An ecological approach to affective injustice

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Abstract

There is growing philosophical interest in "affective injustice": injustice faced by individuals specifically in their capacity as affective beings. Current debates tend to focus on affective injustice at the psychological level. In this paper, I argue that the built environment can be a vehicle for affective injustice — specifically, what Wildman et al. (2022) term "affective powerlessness". I use resources from ecological psychology to develop this claim. I consider two cases where certain kinds of bodies are, either intentionally or unintentionally, deprived of access to goods affording the development and maintenance of their subjective well-being: hostile architecture and masking practices in autism. This deprivation, I argue further, leads to a significant weakening and diminishment of their spatial agency, hinders their well-being, and in so doing gives rise to a pervasive experience of affective powerlessness. By drawing attention to these themes, I show that an ecological approach helpfully supplements existing approaches. It highlights how affective injustice can emerge via the way bodies are positioned in space, and the central role that built environments play in determining this positioning.

There is growing philosophical interest in "affective injustice": injustice individuals face specifically in their capacity as affective beings (Archer & Mills, 2019).[1] It involves limitations on our ability to experience, express, regulate, interpret, and share our emotions and other feelings. Varieties of affective injustice arise, for instance, when members of an oppressed group are forced to suppress their anger — even when this anger is warranted, such as when confronting racism or sexual harassment. Oppressed groups are told by others *what* and *how* to feel (Cherry, 2019; see also Archer & Matheson, 2022).

Many debates focus on how affective injustice plays out at the psychological level. It is said to arise via the interplay between (1) the beliefs, practices, attitudes, and evaluative dispositions of those in power that (2) actively suppress, block, or dismiss the emotional experiences of those who lack such power. The former harms the latter's ability to feel. But affective injustice is *embodied*, too, in rich and subtle ways (Whitney, 2018). It shapes how we carry ourselves through the world as embodied subjects, how we develop and experience our agency and sense of self. Moreover, since the character and dynamics of our embodiment are shaped by the environments that make up our lifeworld — environments that support (or constrain) our agency and sense of self — a properly situated, or what I'll here term "ecological", approach is needed.

An ecological approach asks: how should we understand cases where affective injustice is deeply embedded within — and perhaps built into — structures of our sociomaterial environment? What might it mean to speak of affective injustice as *materialized* within designed spaces that make some bodies feel less at home than others?

I argue that the built environment can be a vehicle for affective injustice — specifically, what Wildman et al. (2022) term "affective powerlessness" — and use resources from ecological psychology to support this claim. I consider two cases where certain kinds of bodies are, either intentionally or unintentionally, deprived of access to goods that afford the development and

[1] I am very grateful for the careful and detailed feedback from an anonymous reviewer. My thanks also to Francisco Gallegos for organizing the original workshop on affective injustice that prompted my thinking about these issues, and for his feedback on this article. I'd also like to thank Lucy Osler and Tom Roberts for many conversations about this material, and for commenting on earlier versions of this manuscript.

maintenance of their subjective well-being: hostile architecture and masking practices in autism. This deprivation, I argue further, leads to a significant weakening and diminishment of their spatial agency, hinders their well-being, and in so doing gives rise to a pervasive experience of affective powerlessness. By drawing attention to these themes, I show that an ecological approach can helpfully supplement existing approaches. It highlights how affective injustice emerges via the way bodies are positioned in space, and the central role built environments play in determining this positioning.

Background

Affective injustice is receiving an increasing amount of attention in various philosophical quarters. This is a relatively new area of debate (Archer & Matheson, 2022; Archer & Mills, 2019; Gallegos, 2022; Plunkett, 2021; Srinivasan, 2018; Whitney, 2018). But it has already proven to be a fertile area of work. It highlights aspects of injustice — specifically, its social and emotional costs — that may be obscured or overlooked when focusing on other more traditional topics (e.g., epistemic, economic, or political harms).

Simply put, affective injustice is a kind of injustice people face specifically in their capacity as affective beings (Archer & Mills, 2019). Of course, the world is full of injustice. It shapes the lives of those it touches in different ways. However, some injustice confers harms specifically, or most acutely, to an individual's *feelings*: their moods, emotions, motivations, evaluations, affective dispositions, attitudes, and other so-called "valenced" states. But this does not mean that injustice cannot be multi-tracked, in that it simultaneously confers other non-affective harms, too.

For example, economic inequalities create unjust conditions that disadvantage many. Consider the so-called "poverty tax" (Karger, 2007). People with low incomes or who live in poor areas often face a variety of costs — not just monetary but also in terms of time, health, and opportunity costs — that people with higher incomes do not. Poorer neighborhoods tend to have fewer doctor's offices, medical facilities, pharmacies, public transportation links, and full-service

grocery stores and supermarkets with fresh food than do wealthier communities. This diminished access makes it more challenging and time-consuming to get everyday goods needed for health and wellbeing. Additionally, poorer neighborhoods tend to have fewer employment opportunities. Residents spend more time on longer commutes and incur higher transportation costs than do their wealthier counterparts.

These are some of the many practical and economic disadvantages low-income people face. But poverty is not just a matter of economics. There is an *emotional tax* on those who are poor. People living in poverty often experience stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues — along with stigma and trauma — because of their financial precarity (Gruebner et al., 2017). And these experiences create negative feedback loops where mental health problems lead to further "impoverishment through loss of employment or underemployment, or fragmentation of social relationships" as individuals move in and out of poverty and live generally precarious lives (Knifton & Inglis, 2020, p. 193). The key point is that the significant affective costs of poverty are obscured if we focus exclusively on economics.

Discussions of affective injustice develop from analogous worries. They consider ways that harms and disadvantages might be most acutely registered in the affective realm — again, within our moods, emotions, affective dispositions, and other feeling states and attitudes. However, as Francisco Gallegos observes, since the philosophical literature on this topic is still emerging, the notion "of an injustice faced by someone specifically in their capacity as an affective being" is fairly general — and it's unclear how we might further specify this concept (Gallegos, 2022, p. 185). I now canvass some attempts to do this.

Forms and phenomenologies of affective injustice

Again, injustice takes many forms and develops across multiple timescales. We can speak of fleeting injustice that happens in the moment as well as injustice that plays out over longer periods of time. And this is true for affective injustice, too. I can be bullied and face emotional abuse at work or school and experience a kind of affective injustice. But if I'm lucky, this is a one-off *synchronic* experience, or perhaps something that only happens a few times. However,

structural racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression — or perhaps repeated bullying, gaslighting, or ongoing exposure to trauma-inducing stimuli — are *diachronic* cases of affective injustice that stretch across longer timescales. So, affective injustice is temporally complex and varied. It also varies in terms of its form and phenomenology. Important work is being done to chart the landscape of varieties of affective injustice and the different experiences it elicits.

For simplicity's sake, we might divide existing accounts into three broad categories: *psychological*, *social*, and *embodied* approaches. These are not meant to be exclusive categories. There is much overlap between them. Moreover, this is not an exhaustive taxonomy. There are other ways of thinking about forms of affective injustice and other ways of carving up existing discussions. I offer these categories to organize existing accounts in a rough-and-ready way in order to better situate an ecological approach. They also help us see how different approaches highlight different aspects of the origin, form, and character of affective injustice.

Consider first a *psychological* approach. Amia Srinivasan (2018) argues that affective injustice occurs when members of oppressed groups are forced to suppress their anger at, say, the killing of another unarmed black teenager by the police or when facing sexual harassment or discriminatory practices at work. In these cases, individuals' experiences and expressions of anger are apt. They are fitting ways to affectively register and signal moral violations. But they are also cases of affective injustice. Not only do they exert a kind of "psychic tax" on victims of oppression that make them feel bad. They also force victims into difficult normative conflicts (ibid., p. 136). Victims face a double-bind: downplaying their anger for prudential ends (e.g., to avoid further angering local police or "stirring the pot" at work) versus expressing their anger to acknowledge a moral violation as such and potentially enduring a backlash (ibid., p. 132; see also Plunkett, 2021). For Srinivasan, this is the substantive (psychological) injustice.

Next, consider a *social* approach. Alfred Archer and Benjamin Matheson (2022) focus on what they term "extrinsic emotion regulation": social practices that influence how individuals experience and express certain emotions. Their central case is James McClean, a Northern Irish footballer who chooses not to participate in the practice of wearing a plastic red poppy each year to commemorate those who died fighting for the British Armed Forces. This is not meant as a

gesture of disrespect. Rather, it is a principled stand based on the British Army's role in the Bloody Sunday Massacre in 1972, where 13 unarmed civilians were killed and 15 more wounded during a peaceful protest on the streets of Derry, in Northern Ireland. McClean tells us that for those from Northern Ireland, the horror of the Bloody Sunday Massacre "is just part of who we are, ingrained into us from birth"; wearing a poppy would therefore "be seen as an act of disrespect to those people; to my people" (quoted in Archer and Matheson , 2002, p.762). McClean continues to receive abuse for his stance, including hate mail and death threats. Many insist that he should wear a poppy as a sign of respect for those who died defending the British. Archer and Matheson argue that McClean faces two forms of affective injustice: first, this social pressure is a violation of McClean's rights to feel as he chooses without undue "pressure to feel or express certain emotions" (ibid., p.9). Second, it is an example of what they term "emotional imperialism". Emotional imperialism occurs when a powerful group imposes "aspects of its culture's emotional norms and standards on another less powerful group whilst at the same time marking out the other culture's emotional norms and standards as deviant and inferior" (ibid., p. 11).

Finally, consider an *embodied* approach. Shiloh Whitney (2018) argues that different forms of affective injustice arise when members of oppressed groups fail to receive proper "uptake" — i.e., recognition and reciprocity — of their emotional expressions like distress and anger (p. 495). For Whitney, affective injustice occurs here not simply because these expressions are overlooked, ignored, or dismissed. Rather, it stems from the way this lack of uptake negatively alters how individuals experience their *body*, including their felt sense of agency and possibilities for connecting with others. Whitney argues that when an apt expression of anger, say, is refused uptake, this is not simply a failure of communication. It is also a failure of *affective discharge*. This is because the expression is not received by and taken up within *other* bodies — via inter-bodily affective "circulation" that is central to how we feel connected to others within a shared world of meaning — and it therefore becomes trapped or "quarantined" within the individual denied uptake. When this happens, the quarantined affect becomes "toxic" and confers a sense that one has undergone a kind of "affective marginalization" (Whitney 2018, pp. 497-499). And this marginalization, in turn, diminishes the individual's feeling that they are part of a shared world *in a deep bodily way*, seen and recognized by those around them. So,

while her discussion of uptake might initially seem similar to Srinivasan's (2018) psychological approach, Whitney's account differs in the way it situates affective injustice within the pre-reflective structures of our embodiment.[2]

Whitney's account — like the others — is rich and subtle. Even more than psychological and social approaches, her embodied perspective considers themes directly relevant to an ecological view. I'll return to similar themes later. Also, note that despite their different points of emphasis, these accounts of affective injustice highlight different forms they might take, as well as different experiences these forms might elicit. So, I do not see them as incompatible. Rather, they highlight different aspects of a complex, multidimensional phenomenon.

For now, I want to note an important concern raised by Francisco Gallegos. He argues that existing accounts of affective injustice, while suggestive, do not adequately "articulate or clarify the conditions on something being an affective injustice, and for this reason, important questions remain unanswered regarding the claims made by each account, as well as the relationships these accounts have to one another" (Gallegos, 2022, p. 187). Working through the accounts mentioned previously, he shows how each fails to deal with important questions such as: What might ground someone's "right to feel"? A right to emotional health? Or a right to expect reciprocity and uptake from others? And why are violations of such rights a form of affective injustice?

Gallegos' critique is helpful in mapping out further clarificatory work. I won't rehearse the details of it here. Instead, I will turn to his account of affective injustice before considering how his proposed solution helps set up an ecological approach.

Affective injustice and the absence of affective goods

[2] Trip Glazer (2019) develops a nuanced embodied account of affective injustice that considers the silencing, distorting, and exploitation of nonlinguistic forms of emotional expression (facial expressions, gestures, tones of voice, etc.). He follows Kristie Dotson and frames this phenomenon as a kind of *epistemic violence*. However, much of what he says, as I read him, is compatible with and can enrich Whitney's (2018) embodied analysis.

One way around problems with existing accounts, Gallegos argues, is to draw on the broader philosophical literature on justice (ibid., p. 189). In this literature, a common place to start is to note that justice exists when each person has the goods they are owed: things like freedoms, resources, opportunities, and forms of recognition. And *injustice*, then, is the morally objectionable deprivation of such goods. With these basic ideas in place, theories of justice and injustice can work on issues such as clarifying which goods are the most morally urgent, how these goods relate to one another, and what makes their deprivation morally objectionable (e.g., because it is unfair, disrespectful, fails to maximize utility, etc.). Gallegos argues that this literature can assist with the foundational work missing from current accounts of affective injustice.

For Gallegos, affective justice is a state in which each person has the affective goods they are owed, the goods they need to live desirable, excellent, or thriving emotional lives (ibid., p. 189). And affective *injustice*, then, is "the morally objectionable deprivation of such affective goods" (ibid., p. 189). As we'll see shortly, an ecological approach can help clarify some basic bodily ways individuals might be deprived of such goods and the means to access them.

What are "affective goods"? For Gallegos, they are things that contribute positively to our emotional lives. In particular, a "core" affective good, Gallegos argues, is *subjective well-being*. Within empirical psychology, subjective well-being encompasses *mood* (i.e., the balance of our positive and negative states), *self-esteem*, and *life-satisfaction* (i.e., an affective evaluation of ourselves and our overall life) (Diener et al., 1999; Haybron, 2010; Raibley, 2013). Gallegos considers "subjective well-being" here instead of "happiness" since the nature of the latter is philosophically contested. While subjective well-being may have its own issues, there is ample evidence that subjective well-being is instrumentally valuable in many ways. Among other things, it contributes to our physical health, cognitive functioning, relationships, work performance, and salary (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). So, while we might debate the moral value of subjective well-being and whether it is sufficient for a desirable emotional life, "its positive value for us as affective beings seems almost tautological" (Gallegos 2022, p. 190).

For these reasons, Gallegos concludes that subjective well-being is a core affective good. He argues further that subjective well-being is supported by a range of subsidiary affective goods. Subsidiary affective goods help us establish and maintain subjective well-being (ibid., p. 191). They can take different forms, including:

- *Affective freedoms*, such as freedom from interference in the pursuit of subjective well-being, including freedom from circumstances that give rise to emotional distress and negative or unpleasant emotions and moods.
- *Affective resources and opportunities*, such as materials, activities, and circumstances that contribute positively to one's subjective well-being, including nurturing interpersonal and social relationships; sleep, therapy, and other means of providing self-care; and "affective scaffolds" in the built environment that facilitate positive mood and self-evaluation.
- A*ffective recognition*, such as respectful consideration of, and responsiveness to, one's particular needs with regard to subjective well-being.

This list isn't exhaustive. But it gives an overview of some subsidiary affective goods we need to maintain our subjective well-being.

I find Gallegos' arguments convincing, including his claim that subjective well-being is a core affective good.[3] I will therefore not defend this idea further here. Instead, my aim is to support and develop this picture by using resources from ecological psychology to argue that the subsidiary affective goods Gallegos highlights can be unified at the level of the *pre-reflective body*. When bodies are deprived of access to such goods, they may experience phenomenologically and ontogenetically basic forms of affective injustice.

[3] One might worry that this emphasis on subjective well-being over-emphasizes positive emotions at the expense of other important qualities of our emotional life such as authenticity, warrant, or justification (e.g., the injustice one might feel if their justified anger is not allowed full expression). Since this worry does not directly impact my ecological focus — I do not claim to offer an exhaustive account of affective injustice, instead highlighting aspects potentially overlooked by other accounts — I set it aside. I'm grateful to Tom Roberts for raising this worry.

In this way, I want to establish some links between Gallegos' analysis and Whitney's embodied approach to affective injustice — although I'll use some different (but broadly complementary) concepts than Whitney does, again mainly drawn from ecological psychology. A virtue of this ecological perspective, I propose, is that it allows us to specify, in a concrete manner, some ways subsidiary goods are structurally and experientially *absent* for those who need them — and thus potentially lead to a kind of affective injustice. Moreover, this perspective draws attention to ways that affective injustice can be *built into* the sociomaterial structures of our lifeworld. It highlights how forms of affective injustice can emerge via the ways certain bodies are positioned in space, and the impact these positionings have on their minimal sense of agency (Marcel, 2003) — themes both Gallegos and Whitney allude to but don't make explicit. It therefore opens up new ways of thinking about embodied affective injustice, in addition to the psychological and social perspectives considered previously.

Spatial agency and finding our way through the world

Ecological psychology sees animals and environments as inseparable.[4] As we find our way through the world, we have direct perceptual contact with the different environments and spaces that make up our everyday experience. And the character and layout of these spaces presents different possibilities for us — that is, they *afford* different actions, relative to the unique structures, skills, habits, and histories of our bodies. Accordingly, to understand what minds are and what they do, we cannot just look inside our heads. We must instead adopt a *relational* perspective. This relational (or "ecological") perspective is sensitive to the sensorimotor dynamics through which basic animal-environment relations develop and are refined throughout our lives. For an ecological approach, the central task of psychology is to "ask not what's inside your head, but what your head is inside of" (Mace, 1977).

Some core concepts

[4] For helpful overviews, see Bruinberg et al. (2023), Chemero (2009), and Heft (2001).

For the present discussion, a few core concepts are relevant: "affordances", "niches", and "spatial agency". Affordances are *action-possibilities*. They are ways of relating to and acting on our world (Gibson 1979/2014). As we find our way through the world, things, spaces, and other people afford different kinds of interactions: chairs afford sitting, keyboards typing, extended hands shaking, music grooving, stairs climbing, pubs drinking and chatting, etc. Importantly, affordances are relative to the bodies that perceive them. Different bodies with unique structures, skills, habits, and histories perceive different affordances.

So, the same body may perceive different affordances at different times relative to things like age, illness, experience, intentions, interests, and many other factors.[5] The stairs in my house that normally afford climbing may become a nearly-insurmountable impediment as I age, say, or develop mobility issues or a respiratory condition leaving me perpetually short of breath (Carel, 2013). Young Black men, older White women, or homeless people may share space with others but still perceive different affordances due to sociocultural and normative factors determining what certain kinds of bodies can (and importantly, *cannot*) do within these spaces (see also Ahmed, 2006; Brancazio, 2020; Dokumaci, 2023).

These observations highlight how different bodies can inhabit the same world while occupying different "niches": affordance spaces that determine what we can do and how we might do it within a given environment (Gibson 1979/2014, pp. 120-121). For many adult humans, a chair affords sitting, standing on, or picking up. For infants, cats, lizards, and ladybugs, it affords none of these things — but it does afford crawling on or hiding under. In this way, different bodies inhabit different niches. However, the idea of a "niche" encompasses more than just practical affordances like climbing stairs or sitting on chairs. As Nick Brancazio reminds us, the character of how we perceive different niches (and the affordances that are part of it) depends on factors like "culture, social position, and identity. There may be historical issues or dynamics that would influence whether spaces are perceived as hostile, dangerous, or

[5] See Dings (2018) for a rich and novel discussion of the "self-referentiality" of affordances, as he terms it — a consideration of how our experience of affordances varies not only in relation to our bodily skills and habits but also our narrative practices, too. Rietveld and Kiverstein (2014) develop an influential treatment of how different animals experience different "landscapes" of affordances in virtue of their distinct abilities and skills.

uncomfortable for some and welcoming or comfortable for others" (Brancazio, 2020, p. 3; see also Heras-Escribano, 2019, chapter 7).

In short, *which* affordances we perceive depends upon *how* our bodies are positioned in space. And these spaces — and this positioning — are not just organized by their practical configuration but by their sociocultural and normative character, too. The notion of "spatial agency", central to my analysis in the following sections, is developed to capture the complexities and dynamics of this positioning, including its affective character.

By "spatial agency", I simply mean our ability to inhabit, negotiate, and use the different spaces we move through in everyday life.[6] As the concepts "affordance" and "niche" help clarify, different things and spaces make themselves available to be inhabited, negotiated, and used in different ways. However, as Quill Kukla notes, the phrase also encompasses "our ability to mark and transform [these spaces] in accordance with our needs and desires" (Kukla, 2022, p. 7). And some bodies have the ability or freedom to do this more readily than others. Crucially for our purposes, "spatial agency" highlights the deep connection between agency and *power* (Schneider & Till, 2009, p. 99) — a political dimension absent from many early and ongoing debates in ecological psychology.[7]

In this way, spatial agency is central to our experience of being an embodied subject in the world. We all have — or better, *are* — our bodies. To be a body is to be an agent capable of doing things in, to, and with the world and its affordances. To be embodied therefore means that we are also *emplaced*. A central insight from ecological psychology, as well as phenomenological thinkers like Husserl, Heidegger, Watsuji, and Merleau-Ponty, is that we can only understand bodies and what they can do — their agency — by considering the spaces and places in which their agency is enacted (Casey, 2013; Hunefeldt & Schlitte, 2018; Malpas, 2007;

[6] I did not come up with this concept. And it's not one ecological psychologists discuss specifically — although as we'll see, it overlaps with many themes ecological psychology is most concerned with while offering some additional descriptive and explanatory resources. The term arises in the context of architectural studies and urban design, where a number of authors call for a move away from a traditional focus on how buildings and spaces look and are made to instead also consider their impact on our ability to move, perceive, and connect with others (Awan et al., 2011; Schneider & Till, 2009).

[7] This now appears to be changing. See, e.g., Brancazio (2020), Crippen (2019), Crippen & Klement (2020), Dokumaci (2020, 2023), and McClelland & Sliwa (2022).

Seamon, 2023). This is because bodies don't just take up space. They *live* it. So, how we experience our agency, its possibilities and limits, will co-vary with the spatial structure of the different niches we encounter and create. A central insight of ecological approaches is therefore that in configuring our spaces, we are simultaneously *configuring bodily selves*. Our curated environments reflect our values, needs, preferences, and interests; they open up (or close down) possibilities for spatial agency, self-expression, and connection.

The key point for our purposes is that just as we are not neutrally in a body — we can be comfortable in our bodies or not; feel strong, healthy, confident, attractive, or the opposite of these things — we are likewise not neutrally in space (Lajoie, 2019). Again, we *live* space. It is "the home or situation in which our choosing and meaning-making capacities become possible in the first place" (Jacobson, 2020, p. 57). As landscapes of affordances, spaces are also at the same time landscapes of meaning. And they don't just tell us things about the world: e.g., what is possible for us or not; how our behavior might be enacted or interpreted in different contexts, etc. They also tell us things about ourselves. They enhance or diminish our spatial agency by dynamically shaping our sense of self as we move through them. In this way, they exert immense power over the bodies that inhabit them and, as we'll now see, potentially inflict forms of affective injustice on some of these bodies.

Constructing affective injustice: two case studies

I now consider some ways the affective dynamics Gallegos highlights play out at the pre-reflective levels of our embodiment, within our spatial agency. I do so by highlighting two cases where certain kinds of bodies are, either intentionally or unintentionally, deprived of access to subsidiary affective goods that afford the development and maintenance of their subjective well-being: "hostile architecture" and masking practices in autism. This deprivation comes about, I argue further, because some niches are designed — again, either intentionally or unintentionally — in ways that weaken or disrupt an individual's spatial agency.

In her work on an ecological approach to critical disability studies, Arseli Dokumaci refers to a similar process as "shrinkage": the process by which possible affordances are reduced in a given body-environment relation (Dokumaci, 2023, p. 19). I argue that this "shrinkage" doesn't simply have a practical impact. It has an affective character, too. It elicits something like what Wildman et al. (2022) term "affective powerlessness": the feeling that a significant portion of one's affective life is manipulated by the decisions and actions of others, those with greater affective power. This sense of affective powerlessness negatively impacts one's agency and sense of self — including one's ability to feel at home in the world and meaningfully connected to others, which is crucial for subjective well-being. It therefore might plausibly be seen as a kind of affective injustice.

Hostile architecture

Consider first so-called "hostile architecture". Discussions of hostile architecture emerged several decades ago in urban planning and design studies (Rosenberger, 2020). The phrase refers to ways the built environment is designed to control bodies in a manner hostile to their affectivity and spatial agency. Of course, *all* designed spaces are organized to control bodies in different ways. Sidewalks, crosswalks, fences, barriers, signs, lights, landmarks, and materials (e.g., large glass planes in airports and shopping areas to increase visibility) guide movement, provide useful information, and help bodies orient themselves in space. These design choices provide contextual "nudges" (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) that assist our everyday "wayfinding" (Lynch, 1960) as we make our way through the world. Think, for instance, of platform markers reminding people to "mind the gap" as they step off the train or brightly lit exit signs that help people leave. Other nudges are meant to impact habits and health, such as serving smaller wine glasses to discourage excessive drinking, placing healthy snacks instead of sugary treats near checkout counters, using footprint stickers on the ground to guide pedestrians to stairs instead of elevators, or installing "emotional spell checker" apps to scan email content and flag emotionally charged prose. These are (relatively) *benign*, as we might term them, design choices

meant to support and enhance cognition, affectivity, and spatial agency — and maybe even health and wellbeing.[8]

Hostile architecture has the opposite effect. It is an example of how the built environment is designed *against* bodies — again, specifically to diminish their spatial agency and possibilities for wayfinding.[9] To be clear, designing space to limit spatial agency is not always pernicious. We might use small barriers or cabinet locks to shrink the array of affordances available to a toddler. This is done for their safety. People with encroaching dementia may similarly simplify and shrink the affordance space of their own home — e.g., using open-storage plans where important items like pots, pans, checkbooks, and medicine are kept in plain view instead of hidden in drawers and cabinets — to assist their ability to live on their own (Drayson & Clark, 2018).

However, the cases I am concerned with here are pernicious. They are "designed to actively exclude particular categories of person" (Smith & Walters, 2018, pp. 2983–2984), that is, deprive them of resources and recognition. A well-known example of hostile architecture is installing spikes or bumps on street furniture, windowsills, ledges, in or near doorways, or under bridges and other sheltered areas. These spikes serve no functional purpose other than to prohibit certain kinds of bodies (e.g., homeless people, drug users, and other so-called "undesirables") from gathering or resting. They are designed specifically to keep these bodies from feeling at home. In this way, hostile architecture impacts agency *and* affect — both by making bodies wary or uncertain as they move through these spaces, as well as by inflicting discomfort or even pain (e.g., when trying to rest on a slanted bench or bed of spikes).

[8] Since the publication of Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) influential book on nudging, there has been much discussion about the ethics of nudging. See, e.g., Madi (2019), Kuyer & Gordjin (2023), Engelen, Osler, & Archer (forthcoming), Schlinder (2015), and Selinger & Whyte (2011). Liao & Huebner (2021), Slaby (2016), and Timms & Spurrett (2023) consider some related issues with an explicit focus on environmental scaffolding. Studies of "desire lines" or "desire paths" — informal paths that emerge when bodies create their own path (e.g., an animal or human footpath cutting across a park) instead of following imposed design or planning — sometimes portray acts of pushing back against nudging as a kind of *spatial resistance* (Smith & Walters, 2018).

[9] The philosopher Erik Rietveld and his architect brother, Ronald, have done much philosophical, ethnographic, and artistic work investigating how we might use an affordance framework to design spaces *for* bodies. See, e.g., Rietveld & Brouwers (2017) and Rietveld & Rietveld (2020).

While "anti-homeless" spikes are perhaps the most infamous example, there are many others. "Skatestoppers", or small metal nubs affixed to handrails and ledges, are clear markers that skateboarders aren't welcome. Conspicuous security cameras in public areas are installed with the promise of maintaining safety. But their ubiquity and visibility are overt reminders that one is constantly being surveilled and thus encourage self-policing. However, other examples are more subtle. They are often masked behind what initially seem to be well-intentioned organizational or aesthetic decisions.

For example, street furniture with armrests or dividers initially seems crafted to provide support and privacy. But this is not the intent. These "anti-sleep" benches prohibit bodies from lying down and stretching out. Creating benches with a wavy or slightly slanted surface — which may initially seem to be an aesthetic choice — achieves a similar effect. Like more overtly hostile pay-per-minute benches, where sharp spikes slowly emerge once time runs out, they are designed to discourage prolonged sitting. Other techniques of spatial manipulation keep bodies from settling. Strategically-timed sprinklers, placing large potted plants in alcoves, playing classical music or high-pitched sounds only audible to young ears, or manipulating the light of certain spaces (e.g., neon pink lights in underpasses to highlight blemishes; harsh blue lights in bathrooms to mask veins) target specific bodies: homeless people, teenagers, and drug users (Chellew, 2019; Rosenberger, 2020).

We can note further that spatial hostility does not always involve adding things to the built environment. It can also be implemented via strategic *absence*. For example, a lack of tables and benches in public plazas, parklands, and privately-owned spaces where people might otherwise gather discourages lingering and socializing. Similarly, an absence of drinking fountains or public toilets in downtown areas — instead relying on quasi-public toilets in retail areas, restaurants, and galleries — discourages so-called "vagrants" from visiting and loitering in these spaces (Davis, 1990/2006, p. 234).

Again, these are all examples of how the built environment is designed against certain bodies. As Naomi Smith and Peter Walters tell us, hostile architecture highlights how

> [c]hanges to city benches and other controlling spatial hardware are a micro manifestation and are symptomatic of a broader project aimed at altering the affordances of the city. These design features not only regulate who is allowed in physical spaces, they also create social space as well (Smith & Walters, 2018, p. 2985).

By shaping (i.e., weakening and limiting) forms of spatial agency possible within certain spaces, these design decisions create social space by creating boundaries and atmospheres of inclusion and exclusion (Krueger, 2021a). Once more, this is because these "top-down" forms of spatial manipulation are not part of a value-free decision process (Davis, 1990/2006; Kukla, 2022; Sibley, 1995). They intentionally diminish "their utility as spaces of social encounter in favor of brief and individualized use", which results in "foreclosing the possibility for encounters with 'others' in the public realm" while limiting cityscape engagements beyond commercial venues and transactions (Smith & Walters, 2018, p. 2984). This "shrinkage" creates social space by determining who gets to inhabit it and what should go on within it.

Moreover, as we've seen, it also signals that certain bodies (e.g., homeless bodies who often have nowhere else to go) are not welcome to meet basic needs for rest, comfort, and security. By removing affordances that would allow bodies to extend into and take shape within these spaces, these decisions deliberately diminish individuals' spatial agency, force them to move elsewhere, and in so doing render certain kinds of bodies (along the lines of gender, race, social class, and physical ability) less visible to other community members, compounding problems of stigmatization and support (Rosenberger, 2020, pp. 888–889).

These design choices, and the values they reflect, can easily fade into the background since they often minimally impact bodies and groups in positions of power (e.g., bodies that don't sleep on the street or who can afford to buy expensive coffee just to use an indoor toilet).[10] However, as Ocean Howell puts it, when noticed, "they draw attention to the way that managers of spaces are always designing for specific subjects of the population, consciously or otherwise

[10] Terri Elliot expresses this idea in a different context when she writes: "Similarly, in the political realm, one does not question a social order which works well. Here the question arises, 'Works well for whom?'. Well, for those who aren't troubled by it, those who do not question it, those for whom it does not seem strange" (Elliot, 1984, p. 424).

[...] When we talk about the 'public', we're never actually talking about 'everyone'" (quoted in Omidi, 2014).

I'll return to why hostile architecture can be a vehicle for affective injustice — specifically, affective powerlessness — later. Before turning to my second case study, however, there is one more point to be made. It concerns the affective *motivation* behind hostile architecture.

Although rarely made explicit, practices of hostile architecture emerge from a kind of fear — namely, a fear of what certain bodies may do, alone or together, if they are allowed to freely congregate and interact within certain spaces. Hostile architecture is an example of the way urban spaces are largely manipulated in the face of real or anticipated threats under the guise of increased safety. As we've seen, they include design elements in which "the hostile function is often embedded under a socially palatable function", such as installing cameras in the name of safety or "beautifying" a space by placing a large potted plant in an alcove where homeless people sleep (Morton, 2016).

The kind of fear animating hostile architecture is akin to the more general insecurity, anxiety, and "urban fear" Setha Low discusses (Low, 2001). Low observes that in the face of intense media coverage and national hysteria about urban crime — even though overall crime rates have consistently fallen since the 1980s — an increasing number of people in the US are moving to walled and guarded communities. Among other things, this movement threatens access to open space and creates further barriers to building diverse social networks and developing tolerance of different cultural, racial, and social groups. Crucially, it's also at least partially driven by fear: a fear of crime, the potential for violence, and a diminished sense of security and place felt by certain groups (predominantly white and affluent) as cities become more culturally diverse.

Practices like these — along with hostile architecture — are an integral part of building "fortress cities" (Davis, 2017). In his study of the "militarization" of Los Angeles, Mike Davis argues that the expanding retreat to gated communities is a kind of class warfare fought at the

level of the built environment. Security and privacy become prestige symbols, available to the "haves" who can live in such fortified communities. The "have-nots" (i.e., urban poor, predominantly made up of Latino and Black minorities, as well as homeless people) are instead quarantined and subject to control: e.g., the use of police to break up homeless encampments, and the erection of permanent barricades around denser, lower-income neighborhoods.

As we've seen, this control extends into built public spaces, and not just neighborhoods. Hostile architecture reflects design decisions that flow from the political power of those who make them, as well as the status and powerlessness they confer on the bodies and spatial agencies impacted by them. For certain bodies, they give rise to the feeling that a significant portion of one's affective life is manipulated by the decisions and actions of others, those with greater affective power. This sense of affective powerlessness negatively impacts one's agency and sense of self — including one's ability to feel at home in the world and meaningfully connected to others and the affordance-rich niches we share with them. As we'll now see, something similar happens in my second case study: effortful wayfinding and masking in autism.

Effortful wayfinding and masking in autism

In the previous section, I considered how the built environment shapes our wayfinding practices. The structure and character of these niches molds our spatial agency. They guide our habitual movements, determine the range of affordances available to us, and help orient us in space. Hostile architecture is an example of a way that built environments are designed to limit certain bodies and weaken their spatial agency by prohibiting certain forms of wayfinding. It is an intentional practice enacted by those in positions of power. However, sometimes this weakening is *unintentional*. It occurs when certain niches are not designed to accommodate the distinctive sensorimotor and affective needs of certain bodies. But as we'll see, this practice — even when unintentional — can be a vehicle for affective injustice.

Masking in autism in order to seem "less autistic" can help us see how so. According to current diagnostic criteria, autistic spectrum disorder is a disturbance of an individual's ability to

engage with others and the social world (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; World Health Organization, 2018).[11] It spans a range of social and communicative difficulties that vary by individual. These difficulties lead to challenges communicating with others, attuning to their emotions, and flexibly adapting to changing and unpredictable environments. Autistic people often find it difficult to participate in shared practices that make up everyday life. They struggle with forms of wayfinding that neurotypical people (i.e., those without an autism diagnosis) take for granted.[12]

"Masking" — or "camouflaging", as it's sometimes called — refers to the practice of adopting certain styles of expression (gestures, facial expressions, speech and intonation, etc.) and behavior that help autistic people navigate neurotypical niches (Petrolini et al., 2023). These styles might differ from those autistic people are more comfortable with, or those they use when interacting with other autistic people. However, they mask because there is a practical trade-off. It makes everyday wayfinding somewhat easier as they move through the world — although as we'll see, it introduces additional challenges, too — by seeming less overtly autistic (Cook et al., 2021; Fombonne, 2020; Williams, 2022). When asked to describe their experience, autistic people generally say they mask to either *hide* their autistic traits or as a *compensatory strategy* for managing social situations, such as intentionally adopting neurotypical scripts to blend in (Cook et al., 2021; Hull et al., 2017).

In other work, I have considered how the built environment — which is generally constructed around the values and needs of neurotypical bodies — causes some of the social difficulties and affective challenges autistic people face (Krueger 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, Krueger & Maiese 2018; see also Boldsen, 2022b). Everyday practices of wayfinding require more effort when the environment is built *against* them, when it fails to afford smooth sensorimotor

[11] As Eyal et al. (2013) note, "autism" is a fluid concept that emerges from what they term an "autism matrix": scientific discourse, clinical practice, policy decisions, and popular media. All these things play a role in shaping the definitions and practices surrounding autism. See also Chapman's (2019) discussion of autism as a form of life, and Hacking's (2009) discussion of how autism narratives shape both first- and third-person experiences of autism. McGeer (2009) offers a rich engagement with Hacking on this point.

[12] I here follow the terminological preferences of neurodiversity proponents who endorse identity-first language (e.g., "autistic person") to emphasize the connection between cognitive and emotional styles and selfhood (Pellicano & Stears, 2011). M. Remi Yergeau, an autistic scholar and activist, tells us that, "Autism is embodied; my embodiment is autism" (Yergeau, 2013).

pathways through the world. For example, autistic people often find the sounds, smells, colors, lights, informational, and organizational layout of public spaces like shopping centers, classrooms and lecture halls, restaurants, music venues, and gyms overwhelming. The character and unpredictability of these spaces makes them difficult to navigate; they place autistic bodies in a reactive mode where they feel like they're constantly battling against an onslaught of sensory information beyond their control.

The intense sensory and affective impact of these spaces may be difficult for neurotypical people to fully appreciate. But consider the following reports. One autistic individual tells us that something as common as a glass dropped onto a wooden table "hurts as much as someone hitting me across the face with no warning…Noise is really painful, especially when I don't realize it is about to happen…I would rather the person threw the glass directly at my face than drop it by mistake" (Henderson, 2020). Another says that when navigating public spaces, sounds, smells, tactile qualities, and visual aspects coalesce into an oppressive atmosphere: "It's like a constant blanket of sound that just keeps coming at you until you are totally disoriented" (quoted in Boldsen, 2022a, p. 5). Yet another describes their "meltdown" experiences when the environment becomes overwhelming "like my senses just went through a jet plane crash" (quoted in Belek, 2019, p. 38).

The key point is that when navigating built environments not designed to accommodate their sensorimotor needs, autistic bodies can become destabilized and disoriented, which leads to a sense of powerlessness and diminished spatial agency (Boldsen, 2022a; Krueger, 2023). As a result, they may withdraw from both the physical and social environment as a means of self-regulation. And this withdrawal, in turn, can further reinforce their feeling of isolation and loneliness (Krueger et al., 2023).

To come back to masking, many autistic people also regulate using self-directed practices of "stimming": hand-flapping, finger snapping, tapping objects, repetitive vocalizations, rocking back and forth, etc. These practices help autistic people manage incoming sensory information and feel more rooted in their body and the world. Stimming helps individuals "meet the physical,

perceptual, or emotional demands of the situation" as they navigate niches designed by people *without* sensory processing differences (Leary & Donnellan, 2012, p. 51).

However, the salient point here is that many autistic people report feeling pressure to *hide* these practices. This is because stimming can be puzzling or off-putting for many neurotypicals. They may not know what to make of them or how to deal with them. This kind of behavior is generally seen as socially inappropriate. But neurotypical people also routinely stim when fidgeting (e.g., chewing on a pen, humming softly, bouncing their leg or toe-tapping, etc.), with little fear of judgment. However, medical culture tends to describe autistic stimming through clinical designations and pathologizing definitions like "stereotypies" or "self-stimulatory behaviors". This language contributes to the stigmatization of this behavior (Felepchuk, 2021) . Moreover, treatment programs — often developed with little input from autistic people — traditionally try to suppress or eliminate them.

A persistent sense of being somehow bodily out of sync with the neurotypical world is a common theme in the narratives and reflections of many autistic people (Belek, 2019, p. 36). It drives many of them to seek a diagnosis in the first place. A fear of being judged and potentially feeling even more disconnected from the social world also drives masking practices. Again, to mitigate challenges of socializing, they try to mimic what they understand to be "normal" behavior: neurotypical styles of gait, posture, gesturing, body language, speech, direct eye contact, etc. (Belek, 2022, p. 636).

The negative *affective* motivation for masking is clear in their personal narratives. One individual tells us that, "I have been endlessly criticized about how different I looked, criticized about all kinds of tiny differences in my behavior…No one ever tried to really understand what it was like to be me…" (Robledo et al., 2012, p. 6). Another says, "I could do a lot of things [to fit in socially] but it makes me feel like a fraud, it is not me. [But] I am not acceptable to many other people as my true self" (quoted in Belek, 2022, p. 636). Mel Baggs, an activist and prolific blogger on the experience of being a nonverbal and genderless person with autism, describes the fatigue of trying to translate the richness and complexity of their autistic experience into [neuro-] "typical" language: "To me, typical language takes place in the clouds, and I have to climb or fly

up there just to use and understand it. This is exhausting no matter how fluent I sound or how easy I make it look. The sky will always be a foreign country to me" (Baggs, 2009).[13]

Reports like these suggest that masking is a way of responding to the powerlessness many autistic people feel in the face of physical and social environments not set up to afford feeling at home and effortless wayfinding. They don't necessarily want to do this; some say it feels inauthentic, a kind of "pretending to be normal" (Hull et al., 2017). But they feel they must — even if it takes a significant toll on their energy, health, and wellbeing (Bradley et al., 2021; Hull et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2021).

Before turning to why hostile architecture and masking are potentially vehicles for affective injustice, I will end this section with a final observation. This focus on masking, I suggest, is illuminating because it shows how deeply built and social-normative niches are intermingled. Of course, we saw such intermingling in the previous discussion of how hostile architecture creates social space by determining both *what* and *how* bodies inhabit public places. However, masking in autism narrows our focus. It highlights the way "micro-level dynamics", as we might put it, of our spatial agency are guided and shaped, over multiple timescales, both by features of the built environment *and* the social practices that unfold within them. In other words, even more than hostile architecture, masking shows how sociomaterial niches enter into and shape habitual (i.e., pre-reflective) ways of experiencing and using our spatial agency — including our habitual ways of bodily engaging with and responding to others.

Diminished spatial agency and affective powerlessness

Recall Gallegos' (2022) argument that depriving individuals of resources and opportunities they need to maintain their subjective well-being is a kind of affective injustice. Again, this is because subjective well-being is a core affective good. As the previous examples

[13] Ralph James Savarese argues that instead of focusing on the deficiency of language use in autism, we should recognize that "autistic embodiment allows for another kind of thought and language use, one obviously conditioned by the encounter with neurotypical culture" (Savarese, 2010, p. 275).

show, it's not something we realize on our own. It's supported by a range of things — subsidiary affective goods — that help us maintain it: affective *freedoms*, *resources and opportunities*, and *recognition*. These things support the development and expansion of our spatial agency. And when we lose access to these subsidiary affective goods, we lose access to the means for expanding our spatial agency and subjective well-being and therefore experience a kind of affective injustice.

I suggest that hostile architecture and masking in autism exemplify this kind of loss. In both cases, individuals are sufficiently deprived of subsidiary affective goods to a degree that they experience diminished spatial agency and therefore lose access to essential resources for maintaining their subjective well-being. A more detailed analysis will have to wait for another time. But the previous discussion should already be sufficient to indicate, in a general way, the scope and character of these deprivations.

Both examples involve a clear lack of *affective freedom*, such as "freedom from circumstances that give rise to emotional distress or unpleasant emotions or moods" (ibid., p. 191). Homeless people, for example, clearly experience a great deal of stress and anxiety — on top of their other challenges — when the spaces they rely on for security, shelter, comfort, and rest are overtly (re-)structured to keep them from feeling at home, and when they are routinely forced to move from one place to the next. Likewise, masking narratives describe intense anxiety and often anger as individuals work to negotiate neurotypical niches not responsive to their perceptual and emotional preferences and needs. They feel forced to adopt styles of expression that feel uncomfortable and inauthentic.

Additionally, both cases involve a lack of reliable access to *affective resources and opportunities*. This includes "material, activities, and circumstances that contribute positively to one's well-being" such as nurturing relationships, rest and self-care, and reliable access to "affective scaffolds": environmental supports that sustain and regulate our affective experiences over multiple timescales (ibid., p. 191).[14] The disruptive nature of hostile architecture — coupled

[14] For more on affective scaffolds, see Colombetti & Krueger (2015), Colombetti & Roberts (2015), Coninx & Stephan (2021), Krueger & Osler (2019), Maiese (2016), and Saarinen (2020).

with the transient and unpredictable nature of homelessness — makes reliable access to these resources difficult to maintain. Similarly, the emotional pressure of negotiating challenging sensory environments and neurotypical niches — some of which reflect implicit biases about what autistic people can and cannot do (de Carvalho & Krueger, 2023) — make reliable access similarly difficult for autistic people, too.

Finally, in both cases, a *lack of recognition* not only comes at the psychological level, via the evaluative attitudes of others (e.g., negative assumptions about why someone is homeless or the abilities of autistic people). Importantly, an ecological perspective shows how a lack of recognition can also be *materialized* within the built environment. The structure and character of hostile architecture sends a clear signal that homeless bodies are not welcome in certain public spaces where others gather. In the case of autism, the lack of recognition may not be as overt or intentional. But in failing to accommodate autistic bodies, everyday niches nevertheless signal a hierarchy of values in which neurodivergent needs are given less consideration than are the needs of neurotypical bodies.

The forms of deprivation in both cases are not identical, of course. Yet in both, these deprivations are expressed in descriptions of feeling a deep sense of *affective powerlessness*: the feeling that a significant portion of one's affective life is manipulated by the decisions and actions of others with greater affective power. As we've seen, this sense of affective powerlessness develops through a feeling that one's spatial agency has been significantly weakened or diminished. Crucially, this "shrinkage" doesn't just limit possibilities for practical action. As the narratives we've considered show, it negatively impacts an individual's sense of self — including mood, self-esteem, and life-satisfaction — as well as an ability to feel at home in the world and meaningfully connected to others, both of which are crucial for cultivating and maintaining subjective well-being.[15]

[15] The rise of the neurodiversity movement, and related calls to de-pathologize clinical, medical, and diagnostic framings of autism and the forms of exclusion these framings generate, is in part a response to this experience of affective powerlessness (Chapman, 2020; Chapman & Carel, 2022; Fernandez, 2020; Kapp, 2019; Timpe, 2022; Walker, 2021).

This theme of powerlessness runs throughout the narratives of those most impacted by hostile architecture and masking. Chellew (2016) offers a telling quote from a nurse who works with homeless and under-housed people. When asked if her clients think about the social signals hostile architecture sends, she responded: "All the time. They ask why, and why are they doing that? Sometimes that's the only place people can get rest so people are forced to sleep sitting up" (p. 18). Others convey a similar sense of powerlessness and vulnerability. "When you're designed against, you know it", Ocean Howell says. "Other people may not see it, but you will. The message is clear: you are not a member of the public that is welcome here" (quoted in Andreou, 2015). This sense of affective powerlessness extends beyond homeless people; hostile architecture impacts more than homeless bodies. It also creates challenges by diminishing the spatial agency of other kinds of vulnerable bodies, too, such as those with physical disabilities or those who find it difficult to stand for long periods of time (e.g., pregnant women, the elderly, children).

Likewise, we find many descriptions of affective powerlessness in autism narratives. Again, recall the individual who tells us that, "I have been endlessly criticized about how different I looked, criticized about all kinds of tiny differences in my behavior…*No one ever tried to really understand what it was like to be me*…" (Robledo et al., 2012, p. 6, my emphasis). Others express a similar feeling. James, an autistic writer and developer from London says that "Badly designed environments cause barriers, and barriers cause behaviors [...] Because most environments don't consider my needs, I encounter more design errors than other people do. Remove the environmental barriers, and I thrive" (Gensic & Brunton, 2022, p. 41).

As we've seen, part of this affective powerlessness comes from the pressure autistic people feel to mimic neurotypicals in order to be accepted. This is especially clear in the case of masking. However, as autistic author and advocate Max Sparrow (formerly Sparrow Rose Jones) reminds us, "Taking away things like hand flapping or spinning is not done to help the child. It is done because the people around the child are uncomfortable with or embarrassed by those behaviors" (ibid., p. 43). These practices are crucial for communication, affect regulation, and identity construction. Autistic writer and advocate C. L. Lynch says that "My stims are better at translating my emotions than my face is, unless I'm actively animating my face in an allistic way

for the benefit of my allistic audience. Which is exhausting, by the way…" (Lynch, 2019). This feeling of affective powerlessness is reinforced in the way autistic people "must constantly find workarounds to live and work in spaces that assault their sensory systems and/or don't accommodate their communication needs" (Gensic & Brunton, 2022, p. 44).[16] Moreover, even in places (e.g., schools, workplaces) open to inclusivity changes, autistic people are often expected to lead these efforts for themselves. As the autistic speaker and music therapist Elizabeth Boresow puts it, neurotypical advocates "too often place the burden of creating change on autistic adults" (Gensic & Brunton, 2022, p. 46). This creates additional pressure and anxiety.

As these narratives demonstrate, forms of diminished spatial agency can lead to deep feelings of affective powerlessness. And this affective powerlessness, in turn, can be traced back to a lack of reliable access to subsidiary affective goods (e.g., affective freedoms, resources and opportunities, and recognition) that afford the development and maintenance of our subjective well-being. These things support the development and expansion of our spatial agency. However, when they are missing — either due to overt design decisions within the built environment, or due to indifference or oversight — certain bodies lose reliable access to these goods, are prohibited from maintaining their subjective well-being, and therefore experience a kind of affective injustice.

These are instances of affective injustice due to the systemic and unequal nature of the deprivation and expressions of power that lead to them. Certain groups (e.g., able-bodied, affluent, neurotypical) may be affectively inconvenienced when they find slanted park benches annoying to sit on and must temporarily stand when waiting for a friend, when they have to buy an oat milk latte in order to use the restroom, or when they find the music in a local cafe a bit too loud. However, many of these bodies have access to physical, social, and financial resources that help them cope. They also have the social and political standing to resist and, if they choose, work to change things. In other words, they are not powerless.

[16] Similarly, Dokumaci documents the many "tiny, everyday artful battles" disabled people engage in to create more liveable niches for themselves, often in spaces indifferent or hostile to their unique bodily needs (Dokumaci, 2023, p. 14). The ecological account of affective injustice I consider her will likely be applicable to these cases, too.

The examples I've considered here impact other bodies in a different way. This is because these bodies stand in power relations that are *asymmetrical*. Under-housed and homeless bodies are disproportionately impacted by hostile architecture. They often have nowhere else to go and lack the social and political standing to resist or work around them. Again, one motivation for hostile architecture is precisely to force homeless bodies to move elsewhere and make them less visible (Rosenberger, 2020). A significant portion of their everyday affective life is therefore controlled by others with greater power.

Similarly, autistic people must often change their preferred ways of navigating the environment and expressing their emotions because they are in spaces designed *by* and *for* bodies with different sensorimotor needs, normative expectations, and greater power. Neurodiversity movements are working to change this, along with the pathologizing language (e.g., autism as a neurological dysfunction or deficit) and negative metaphors (e.g., autism as *combat*, *kidnapping*, *barrier*, or even *death*) used to represent autism to the public in media and press depictions (Chapman & Carel 2021). Like autism-unfriendly niches, this language and these metaphors convey a lack of recognition. They reinforce assumptions that autism is fundamentally incompatible with flourishing and a good life. And they also suggest that autistic people have little interest in sharing a world with others. But as we've seen, these negative assumptions are not only wrong. For many autistic people, they lead to anxiety and anger. They affirm the extent to which their day-to-day affective experience is disproportionality controlled by others — again, those with greater power and standing.

Conclusion

I have argued for an ecological approach to affective injustice. Such an approach, I've suggested, supplements existing accounts by drawing particular attention to the important role that built environments play in shaping and sustaining — or weakening and diminishing — affectivity and spatial agency. I considered two case studies that exemplify what happens when bodies lose reliable access to subsidiary affective goods subjects need to maintain their well-being, and the affective powerlessness that results. Psychological, social, and embodied accounts

of affective injustice all draw attention to different ways individuals can be harmed in their capacity as affective beings. And Gallegos' friendly critique brings additional nuance by specifying further dimensions of affective injustice. Once again, the contribution of an ecological approach, as I see it, is to bring the world into the story in a concrete way — namely, by emphasizing the deep interconnections between the *built environment*, *affectivity*, and *spatial agency* in a way other approaches do not. I've tried to show how this ecological perspective, by foregrounding analyses of bodies and spaces, might offer some additional descriptive and explanatory resources that can enrich existing accounts.

One might worry that this proliferation of characterizations — psychological, social, embodied, ecological, Gallegos' deprivation of "affective goods" account, etc. — risks conceptual bloat. In other words, might this constellation of different frameworks and ways of thinking about affective injustice stretch the concept so thinly that we deprive it of substantive meaning and descriptive force? Perhaps. But this worry, in my view, is too hasty.

As noted at the beginning, this is still very much an emerging debate. However, it's already clear that discussions of affective injustice target a substantive — and oft-overlooked — phenomenon worthy of further philosophical analysis. At this early stage of discussion, it therefore seems pragmatic to use as many conceptual tools as needed to think through what is likely going to be a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon amenable to different levels of description and analysis. Additionally, justice matters. So, particularly early on, a more permissive stance is warranted. Such a stance remains open to finding new and possibly unexpected ways of thinking and talking about affective injustice — and crucially, new ways to address it. In the long run, future debates and ameliorative practices will be better for it. Hopefully, this paper has made a small contribution to both.

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