The special session “everyday ethics & the urban. Care, habit and phronesis” took place during the 2016 meeting of the American Association of Geographers (AAG) in San Francisco, held from March 29th to April 1st. It was organized by Kathryn Furlong, co-director of Ethics and Environment Group at the Centre for Research on Ethics’ (CRE), and Marie-Noëlle Carré, post-doctoral researcher in the same group. This session sought to explore a range of issues bringing urban scholarship and geographies of ethics into conversation (see the list of papers below).

Existing geographies of ethics have an important, yet largely overlooked, contribution to make to urban scholarship. Since Lefebvre’s (1968) “right to the city”, research has examined a range of urban issues and processes for their implications on justice and equity. These include capital flows (Harvey, 1973), technical change (Soja, 2010), informality (Roy, 2004), and environmental hazards (Sze, 2007), to name just a few. Despite the richness and breadth of this work, an engagement with insights from ethics is rare (an exception being Gary Bridge). Recently, the field has gained new attention, with two sets of papers in Progress in Human Geography (Barnett, 2011, 2012, 2014; Popke, 2006, 2007, 2009) and two special issues (Ghorra-Gobin, 2010; Olson & Sayer, 2009). An ethical approach brings the everyday decisions and actions of those who inhabit cities into analyses in ways that can be productively integrated with questions of scale, uneven development, political ecology, assemblage, southern urbanisms, and so on. In a time when cities are called to be competitive, green, adaptable, efficient, open for investment, all while combating obesity, inequality and climate change, an ethical perspective can add richness by taking us beyond institutional exigencies to debates about care, capabilities, habit, and phronesis.

Geographies of ethics and current issues

Several papers of the special session drew out the importance of a relational approach to understand normative issues related to service provision, governance and professional practices. Natasha Cornea explored the connections between ethics and the everyday governance of parks, ponds, and urban neighbourhoods in West Bengal. She underlined the entanglements between moral obligation to the poor and situated practices of power and infrastructure. Similar themes were raised in Olivia Molden’s contribution on water infrastructure in Katmandu valley (Nepal). Molden discussed the complexity of decisions both in terms of routine and of exception. She introduced the importance of considering the gaps between local and global representation of urban space in dealing with ethics. This multiscalar and multisituated concern was shared by Aurélie Quentin and Marianne Morange in their paper on street trading in Quito (Ecuador) and Cape Town (South Africa). For them, engaging with the right to the city now implies a consideration the moral views and justifications of actors in cities of the South. Kathryn Furlong insisted on the importance of considering urban service provision through the perspectives of those who engage in their provision. In paying attention to the work of service providers, more complexity and richness can be added to discussions of the normative
principles that guide service provision. Marie-Noëlle Carré tried to go further with this reflection while discussing the individual reasons to recycle a closed sanitary landfill in a metropolitan area context. Sarah Marie Hall provided an insightful reflection on how relationships of care are structured in times of crisis. She concentrated on ethical issues that shape spaces of hope and despair in the context of austerity in England. Her fieldwork in collective cooking groups grounded her reflection on how an ethics of care can help to better understand austerity as both a socioeconomic and a personal condition. Michaela Busenkell and Rainer Kazig both engaged with the practice in architecture and urbanism. Busenkell clarified the tensions and collaborations present in efforts to turn Singapore into a “creative city”. Ethics permeates performative practices of the architects involved, as they are expected to shape the “good life” in the city. However, creativity is a multidimensional concept and offers space for the expression of divergent forms of urban ethics. Kazig concentrated on everyday esthetics as an experience of the “good life” in an urban environment. For him, aesthetics merits more debate in urban studies, as it presents an opportunity to renew discussion on wellbeing.

Geographies of ethics and epistemic renewal

The contributions suggest the importance of normative theories for the social sciences as well as their relevance for many facets of geography (Olson, Sayer, 2009). Shin Alexandre Koseki argues that geographers should investigate the individual and social production of moral and ethical systems and practices instead of reducing their research to the moral and ethical beliefs of their scientific community. He seeks to bridge the gap between care and ethics in geography, through and engagement with the notion of “caring at a distance” (Silk, 2000). Ege Moritz echoes this call for more reflexivity in the everyday practices of geographers. He recommends remaining cautious and reflexive about the consequences of creating moral hierarchies within the social science. Similarly, Sarah Marie Hall’s personal engagement in her fieldwork gave her the opportunity to think about the responsibilities of the geographer (Massey, 2009). For her part, Aurélie Quentin reported her difficulties in opening a conversation with neo-marxist researchers about the right to the city beyond structure. By way of conclusion, we might say that most the papers argued for innovation in geographies of ethics in urban research. This could involve engaging related philosophical approaches, like pragmatism, as presented by Kathryn Furlong, or the renewal of existing approaches in geography like Urban Political Ecology, as suggested by Natasha Cornea. This special session provided a rich opportunity to address the trystic of “ethics, space, action” (Tollis, 2010) in our analyses of a globalized world.
Everyday governance practices and moralities in urban West Bengal

**Natasha Cornea**, PhD, Institute of Geography and Sustainability, University of Lausanne (Switzerland)

Spaces of hope or despair? An ethnography of the ethics, spaces and politics of everyday austerities

**Sarah Marie Hall**, Geography, University of Manchester (United Kingdom)

The political currency of tradition: water infrastructure and provincial urbanism in the Kathmandu Valley

**Olivia Molden**, PhD Student. University of Oregon. Eugene, OR (United States)

Phronetic landscapes. Engaging with a methodological approach of metropolitan sustainability

**Marie-Noëlle Carré**, Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre de Recherche en Éthique and Université de Montréal (Quebec, Canada)

Singapore Idiom: Urban Ethics between the Constructions of Space and Architecture Practices of a Creative City

Prof. Dr. **Gordon Winder**, Professor of Economic Geography and Sustainability Research and Teaching Unit Economic Geography and Tourism Research Department of Economic Geographie, LMU Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich (Germany)

**Michaela Busenkell**, Dipl.-Ing. Architektur Department of Economic Geographie, LMU Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich (Germany)

Associated Sub-project of the research group “Urban Ethics – Conflicts about the Good Conduct of Life in 20th and 21st Century Cities”

Everyday Ethics and Urban Service Provision: Engaging with care, capability, habit, and phronosis

**Kathryn Furlong**, Professor, Department of Geography, Université de Montréal (Quebec, Canada)

**Marie-Noëlle Carré**, Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre de Recherche en Éthique and Department of Geography, Université de Montréal (Quebec, Canada)

**Tatiana Acevedo**, Ph.D Student, Department of Geography, Université de Montréal (Quebec, Canada)

Situating urban ethics: toward a reflexive approach to ethicization and normativity

Professor **Moritz Ege**, Institut of Cultural Anthropology / European Ethnology, University of Göttingen (Germany)
Moral, Ethics and Geography: An Empirical Perspective on Political, Economical and Sociability Behaviors
Alexandre Shin Koseki, Ph. D candidate. EPFL, Lausanne (Switzerland)

Street trading and the right to the city in Quito and Cape Town: a matter of justice?
Marianne Morange, Senior Lecturer in Geography and Urban Studies at Paris Diderot University, UMR CESSMA (France)
Aurélie Quentin, senior lecturer in Geography and Urban Studies in Paris Ouest Nanterre University, UMR LAVUE (France)

Everyday aesthetics of the urban sphere : an ethical problem ?
Dr. Rainer Kazig, Ecole Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture de Grenoble (France)