Book review

A Caring City: Ethics of an Urban Design

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Maria Cheshire-Allen*
Swansea University

A Caring City: Ethics of an Urban Design explores the connection between urban design and care. It is deeply influenced by an understanding of care belonging to the field of care ethics - an approach that broadly frames care and caring as an ethical concept infused with moral and power relations (Tronto, 2015). This collection provides a timely and welcome addition to what is understood to be a disparate and loosely connected field. It suggests the foundation for a theoretical framework for understanding how urban design can support human capabilities and flourishing. In detail, developed through nine connected chapters, and drawing upon primary research conducted in six countries, the author seeks to broaden the urban lens beyond the physical and material environment. A central argument is presented on how design can shape care practices but also how it can embody and be a care ethic practice in and of itself.

The founding characteristics of a caring city are outlined in Chapter 2, which begins by noting how urban design is typically considered the antithesis of a caring city. It is more readily understood to be neglectful of need and reinforce division and inequities. Informed by the seminal works of Joan Tronto (2015) Selma Sevenhuijsen (2003) and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), the resultant 'six ways of thinking of the materiality of care' provide conceptual wayfaring throughout the compendium. Importantly, how good caring outcomes are assessed is clarified at the outset and is influenced by a capabilities approach to well-being (Nussbaum, 2011).

The second section of Chapter 2 looks at the process of care and reflects on the need to acknowledge how urban design can switch from the historical paternalistic trend of 'caring about'. It is suggested that this 'top-down' tendency of care can serve to encode and solidify assumptions about community and population needs and stereotypes. An ethical caring design, on the other hand, fosters a far more democratic and co-produced approach. The author continually returns to these founding concepts to extend ideas about urban design and indeed care ethics as a practical embodiment of what it means to care.

The self-stated aim of Chapter 3 is to discern what design and place can tell us about the social construction of care. Empirical findings based on two case study sites in South London and Vienna are presented. The author notes the importance of place on the social construction of care, and how it can reinforce stereotypes and prejudice. Drawing upon interviews with the architect of an Alms-housing project in South London, the key concepts provided by Tronto (2015) are developed to argue the Almshouses can be understood to provide opportunities for what could be described as a site helping them to cultivate capabilities and new opportunities (p.63).

Chapter 4 attends to concepts contained within urban design relating to accessibility and universality and the intersection of these ideas with caring spaces. The author adeptly connects these concepts with welfare theory and practice, referring to the important work of care ethicist Daniel Engster (Engster, 2015). The case study presented is particularly illuminating describing how with care-infused design practice, designers consider accessibility to space without assumption of need. This, it is noted, avoids determinism and encourages residents themselves to decide how space can be used and experienced. This resonates with Tronto's five aspects of care ethic, and the example shows clearly what a responsive care ethic can offer urban design and what can be truly yielded from such an endeavour and approach.

The second case study described in this chapter is Kampung Admiralty in the city-state of Singapore. This example is particularly pertinent given Singapore's family support law that in effect obligates families to care for ageing and older family members (Mehta et al., 2017). Extending the discussion here to the connections made previously with the work of Engster would make the book even more valuable and of significance to students and scholars of social policy and welfare theory.

The following chapter (5) provides a distinctive exploration of the role of atmosphere and design. Two case studies address issues of atmosphere relevant to care. The first focused on atmospheric pollution and its connections to the daily care of children in Copenhagen. A second comparative case study is presented located in Valencia, Spain, where a new 'green lung' urban space has been designed within a heavily populated area within the inner-city. Both case studies provide useful insights into how air quality and broader notions of atmosphere in urban design can be politicised - ultimately to improve the health and wellbeing of populations.

Chapter 6 is devoted to understanding how care and needing to be cared for as a universal condition evolves and changes over time and the role of urban design in supporting this. Here the book offers what could be described as a slightly romanticised version of care. Nevertheless, the case study examples are thought-provoking and deeply descriptive. The first is a self-build neighbourhood in the city of Indore in India known as the Aranya Low-Cost Housing scheme. This case study is particularly notable as the only one of two case studies drawing evidence from a low-middle income country, and it reports on findings taken with 11 family groups living within the housing project in Indore. The second case study reported upon is a social housing project, again in Vienna. Both projects, the author notes, are heavily state subsidized. Absent here is a deeper discussion on the implications of these types of sociopolitical arrangements and the enabling conditions for state-funded support for these projects.

The final case study chapter presented in Chapter 7 is focused on place attachment, care, and discontinuity, and drawing from an example provided in Bermondsey, London. This chapter provides balance to the preceding sentimentalist accounts of care and the caring city. The findings report on residents' experiences of living in the shadow of the Shard, which is emblematic of displacement and redevelopment. The author sensitively develops this chapter to provide insights as to how residents can and do exercise power

and control and develop mechanisms to guard against displacement and extreme negative development such as 'social cleansing'.

We hear from forms of participatory democracy within housing organisations that defend and promote the rights of residents. Here important connections are made between key housing law reform in the UK, in the form of the Right to Buy scheme that saw many local communities displaced and forced to outlying areas.

The focus of the final empirical chapter is how urban design can support future generations, drawing upon a case study site in Bengaluru, India. This account reports on the restoration of water management infrastructures to revitalize groundwater reserves. The second case study is a net zero housing project in South Wales, UK. Both offer important insights into how sociopolitical and historical arrangements impact design and architecture's ability to enact caring design and development. The last section reflects on the Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and the seeming implementation gap between the progressive aspirations of the Act and the demands of investment and profit-making that is motivating much urban design in the UK.

From the outset, the author acknowledges that this collection should not be read as a toolkit or roadmap for caring cities. The case studies provided are suggestive rather than illustrative and are thought-provoking and highly descriptive. However, the case studies presented do not sufficiently explore the interrelationships between state-driven welfare policies and implications for urban design. With additional social care policy insights, the collection would have a far broader appeal and greater relevance to students and scholars of sociology, social care and family welfare policy. Furthermore, absent from the discussions is how these contemporary examples of ethical urban design can be adopted at scale. This question is connected to the lack of a deeper social policy analysis. The potential for extending care ethics into the analysis of power relations within and between different forms of urban design and governance is crucial. From a care ethics perspective, care must be placed within larger sociopolitical contexts, ensuring our perspective moves beyond personal relationships into the political realms. Despite this however, this book is significant in that it extends care ethics into urban design and provides a compelling and thorough foundation for future work in this area.

*Correspondence address: Maria Cheshire-Allen, Senior Research Fellow. Swansea University, Singleton Park, Swansea, SA2 8PP. Email: m.cheshire-allen@swansea.ac.uk

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