant component of what is required is the subjective transformation on the part of urban inhabitants. An initial and ongoing step to urban transformation ought to include attention to, and cultivation of, the moral agency and moral formation of urban inhabitants

453 Moe-Lobeda, Resisting Structural Evil, 140.
(particularly the middle-class given the eco-social power of those of us in the middle) to become responsibly relational and stranger loving. These ways of being together can be stimulated through participation in coalitional work for social transformation, and can be affectively experienced and ignited through partaking in particular works of participatory art.

The hope I have discerned throughout this project, and the normative direction that I believe can help counter urban economic injustice and neoliberal subjectivities, exists within and beside what is already at work here and now in neoliberal cities. In turning to participatory planning and the right to the city as alternatives to the building practices promoted in urban neoliberalization, and in considering the moral-spiritual resource of participatory art, I have intentionally stayed with alternatives and moral-spiritual resources that are in practice already here and now. I have looked to the present for seeds of hope for the future. As J.K. Gibson Graham suggests in relation to post-capitalist economic development, “in the absence of clear instructions about where to start, we are afforded the ubiquitous starting place of here and now.”

Other ways of constructing cities are possible, and there are valences into these possibilities within the current distribution of the sensible. The “modest beginnings and small achievements” that are already here in the form of participatory democratic practice, coalitions of solidarity within neoliberal cities and responsibly relational exercises in urban construction ought to be employed as our guide into processes, spatialities, and structures that we cannot yet entirely fathom or plan for.

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456 Ibid., 196.
Hope in God’s Body

As a middle-class Christian participating within the spatialized and structural sins of urban neoliberalism, my hope also exists through the belief that there is movement within the fascial network of our connected bodies that is arcing towards justice-love. As Gregory Baum suggests, “God is graciously present in the whole of humanity. People wrestling with issues of truth and justice are not simply left to their own limited resources: they are deeply touched by a light and a strength not of their own making: the sign of God’s gracious presence.” My hope for this city, and for our interconnected lives more broadly, exists because I believe that God’s embodied presence is organized like connective tissues of love that draws all of creation towards the practice of responsible relationality and justice-love. Conceiving of God’s body as made up of connective tissues of love offers gestural cues for additional values and norms necessary towards the construction of just cities. As I argued in the last chapter, the universe as God’s body full of God’s connective tissues of love can be imagined through supporting, protecting, binding, and stabilizing behaviours. Each of these behaviours and more is essential for the construction of just cities.

Just cities will necessarily support the diversity of all urban inhabitants not in order to construct civic or neighbourhood identity, not in order to commodify differences, and not in order to fetishize and essentialize differences as always good in and of themselves. Just cities will allow for the differences that are present and produced within the city to be represented within the procedures of institutionalized city building. Just

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457 Gregory Baum, Compassion and Solidarity: The Church for Others (Toronto, ON: CBC Enterprises, 1987), 71.
cities will seek to rectify and transform differences that exist because of unjust socio-spatial arrangements.

Just cities will protect low and mixed-income neighbourhoods within the city from being gentrified. Just cities will be those that prioritize planning for low-income inhabitants, while at the same time, seeking to transform the conditions that make and keep people poor. Just cities will be those that have inhabitants within them that recognize that all urban inhabitants are bound up together in structural-spatial relations that require responsible action. Just cities will be those that stabilize the procedures and policies of institutional city building apart from the practices of the neoliberal market.

Together, and in recognition that we are irreducibly bound up in relation, we must cultivate practices, conditions, structures and spatialities within urban contexts that promote right relations between us, which is to say, relations wherein all participants have what they need to thrive and where all inhabitants have meaningful opportunities to shape the structures and spaces of our lives in common.

**Exercising Hope**

As particular manifestations of community within God’s body, urban churches and Christian fellowships can be sites for working towards just cities. One of the ways that churches can engender such action is through the lived and everyday *exercise of hope*. As Keri Day argues in relation to black feminist and womanist social movements, hope can be understood as “a social practice oriented toward love and justice.”

Hope can be understood as “a virtue, disposition, and practice to remain committed to liberative

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projects of human flourishing despite the messy, contradictory, viscous, and complex experiences of life.”459 As communities committed to loving neighbours and strangers, churches can be counter-publics that help its members to become justice-love seeking moral agents in response to the malforming subjectivizing practices of neoliberalism. They are certainly not always or necessarily such communities, but they can be and ought to be. Churches can be communities wherein members cultivate and exercise hope through ritual, prayer, and community practices of solidarity. These exercises of hope can be conduits towards feeling and acting into liberative possibilities; they can offer moral-spiritual energy for the work of constructing just cities.

One example of an ecclesial exercise of hope within the neoliberal context of Toronto is Parkdale United Church’s outreach project Phoenix Place. In response to the housing crisis in this city and to the presence of poverty in this gentrifying neighbourhood, Phoenix Place has a mission “to be home to people whose options may be limited by poverty, disability, age or other unjust cause through the provision of affordable, clean, quiet and safe shelter. This we undertake as an expression of our Christian faith.”460 In 1973, the congregation of Parkdale United Church voted to demolish their original church building in order to construct Phoenix Place in its site. A congregation still meets here, but the majority of the land upon which the church building once stood is used for the purposes of offering affordable housing in a neighbourhood where rent continues to increase. Basic rent (including utilities) for a bachelor apartment

459 Ibid., 135-136.
at Phoenix Place is $640.00/month,\textsuperscript{461} whereas the average for a bachelor within the Greater Toronto Area in 2017 was $1317.00/month.\textsuperscript{462} By offering housing at this price, Parkdale United is practicing solidarity, responsible relationality and neighbour love within a gentrifying and increasingly neoliberalized area of the city. That is, this congregation is exercising hope.

While my hope resides in the belief that God’s body—and all of its particular and interconnected fibres—yearns towards justice-love, I also recognize that hope includes and is generated through collective action (such as exhibited by Parkdale United) and ongoing practices for liberation. Hope is not the passive belief that God’s body might organically produce justice and just-cities, but rather hope exists in the active conviction that God works in and through our collective and cooperative efforts for building the conditions for justice-love in cities.

Hope for a just city is in the making of just spatial and structural urban practices. Hope for a just city is found in transforming the values, ideals and ideologies that govern our lives in common. We do this work of hope by resisting the competitive, atomistic and individually responsible subjects that neoliberal practice constructs, and by becoming moral agents who together—and with constant commitment to “the complexity of identity formation in relation to difference”\textsuperscript{463}—enact new ways of being together as we create spaces and processes in the city that are oriented towards stranger/neighbour justice-love.

\textsuperscript{461} Ibid.
As an exercise of hope, participatory democratic practices and coalitions of solidarity within neoliberal cities that foster empathic connections offer possibilities for mutuality in relationship by sharing tasks to intervene into renegotiating the arrangements of power in the planning of cities. As discussed in Chapter Three, within the practice of participatory planning there is an expansion of who is consulted and considered in the design of urban space. Within this process, efforts are usually made for power to be shared between multiple and diverse moral agents. Through this sharing of power, coalitions of solidarity for constructing a just city (such as participatory planning) can facilitate the conditions for mutuality, which, as Carter Heyward notes, is “sharing power in such a way that each participant in the relationship is called forth more fully into becoming who she is—a whole person with integrity.”464 By making pathways for other—more empathic—ways of relating, and by arranging constellations of power and decision making so that all members are meaningfully consulted and considered, coalitions of solidarity can incarnate justice-love into the processes of city building and into the material spaces of a city.

These participatory democratic practices are ways of exercising hope as solidarity and they must always, as Marilyn Legge notes, practice self-criticality.465 Responsible relationality and neighbour love as stranger love look different context by context, and these norms are never achieved in communities once and for all. It is essential that collective efforts towards constructing cities based on these ways of being together—including ecclesial work towards just cities, as well as the efforts of participatory

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465 Ibid.
planning and the right to the city movement—remain constantly curious and evaluative of whether or not their labours, processes, and impacts incarnate these norms.

**Contributions of this Research**

The contributions of this project have included the development of a feminist liberative theo-ethical position on urban spatialized structural economic injustice and urban neoliberalization. By engaging with interdisciplinary critical social theory and liberative theo-ethics, I have woven together a framework for how to think about the causes and consequences of geographically observable urban economic disparities as emerging from the materialized ideology of neoliberalism, and I have suggested possible alternatives, and potential resources for becoming responsible towards creating these just alternatives.

My explorations of responsible relationality and public neighbour love as stranger love have added to theo-ethical discourses on relationality, responsibility, love and justice. Likewise, my metaphor of the universe as God’s body as made up of connective tissues of love has contributed to the field of metaphorical theology by including contemporary research into this biological category for a fresh theo-ethical imaginary.

This study has also included the development of a position on the moral relevancy of art, and participatory art specifically. In so doing, it contributes from a Christian liberative materialist feminist theo-ethical perspective to discourses that seek to consider the connections and conflicts between ethics and aesthetics.
Directions for future Research

In our efforts towards constructing just cities, we will need to consider what it means to be relationally responsible and loving in the city alongside of the various animals, plants, insects, dirt, rocks, and waters that inhabit this city. We must consider what it means to practice responsible relationality and stranger love as we plan and construct buildings, sidewalks, park systems, transit systems, housing systems, school systems, health care systems, public spaces, etc. Being responsibly relational as an urban inhabitant requires that we consider what responsibility and justice-love require in relation to the entire living and non-living city.

Being responsibly relational as urban inhabitants will also require sensitivity to interscalar relations—which is to say, to various and intertwined geo-spatial scales. We cannot build just cities without considering how cities are connected to, dependent upon, and thereby responsible within eco-systems as well as rural, suburban, exurban, provincial, national and global spatialized and structural relations.

A major omission in this work has been the lack of investigation into what it means to practice responsible relationality and stranger love in the city of Toronto as someone not indigenous to this land, but rather as someone who benefits from the procedures of settler-colonialism. This land that the city of Toronto is constructed upon is on the historical territory of the Huron-Wendat, Petun, Seneca and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the New Credit Indigenous peoples. This territory is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the lands and resources
around the Great Lakes. Toronto is still home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. Creating more just cities, and a more economically just Toronto in particular, will necessitate that Indigenous peoples are central to the process at every step.

As I continue with this work into the future, I hope to explore these substantial gaps. An economically just city necessarily and ardently extends to the first peoples of this land, and to the built and ‘natural’ environment. There can be no economically just city without justice for all the city’s human inhabitants and other-than-human life.

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