



***Solidarity in human geography:  
responsibility, care, place and  
encounter***

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## 1 - Introduction

In human geography, **'solidarity' has never been a key concept**. A quick search in the Web of Science brings up only 73 journal articles dealing with 'geography' and 'solidarity'. In the Dictionary of Human Geography, 'solidarity' does not deserve a place in the index, let alone a special entry. A query for 'solidarity' reveals that it is only mentioned in 13 out of more than 1000 entries (Gregory et al. 2009).

Because of the limited engagement with the concept of solidarity, we will push this status quaestionis further by taking up three related issues which recur in the human geography literature. In section 2, we will address **spatial perspectives on community and identity as a basis for solidarity**. Among geographers, place has been positioned at the center of identity, community and identity-based solidarity. Alternatively, scale and territory have been treated as spatial dimensions of the organization of solidarity. While space relates to the question with whom we want to develop solidarity, scale and territory are connected with the way in which we operationalize and bound solidarity. Recently, place, territory and scale have been reconceptualized through a relational turn. While more traditional concepts of place and community used to be based on an association with a particular identity, location and territory, recent scholarship draws on a relational understanding of space and place to suggest that processes of community building cannot only transcend social, cultural and economic differences within a particular place, but that they can also be defined by the networks linking a particular place to other places beyond that place.

In section 3, we will focus, then, on **spatial understandings of solidarity and related concepts such as care and responsibility**. Scattered over four subsections, we will demonstrate how geographers have understood our ethical and moral orientations towards close and/or distant others. By detailing the way in which the concepts of solidarity, care and responsibility have been used by geographers, we aim to deepen the theoretical conceptualization of solidarity in diversity. Starting from a relational understanding of space and place, special attention will go to attempts to overcome the prevailing associations of localism with particularist forms of solidarity and globalism with universalist ones.

Before coming to a conclusion, section 4 will look at **the meaningfulness of interactions, contacts and encounters in the creation of solidarity in diversity**. Building upon the theoretical debates explained in sections 2 and 3, we will focus on geographies of encounter and debates around

segregation and social mix. Drawing on case-studies in a wide variety of places, geographers try to find out whether identities, communities and solidarities can be re-configured through meaningful contacts with the diversity in multicultural streets, schools and neighborhoods. On the one hand, this literature hints at the possibility of solidarities which are not undergirded by exclusively bounded identities, but by the shared use of a certain place. On the other hand, these writings will also warn us, however, to be careful with the naïve assumption that contact with difference automatically translates into innovative forms of solidarity in diversity.

## 2 - Rethinking spaces, places and communities

### 2.1. *Place as a basis for community*

**Place** is a core concept in human geography (Cresswell 2004). Often used in opposition to undifferentiated understandings of space, place denotes a location which has obtained a meaningful identity to (a group of) people. To discuss the relationships between place and group identity, geographers borrow terms from environmental psychologists. They range from sense of place (Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff 1983) and sense of community (McMillan and Chavis 1986) to place attachment (Low and Altman 1992) and place identity (Proshansky et al. 1983). A common thread through all these concepts is that people maintain deep emotional ties to places. Places are filled with ordinary memories of everyday life, of life that we live(d) in them and through them. Places are important elements in the construction of identities as they trigger images, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences and ideas about the suitability of behavior (Smith 2000a). Of particular interest is the way in which 'place' fixes and embodies collective memories (Nora 1997).

Traditionally, geographers have discussed how places are constructed through day-to-day activities (e.g. Hägerstrand 1982, Pred 1990). More recently however, geographers put more emphasis on the political dimensions of **place making**. By demonstrating that shared place identities are assembled through struggle, negotiation, they clarify that place is inherently a social construct (Pierce, Martin and Murphy 2011, Johnson, Halfacre and Hurley 2009). According to the definition by Pierce et al. (2011, p. 54), place making refers to "the set of social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live". Scholars in this field do not only focus on the ways in which people identify themselves with places or on the manner in which places influence the formation of group identities and communities, but also on the socio-political struggles over the meanings of different places and place identities.

In any case, the relationship between place identities and politics is not one-sided. Place identities are not only the result of political struggles. They can also become powerful bases for **political mobilization** themselves (Cox 1998, Le Galès 2002, Nicholls 2009, Uitermark, Nicholls and Loopmans 2012). Scholars such as Nagar (2000), Uitermark (2004) and Hung (2011) emphasize, indeed, how particular place identities can serve as an arena for political struggles and voicing concerns. In this context, Martin (2003) considers place identities as 'place frames' for collective action: selective, but shared experiences and understandings of collective interests which can stimulate collective organization and mobilization. In her own words, "place-frames conceptually identify [the] relationship between place and activism by situating activism in place and defining a collective identity in terms of the common place that people (...) share" (Martin 2003, p. 733).

Obviously, political struggles over the meaning of a place are fought in unequal power fields. All too often, **dominant actors** attempt to align place identities with their own interests (Harner 2001). They do not only do so through discursive struggles over place, but also through material practices. Dominant groups in control of major 'discourse-producers' such as media houses or government structures will either try to reinterpret folk identities of place or coercively eliminate them from consciousness (Hay, Hughes and Tutton 2004). At the same time, they will also try to organize the spatial environment in such a way that it facilitates the production and reproduction of their own place identities and place identifications. If an alignment between places and place-based identities takes place, the former can become nodal points in systems of power and political hegemony (Harner 2001). In that case, spatial divisions are not only integral to the construction of social differences. They are also the outcome of strategies to maintain these differences (Dear et al. 1997, Natter and Jones III 1997, Wilton 1998). Johnson (1995) analyzed, for instance, how statues and monumental symbols in public space are a means to arouse public imagination in the context of the ongoing task of bourgeois nation building. Along the same line, Kearns and Philo (1993) note how urban form is mobilised as a tool of social control and discipline: "Height (as with Sacre Coeur in Harvey's account: see Harvey, 1979), arrangement (as with those ancient Chinese cities studied by Wheatley: Wheatley, 1971) and naming practices (think of the renaming of cities, squares and streets during the collapse of Communist Eastern Europe): all of these have been manipulated so as to present the current social hierarchy as natural and permanent, and in this respect we may speak of urban form as an ideological project" (Kearns and Philo 1993, p. 13).

Importantly, the place making process does not only occur in 'sites of domination', but also in 'counterspaces' (Yeoh and Huang 1998, p. 599) and 'communities of resistance' (Keith and Pile 1993, p. 37). Based on interviews in Singapore, Yeoh and Huang (1998) substantiated, for instance, how

domestic workers from the Philippines were rigidly surveyed by their employers, but managed to impress their own cultural style on the urban landscape in a separate neighborhood called 'Little Manila'. In a similar way, Secor (2004) detailed how the antagonistic and alienating practices associated with Turkish claims on Istanbul are continuously being reconfigured and contested by Kurdish women staking out spaces of Kurdish identifications. In the words of Sibley (1995), such studies show that the "relatively powerless still have enough power to 'carve out spaces of control' in respect of their day-to-day lives" (Sibley 1995, p. 76). Even though these place making processes are often incapable of uniting different dissonant voices into one speech act, the emergence of a united place identity from below is always possible. If this happens, place identities can also become powerful elements of **resistance and empowerment** (Larsen 2004, Johnson et al. 2009).

Looking at the interrelations between places, identities and politics, it can be understood that place making strategies are strongly related to processes of **community building**. While many scholars argue that place identities foster a common identity rooted in common experiences, shared values and collective interests, it is clear that the politics of place and place making are equally related to the marginalization of specific groups in particular places (Hay et al. 2004, Loopmans, Cowell and Oosterlynck 2012). Specific place identities are constructed by selecting specific place-elements or prioritizing some over others. Opposing interests may appear as to which elements are included in or omitted from collectively shared place identities. Paraphrasing Martin (2003, p. 730), this does not only highlight that place identities provide an important mobilizing discourse and identity for collective action, but also that certain groups and facets of their social identities are often obviated in the definition of place-based communities. This inherent selectivity of place making processes underpins social processes of inclusion and exclusion.

## ***2.2. Relational politics of place making***

In human geography, Massey (1991, 2004, 2005) was one of the first to describe the radical effects of **globalization** on spatial ontologies. While the proliferation of international markets, the amelioration of transport links and the improvement of communication technologies had encouraged some commentators to predict the end of geography (e.g. O'brien 1992), geographers such as Massey pointed to the need to reconceptualize and reprioritize space and place under the effects of economic, political and cultural dimensions of globalization (see also Brenner 1999, Sheppard 2002, Swyngedouw 2004). According to Massey, conceptualizations of space and place should not

necessarily be framed around boundaries. In-stead, they can also be constituted through relations with other places and through the in-place multiplicity which they bring about. In her own words, the definition of a particular place “does not have to be through simple counterposition to the outside” (Massey 1991, p. 29). In-stead, Massey asserts that such a definition “can come, in part, precisely through the particularity of linkage to that ‘outside’ which is therefore itself part of what constitutes the place” (ibid.). From the perspective that space cannot be disentangled from time, Harvey (2006) added that every place is affected by the history, the present and the future of social **interactions running from the very local to the completely global** (cfr. Murdoch 2006, p. 20). For him, “an event or a thing at a point in space cannot be understood by appeal to what exists only at that point. (...) A wide variety of disparate influences swirling over space in the past, present and future concentrate and congeal at a certain point (...) to define the nature of that point” (Harvey 2006, p. 96).

To clarify the relational understanding of space and place, the early writings of Massey draw on her everyday experiences in Kilburn High Road in London. In her view, the character of this multicultural street cannot be reduced to a coherent and localized place identity (Massey 1993). Elaborating on the diversity of the residents and the variety of the products on display, Massey makes it clear that its **‘global sense of place’** “can only be constructed by linking that place to places beyond” (Massey 1991, p. 28). The identity of the street does not only lie in its internal multiplicity, but also in its external connections. “What gives a place its specificity”, Massey (1991, p. 28) asserts, “is not some long internalized history, but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus”. “If one moves in from the satellite towards the globe, holding all those networks of social relations and movements and communications in one's head”, she continues, “then each 'place' can be seen as a particular, unique, point of their intersection” (ibid.).

Building on the work of Massey, Amin (2004, p. 38) proposed to “explore a politics of place that is consistent with a spatial ontology of places as sites of heterogeneity juxtaposed within close spatial proximity, and as sites of multiple geographies of affiliation, linkage and flow”. In the context of growing diversity, a fundamental shift is needed away from territorial politics of place. If we acknowledge that every place is influenced by cultural, social and economic circuits that stretch way beyond their boundaries, our analytical focus on place making processes cannot be limited to the actors, the practices and the discourses within one particular place (e.g. Baldwin 2012). Once it is supposed that streets, neighborhoods, cities and countries are made through networks of flows that reach far beyond their territorial boundaries, it becomes crucial, in Amin's eyes, to raise the challenge of a **relational politics of place** (cfr. Pierce et al. 2011).



In the framework of Amin, such a relational politics of place encompasses two crucial elements which cannot be separated from each other. First of all, the relational '**politics of propinquity**' draws on the notion of places "as sites of heterogeneity within close spatial proximity". When very different people share the same place, it becomes necessary to consider the internal ambiguities and ambivalences of place identities and the way in which they may affect everyday negotiations of identity in diversity. In the words of Amin (2004, p. 39), "the politics of propinquity may be read as a politics of negotiating the immanent effects of geographical juxtaposition between physical spaces, overlapping communities, contrasting cultural practices, ...." (Amin 2004, p. 39). In his reading, this implies that multiplicity, heterogeneity and inescapable juxtaposition *in* space have to be taken seriously as a field of agonistic engagement.

For Massey (2004), the adoption of a relational view does not only force us to look at the "internal multiplicities" created by the "strangers within", however, but also at the "external multiplicities" created by the "strangers without". "If the identities of places are indeed the product of relations which spread way beyond them", Massey (2004, p. 11) asks, "then what should be the political relationship to those wider geographies of construction?" To answer this question, Amin (2004) presents the notion of a '**politics of connectivity**'. In his own words, "a politics of place, whether we like it or not, has to work with the varied geographies of relational connectivity and transitivity that make up public life and the local political realm" (Amin 2004, p. 40). Through the notion of a politics of connectivity, he underlines that connections and links which stretch way *beyond* a particular place also have to be treated as a field of agonistic engagement.

An application of such relational thinking can be found in **regional geography**. In this field, relational thinking challenges place notions which limit regions to vertically defined entities with homogeneous identities (Goodwin in press, Varró and Lagendijk 2012, Jones and Paasi 2013). Under the heading 'regions unbound', Amin (2004, p. 37) already criticized the fact that many instances of regionality are "grounded in an imaginary of the region as a space of intimacy, shared history or shared identity, and community of interest or fate". To counter the restrictive politics that come with such a territorial conceptualization, he advocates a relational reading of regions "that is neither a-spatial (i.e. where the local is reduced to a mere stage) nor territorial (i.e. where the geographical local is all), but topological (i.e. where the local brings together different scales of practice/social action)" (Amin 2004, p. 38).

As such, the work of Massey and Amin has facilitated a **new understanding of identities and communities**. In the words of Morley and Robins (1995, p. 1), "patterns of movement and flows of

people, culture, goods and information mean that it is now not so much physical boundaries (...) that define a community or nation's 'natural limits'. "On the one hand", Massey (1991, p. x) explains, "communities can exist without being in the same place – from networks of friends with like interests, to major religious, ethnic or political communities". "On the other hand", she adds, "the instances of places housing single 'communities' in the sense of coherent social groups are probably (...) quite rare".

### ***2.3. Territories, territoriality and the territorial approach***

While all of the above relates to the question with whom we want (or should) develop solidarity, the notions of territory and scale, which we explain below, are connected with the way in which we operationalize and bound solidarity. Confusingly enough, there are two readings of the first term in human geography. Relational theorists oppose themselves against what they call 'a **territorial approach**' to place. This territorial approach is not to be equated with the geographical literature on territoriality, however, which describes territory and scale as analytical concepts. While the geographical literature on territoriality would concentrate on the political effects of the administrative boundaries of the Brussels Capital Region, a territorial approach would focus on the definition of Brussels' core identity in terms of 'Manneke Pis' and 'Faro' rather than 'Nasreddin Hodja' and 'couscous'. An analysis of 'territory' would consider a person who moved 2 years ago from Dakar to Molenbeek a 'Brussels citizen', whereas a 'territorial approach' to place would claim that a person who is currently living in Wemmel, but who grew up in the Marollen, is more of a 'Brusseleir'.

In comparison with place, territoriality denotes a particular strategy to structure socio-spatial relations. In the definition of Cresswell (2013, p. 282), a **territory** is "a clearly defined and bounded space which defines particular actions both within it and between the inside and outside". For Agnew (2007), territoriality refers to "either the organization and exercise of power, legitimate or otherwise, over blocs of space or [to] the organization of people and things into discrete areas through the use of boundaries" (in Gregory et al., 2007, p. 744). As such, territoriality can be seen as a particular form of socio-spatial structuring that is based on power, social control, exclusive spatial identities and explicit spatial boundaries.

In 'Human territoriality', Sack (1986) unearths the political dimension of what had hitherto been considered as a natural instinct. He treats territoriality as a strategy to exert power by dominating people and things by making use of territories (Sack 1986, p. 216). In his own words, territoriality is "the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area" (Sack 1986, p. 19). In this definition, there are two crucial elements. First, territoriality is based on the demarcation of **boundaries** between 'here' and 'there', 'inside' and 'outside', etc. These boundaries are necessary to erase territorial ambiguities and ambivalent place identifications (Sibley 1995, Cresswell 1997). Once this demarcation exists, it facilitates the exercise of **social control** on what happens inside and what enters from outside (Sack 1986, p. 21-22 & p. 32). In the definition of Cohen (1985, p. 1), social control corresponds with "the organized ways in which society responds to behavior and people it regards as deviant, problematic, worrying, threatening, troublesome or undesirable". Territoriality does not only lead to the exclusion of (groups of) individuals who are supposed to be 'out of place', but also to the disciplining of all people allowed to be 'in place' (Sibley 1995, p. 81-86).

Territoriality is often described as an essential element in the structuring of **national communities** (Knight 2005). Ideally, nationalism aims to contain social and cultural life, economic interactions and political dynamics within national territories. The shaping of national identities is also supposed to depend upon the regulation and equalization of social relations within the boundaries of national territories (e.g. through the rise of national media, see Anderson 2006). During the second half of the 20th century, the development of strong welfare states in Western Europe prioritized space as a bounded and bordered territory. Citizenship status and its concomitant rights and responsibilities were made dependent upon long term presence in the national territory and integration in its associated culture (Desforges, Jones and Woods 2005). Importantly, the solidarity of the welfare state was not just based on territorial notions of place and place attachment. It also reinforced the importance of strong boundaries and distinguished place identities to oblige solidarity between those inside, and inhibit solidarity with those outside national boundaries (McEwen 2002).

Recently, relational thinking has entered the debate on territoriality (Swyngedouw 2005, p. 33). Through the work of Sassen (1991) and Castells (1996), the emergent understanding of power in terms of networks as championed by Mann (1993) has taken root in geographical thought. This has undermined an understanding of the world as a mosaic of political-economic territories. The **relational rethinking of the nation-state space** emphasizes overlapping and interlocking networks of institutional spaces instead of distinct and clearly separated territorial units at certain spatial scales (Brenner 1999, Ernste, Van Houtum and Zoomers 2009).

In particular Agnew (1994) and Taylor (1996, 1997 & 2003) have raised a forceful critique towards a presumed naturalisation of territoriality in social thought or what they term the ‘territorial trap’ or ‘embedded statism’. They emphasize how important social processes ignore national boundaries and how the enforcement of these boundaries on all sorts of social relations is increasingly problematic under influence of economic globalisation. Now that **national boundaries are becoming increasingly porous to international flows** of people, capital, commodities and information, the regulation of these flows can not only be dependent upon national governments and border patrols.

A relational understanding of territories does not only discuss the difficulties of controlling the relation between inside and outside, however. On top of that, it also emphasizes the **insufficiency of territories for the regulation of internal social relations**. As such, it explores how governmental strategies are necessary to establish the alleged effects of territory. By way of example, Allen (2003, 2004) criticizes geographies of territoriality for ‘an overblown sense of what centralized institutions are capable of bringing about at a distance’ (Allen 2004, p. 22). Drawing upon Foucault and Latour, he reveals the intricacies of territorial control as a problem of penetration and reach. Central institutions (e.g. national governments) allegedly ‘controlling’ territories need extensive networks with other actors and organisations (often non-state) to achieve their aims. In this way, relational territorial penetration is a two-edged sword. Uitermark (2005) quotes Mann (1993, p. 59) who argued that Weber was only half right when he said that the power of a central state increases as it gradually penetrates its territories with an increasingly dense institutional infrastructure that makes it possible to implement decisions in remote territories. The reverse, Uitermark claims with Mann, is also true: When the national state connects with peripheral actors to have its policy implemented, these actors can revert the institutional relation created to manipulate the decisions of the central state for their own benefit. Hence, the homogenising pressure of territorial control always meets the issue of difference through the problem of penetration (see also Scott 1998).

#### **2.4. Scale**

Nation states have always needed more than just boundary control to operate and exist. In human geography, **scale** has been discussed as a complementary spatial strategy to do so. Human geographers have defined ‘scale’ in various ways, but following Howitt (1998) two dimensions generally come to the fore, namely size and level (see also Marston 2000, Marston, Jones and Woodward 2005). Size or scope refers to the extensiveness or reach of social processes, such as a language region, a commuter area, the territorial boundaries of a national state, etc. Level refers to

what Collinge (1999) has termed the 'vertical ordering' of social systems and relations within a hierarchical scaffolding of territorial units, to 'a nested hierarchy of bounded spaces of differing size' (Delaney and Leitner 1997). Scale as level is related to a hierarchical priority of one or another social process with a certain scope. One can for instance invoke the priority of national interests over local interests at the occasion of NIMBY struggles. Another example is the way the 'global level' is often related to capital(ism) as prior to or dominating 'lower level processes' operating nationally or the locally (see Marston et al. 2005, p. 427).

Drawing on a social constructivist approach, geographers have invariantly treated **scale as a historical product** rather than a fixed and immutable given (Smith 1992, Swyngedouw 1992, Agnew 1994, Taylor 1996, Cox 1998, Marston 2000). Such an approach necessitates attention for the mechanisms of scale transformation through social conflicts and struggles. The literature on so-called rescaling processes has mainly focused on the changing importance of state scales or the creation of entirely new scales as part of the struggle over the neoliberal project (Swyngedouw 2005, Oosterlynck 2010). Scales are never fixed, but perpetually redefined, contested and restructured in terms of their extent, content, relative importance and interrelations. Scales are conceptualised as both influencing and resulting from social struggles (Brenner 1998, Oosterlynck 2010, Swyngedouw 1992). As Smith (1992, p. 101) argues, scales must be viewed as much as the "materialization of contested social forces" as they are their active "progenitors". As such, scale demarcates at once the site of social struggle, an object and the spatial resolution of it. In Swyngedouw's (1992, p. 60) analogous formulation, "geographical scales are both the realm and the outcome of the struggle for control over social space". They are produced, contested, and transformed through an immense range of socio-political processes, strategies, and struggles that cannot be derived from any single encompassing dynamic (Agnew 1994, Herod 1991, 1997b, 1997a, Swyngedouw 1992). Nevertheless, there is disagreement between those arguing for a focus on 'scaling from above' or those advocating to pay more attention to 'scaling from below' (Herod 1991, 1997b, Nielsen and Simonsen 2003).

Drawing on these insights, scale has been presented as a strategic instrument to organize the **solidarity of the welfare state** and to regulate issues of difference and penetration. One of the first, but largely forgotten contributors to this insight has been Saunders (1979). Based on Offe's insight on the state's structural selectivity, he proposed some sort of scalar selectivity in his 'dual state hypothesis'. Searching for a specificity for urban politics, he claimed that state functions were distributed strategically between the national and the local on the basis of the fact that the local level is by definition more permeable to claims 'from below'. According to Saunders, the local state will generally be accorded authority over issues that are of lesser strategic importance to capital, but

which can improve the state's legitimacy (such as welfare state institutions). Issues more central to capital accumulation, on the other hand, tend to be shielded from grassroots control at the national level. As such, a lot of the 'rescaling' literature has focused on the neoliberal pressure to 'downscale' welfare systems from the national to the regional and the local. In general, it is supposed that solidarity organized at the level of the nation state will be more powerful (e.g. in controlling and forcefully incorporating 'freeriders' such as tax evaders) than regionalized or localized solidarities.

Another example relates to the **rescaling of the state and the globalisation of capitalist production** as part of a neoliberal project of capitalist restructuring (see Brenner 1999, Herod 1991, 1997b, 1997a, Jessop 1993, Oosterlynck 2010, Peck and Tickell 1994, 1995). In this literature, it is generally asserted that state scalar restructuring has been both an outcome of the changing power balance between capital and labour in social struggle and a force structuring social struggle in terms of privileging capital over labour organisation. The demise of the nation-state as a central regulatory scale, accompanied by a globalisation of relations of production and a localisation of social reproduction (what Swyngedouw 1992 has called 'glocalisation') is generally depicted as a power-take-over by capital as against organised labour and an attempt to break labour solidarity which was most strongly organised at the national scale. By escaping the territorial control of the nation-state, global economic networks increase their freedom to act and to escape welfare state responsibilities. At the same time, they exert more pressure on lower levels of organisation (the domination of the space of places by the space of flows, see Castells 1996).

More recently, **relational critics of scale theories** have noted how the relations between scales are narrowed down to a hierarchical ordering where those further up the ladder hold power over those further down the hierarchy. This would imply that those organized at a higher geographical scale are able, in some way, to constrain or shape the activities of those below (Howitt 1998, Marston 2000, Allen 2004). According to relational critics, relations between various scales are much more complex and the elements of scope and level need to be disentangled more clearly (Sheppard and McMaster 2004). Brenner (2001, p. 605) explains that "the meaning, function, history and dynamics of any one geographical scale can only be grasped relationally, in terms of its upwards, downwards and sideways links to other geographical scales situated within tangled scalar hierarchies and dispersed interscalar networks". It is his contention that "the very intelligibility of each scalar articulation of a social process hinges crucially upon its embeddedness within dense webs of relations to other scales and spaces" (Brenner 2001, p. 606). Cox (1998) emphasized, for instance, how we might better view the politics of scale through networks of association that are uneven in their spatial extent and that problematize the territorial coverage and penetration of state institutions.

### 3. Geographies of solidarity, responsibility and care

#### *3.1. Introduction: moral and ethical geographies*

Over the last couple of decades, geographers have produced a rich understanding of the relationships between spatiality, on the one hand, and **ethics and morality**, on the other. The underlying assumption is that the connections between people and places reflect and produce moral sensibilities, ethical judgments and ideas about social justice. What is morally wrong is fundamentally influenced by where people are (Smith 1998a). What is seen to be appropriate or suitable will be different in different environments (Smith 2000a). What is considered to be just in a particular place, will be different in a territorial or relational reading of place (Massey 2004, Darling 2009).

The current interest in human geography for moral and ethical issues builds upon a focus on values that ran through the discipline in the 1970's (Smith 1997, Popke 2009). Whereas the Marxist geography of Harvey (1973) drew on moral philosophy to outline specifications for territorial justice, the humanist geography of Tuan (1974) relied on phenomenology to study the interrelations between spatial experiences, geographical perceptions and attitudes. Starting from the scholarship of Smith (1997, 1998, 2000), the more recent '**moral turn**' in human geography has led to a deeper engagement with moral and ethical questions. Under the heading of 'geographies of solidarity' (Massey 2008), 'geographies of care' (Lawson 2007) or 'geographies of responsibility' (Massey 2004), much of this work is concerned with ethical orientations towards close and/or distant others.

A crucial question in the field relates to the issue of **distance**. Scholars debate whether proximity is a prerequisite for moral behavior or whether concerns for people in proximity can extend to distant strangers (Smith 1998b, Barnett 2005). In the words of Silk (2000, p. 303), geographers need to study "what difference (...) distance make[s] to our concern for others". According to Smith (1998b, p. 23), we should try to find out "how, and to what extent, does distance or proximity make a morally significant difference to how people should treat one another?". One argument is that ethical competencies are necessarily learned in a particular place and that "distance leads to indifference" (Smith 1998b, p. 23). Another argument underlines, however, that there is no reason to believe that ethical orientations cannot extend across distances (Silk 2000).

In essence, such debates touch upon the tension between **particularism and universalism**. For Smith (1997, p. 30), "there is clearly a disparity between the common practice of partiality, expressed in the

inclination to favor our dearest (often nearest), and the modern moral ideal of impartiality, treating people the same in the same circumstances, such that the same credit, reward, or retribution is assigned for the same virtue, contribution or violation, irrespective of the status, wealth, race, gender [or location, we would add] of those concerned". An approach that appeals to many moral geographers is accepting that there are certain universal moral values, while at the same time recognizing the particular spatial and temporal ways of applying them. The practices of morality and the theories of ethics are, then, embedded within specific sets of social and physical relationships apparent in geographical space (Smith 2000a, p. 11).

As noted above, solidarity has never really been a key concept in human geography. While a search in the Web of Science brings up 73 articles dealing explicitly with 'geography' and 'solidarity', a similar search for 'geography' and 'responsibility' or 'care' brings up 592 and 2354 results, respectively. For this reason, this section does not only provide an overview of the geographies of solidarity literature (subsection 3.2), but also of the geographical scholarship on responsibility (subsection 3.3) and care (subsection 3.4). As indicated in the introduction, this will not only teach us something about the way in which geographers define solidarity and concepts closely related to it, but also about the field of tension between particularistic and universalistic notions of solidarity.

### ***3.2. Geographies of solidarity***

In spite of their limited engagement with the notion of solidarity, human geographers have used it in at least five different ways. First, they deploy solidarity to describe the sympathies and loyalties between underprivileged people involved in **struggles against oppression, injustice or inequality**. The Dictionary of Human Geography entry on 'difference' mentions, for example, that "race, class, gender, sexuality and other differences can provide the basis for solidarities and resistance" (Gregory et al. 2009, p. 160). While Alderman, Kingsbury and Dwyer (2012) look at the sense of solidarity between African Americans in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Jazeel (2005) disentangles how sexualized geographies of exclusion unsettle patterns of intra-racial solidarity between Tamils in Sri Lanka. From a spatial perspective, geographers emphasize that such forms of solidarity are generally rooted in a solid sense of community and a strong feeling of shared territory. While this territory is often linked to the national homeland (Paasi 1997, Varró 2012), it can also be realized at the scale of the neighborhood (Wridt 2004), the city (Chari 2009, Browne and Lim 2010) or the supranational union (Hadjimichalis 2011).



A second use of solidarity can be found in the '**autonomous geographies**' literature (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006). Inspired by the Mexican Zapatistas (Cecena 2004) and the Argentinian Piqueteros (Chatterton 2005), several researchers report about a 'solidarity economy' inside autonomous communities. In the face of unemployment and poverty, such a 'solidarity economy' can entail anything from the distribution of unemployment benefits and the provision of food and shelter outside the market economy to the organization of education, community banks and clinics outside established institutional frameworks. Even though particular places, people and times always affect local struggles for a better life, Chatterton (2005) concludes that they do not necessarily rely on exclusivist claims on identity, territory or community. Based on the potent conjunction between middle-class outrage and working-class labor organizations, he shows, in fact, how people with different interests can establish a sense of communality and solidarity in concrete encounters and actual practices (cfr. Lawson 2012). Drawing on the way in which different autonomous groups within the Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados (Unemployed Workers Movement) in Buenos Aires interact with each other, Chatterton (2005, p. 554) also concludes that "inter-place solidarity is sought with those, wherever they may be, willing to promote and defend dignity, solidarity and autonomy". This shows that autonomous communities do not only transcend social, economic or cultural fault lines within a particular place, but that they also stimulate solidarity between people and communities in completely different places.

A third use of solidarity in human geography can be found in scholarship on **global justice networks** (Cumbers, Routledge and Nativel 2008, Nicholls 2008, Routledge and Cumbers 2009). While networks of social movements, labor unions, community organizations and NGO's often focus on particular issues such as ethical consumption (Barnett et al. 2005), climate change (Chatterton, Featherstone and Routledge 2013) or human rights (Pratt 2008), they can also be heterogeneous alliances of actors working on very different themes at the scale of the city (Wills 2012) or world (Ponniah 2004). "From a geographical perspective", Cumbers et al. (2008, p. 184) underline, "these developments are important because they represent attempts to connect up territorialized struggles to broader global networks of support, action and debate". Thinking about the consequences for solidarity, Routledge, Cumbers and Nativel (2007, p. 2575) state that "new forms of political solidarity and consciousness have begun to emerge, as social movements, trade unions, NGO's and other organizations increase their spatial reach, constructing networks of support and solidarity for their particular struggles, and by participating with other movements in broad networks to resist neoliberal globalization" (cfr. Featherstone 2003, Sundberg 2007).

Similar conclusions are being drawn in the field of **labor geography** (Castree 2007). Inspired by the pioneering work of Herod (1995), the main question in this field is to what extent international worker solidarity has become a necessity now that corporate strategies are strongly affected by the imperatives of globalization. As such, labor geographers do not only pay attention to attempts to overcome localized competition between different workers along lines of class, gender or ethnicity (e.g. Tufts 2006), but also to concrete instances of cross-border labor solidarity (e.g. Taylor and Bain 2008, Merk 2009). While researchers agree that the global mobility of capital has a dramatic effect on the spatial organization of labor, they disagree whether workers can only challenge this situation through global campaigns or also through highly focused local activism against transnationally organized employers (Castree 2000, Herod 2001). In any case, there is a consensus that international solidarity is not always guided by altruistic feelings, but often motivated by local or national interests (Wills 2001). In this context, Johns (1998) queries, for example, whether the promotion of labor standards by American unions in Guatemala is not meant to eliminate sources of cheaper labor so as to reassert the position of workers in the United States. For this reason, she distinguishes between accommodationist solidarity - when spatial interests are more important than class interests – and transformatory solidarity - when “universal class interests dominate over interests that are spatially derived and rooted” (Johns 1998, p. 256).

Finally, solidarity has been used by human geographers to reflect upon the relevance and the impact of geography itself (cfr. Beaumont, Loopmans and Uitermark 2005, Pain, Kesby and Askins 2011). Especially among anarchist and radical geographers, there is a tendency to establish a so-called ‘**solidarity scholarship**’ with close or far-away people (Koopman 2011). In such scholarship, the main aim is to conduct critical research in close collaboration with - and to the benefit of - activists, social movements and community organizations (Burrige 2010, Routledge 2012). According to Springer (2012, p. 1620), “intensified networks of solidarity with those involved in direct action on the streets may well be the future of radical geography”. From a post-colonial perspective, Barker and Pickerill (2012) warn, however, that many anarchist researchers find it difficult to set up alliances and acts of solidarity with Indigenous activists.

Looking at these five uses of solidarity in human geography, it can be concluded that the discipline has defined solidarity in a rather limited way. The concept has been deployed mostly by radical and anarchist scholars engaging in concrete struggles against capitalisms, racisms, sexism and other -isms. Depending on the specific subfield, these struggles are situated within underprivileged communities (1), autonomous groups (2), global justice networks (3), international trade unions (4) or academia itself (5). Despite this narrow conceptualization, table 1 shows two crucial variances in

the literature. Vertically, a difference can be made between solidarities rooted in **homogeneity or heterogeneity**. The first row lists solidarities which are based on a common ethnicity, sexuality or class position. In struggles against oppression, injustice and inequality, solidarity is often based on a shared subjectivity. In cross-border labor solidarity, international workers are supposed to work together because they are in the same class position with regards to their employer. The second row gives examples of solidarities which cut across social differences and identifications. In autonomous communities, angry middle classes cooperate with more needy working classes. In solidarity scholarship, academics defend the interests of activists, social movements and community organizations.

	<b>PROXIMITY</b>	<b>DISTANCE</b>
<b>SAME</b>	<p>1. Struggles against oppression, injustice and inequality &lt; solid sense of community and strong feeling of shared territory (Jazeel 2005, Alderman, Kingsbury and Dwyer 2012)</p>	<p>4. Cross-border labor solidarity (Herod 2001, Taylor and Bain 2008); can be transformatory or accommodationist (Johns 1998)</p>
<b>OTHER</b>	<p>2. Autonomous communities: con-junction between middle class outrage and working-class labor organizations (Chatterton 2005, Lawson 2012)</p> <p>3. Heterogeneous alliances of actors working in a particular city (Wills 2012)</p> <p>4. Unions overcoming local competition between workers along lines of class, gender or ethnicity (Tufts 2006)</p> <p>5. Solidarity scholarship (Springer 2012)</p>	<p>2. Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados: inter-place solidarity between autonomous groups (Chatterton 2005)</p> <p>3. Global justice networks (Cumbers, Routledge and Nativel 2008, Routledge and Cumbers 2009)</p> <p>5. Solidarity scholarship with Indigenous communities (Barker and Pickerill 2012)</p>

**Table 1: Five uses of solidarity in human geography**

Horizontally, a second distinction can be made between **intra- and inter-border solidarities**. While the cases on the left hand side consider proximity based solidarities which are restricted to a particular neighborhood, city or factory, the cases on the right hand side exemplify solidarities which

transcend places and distances through networks of cooperation. While it is tempting to associate localized struggles with particularist forms of solidarity and globalized networks with universalist ones, Johns' (1998) distinction between transformatory and accommodationist types of international labor solidarity shows that the binary between proximity and distance does not necessarily correspond with a difference between particularism and universalism. A rhetoric of universalist solidarity across borders can ultimately defend the particularist interests of local actors.

In different fields of human geography, scale has been deployed as a crucial factor in the analysis of solidarity (cfr. supra). Social movement theorists have emphasized how movements organize their solidarities at a variety of scales. Kevin Cox's (1998) distinction between spaces of dependence and spaces of engagement is crucial in this respect. **Spaces of dependence** are defined by the spatial reach or scope of those 'social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential conditions for our material well-being and our sense of significance.' (Cox, 1998, p. 2; see also Bennett, 1997). Spaces of dependence might differ or might even be contradicting or competing for different actors. Think, for instance, about the different space of dependence of workers as against to firms (see e.g. Herod 1991, 1997a & 1997b). Hence people, firms, organisations interact and organize spatially to secure those social relations which form the conditions of their existence. States, with their emphasis upon territorial organisation and control are particularly important in this process of spatial cooperation and competition; through time, they have crystallized as a particularly dense form of socio-spatial organisation (see 2.3.).

However, Cox (1998, p. 2) argues, the defence of particular spatial interests does not necessarily entail organisation at the same scale as the space of dependence. The '**space of engagement**' can have a different reach. Cox's (1998) own example of labour union struggles in the US makes this clear. As scalar organisation might make a difference in the power one can exert over others, actors might 'jump scales'. This is defined by Smith (2000b, p. 276) as the process whereby 'political claims and power established at one geographical scale are expanded to another'. An example is the way actors speaking for the urban poor in Flanders have been able to 'jump up' their local claims to the national and more importantly to the regional state, where they 'hi-jacked' the urban policy programs of the early 1990s. This way, they have not only secured a relatively stable funding for local non-governmental organisations working for the urban poor in larger cities, but also brought the issue of poverty to the attention of local policy makers in smaller municipalities where they were, due to the electoral insignificance of poor people, hitherto ignored (see Loopmans, Uitermark and De Maesschalck 2003). Hence, spaces of engagement can open up or reinforce relations of solidarities between different territories or networks.

### 3.3. Geographies of responsibility

Moral and ethical issues relating to proximity, distance, sameness and otherness are more deeply discussed in the **geographies of responsibility** literature. Inspired by the seminal work of Doreen Massey (1994, 2004, 2005), this field is preoccupied with political and ethical questions around propinquity and connectivity. Drawing on a relational understanding of identities and spatialities, Massey questions the political and ethical responsibilities running 'into' and 'out from' place. The key issue is how relationality can (or should) entail a sense of responsibility not only towards people we feel spatially and socially close to, but also towards near and distant others (Darling 2009).

Even though the concept of '**responsibility**' is very central to Massey's work, it is difficult to pinpoint how she defines it exactly. In his review of 'For space' (Massey 2005), Sparke (2007, p. 397-398) mentions that the responsibility Massey invokes is both ethical and political. In-stead of defining the term unambiguously, he finds it easier, however, to say how she does not understand it. First, he states that "the sort of responsibility that Massey is interested in is clearly not a religious responsibility based on the rites and wrongs of morality and guilt". Afterwards, he adds that "Massey is equally wary of modern liberal visions of political responsibility rooted in territorialized notions of national duty and secular accountability to the state and its laws". Finally, he concludes that Massey's notion of responsibility is also different from "the deterritorialized hyper-individualist responsibility associated with the buyer-beware regimes of neoliberal 'prudentialism'".

In a response to Sparke (2007), Massey (2007a) answers that her view on responsibility goes further than the one suggested by I.M. Young (2004, 2006). For Young, the buyers of cheap trousers and T-shirts are not to blame individually for the labour conditions in sweatshops. In-stead, she argues that consumers are politically responsible because they are connected to those conditions through unequal market relations. In this way, Young considers responsibility to stem from involvement in structural processes. Referring to Young's work, Massey (2007, p. 405, her own emphasis) argues, however, that "such involvement is *identity-forming*, and that from there springs responsibility". It is her conviction, indeed, that ethical and political responsibilities are rooted in the way our **identities** are constructed. "In identifying myself as a Londoner", she asserts, "identity is serving not as the *assertion of a claim*, but as the *acknowledgement of a responsibility*" (Massey 2007b, p. 187, her emphasis).

Drawing on the work of Gatens and Lloyd (2002), Massey (2004, 2005) explains that a responsibility rooted in identity formation is **relational**: “it depends on a notion of the entity (individual, political group, place) being constructed in relation to others” (Massey, 2004, p. 9). While early notions of responsibility articulated a one-sided view of relationality in which privileged people, places and nations took up responsibility for less privileged ones (Noxolo, Raghuram and Madge 2012), Massey shifted the discussion towards a more context-driven, power-conscious and complex analysis. Recently, a number of authors have deepened this understanding from a ‘non-normative’ perspective (Raghuram, Madge and Noxolo 2009, Noxolo et al. 2012). Their post-colonial viewpoint challenges any conceptualization of the relationality behind responsibility emanating from a particular centre towards a periphery.

According to Massey, the relational character of responsibility also makes it **extended**: “it is not restricted to the immediate or the local” (Massey, 2007, p. 192). Interested in the collective responsibilities of present-day White Australians for the historical brutalities against Aboriginals, Gatens and Lloyd (2002) consider this extension to be temporal. They state, for instance, that “we are responsible for the past not because of what we as individuals have done, but because of what we are” (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999, p. 81 in Massey, 2004, p. 9). Massey wonders whether such a responsibility for the past also has a geographical equivalent. More specifically, she questions whether “this extension of responsibility over the temporal dimension [can] be paralleled in the spatial and in the present?” (Massey 2007b, p. 178).

To answer this question, Massey (2004, p. 9) asserts that the hegemonic geography of responsibility pertaining to Western societies is based on **territorial groundedness**. In a territorial reading of place, our responsibilities towards others decrease from the smallest to the biggest territory we identify ourselves with. Referring to a nested set of Russian dolls, Massey (2004, p. 9) explains that “there is a kind of accepted understanding that we care first for, and have our first responsibilities towards, those nearest in”. Often, people care the most for family members in their own homes. Their feeling of responsibility then diminishes as they move away from the proximate places of the neighbourhood to the distant places of the nation. In the words of Massey (2004, p. 9), this Matryoshka doll model of responsibility – as summarized on the first row of table 2 - is “utterly territorial” and “proceeds outwards from the small and near at hand”. In her view, such a territorial closure of identities, loyalties and responsibilities also provides little room for a radically progressive politics and ethics.

	PROXIMITY	DISTANCE
TERRITORIALITY	Strong feeling of responsibility inside a small Matryoshka doll: “There is a kind of accepted understanding that we (...) have our first responsibilities towards those nearest in” (Massey 2004, p. 9)	Weak feeling of responsibility inside a large doll: “Often what seems to be at issue is merely the size of the relevant territory – a shift of loyalty and identification from one territorial enclosure to a bigger one” (Massey 2005, p. 187)
RELATIONALITY	The responsibilities which derive from “the internal multiplicities, the decenterings, the fragmentations of identity (...) the hybridities within, the global within the local” (Massey 2007b, p. 179); the question of the stranger within; the question of engagement in propinquity.	The responsibilities which derive from “those relations that run out from a place – that help construct its identity and on which it depends (Massey 2007b, p. 21); the question of the stranger without; the question of engagement in connectivity.

**Table 2: Territorial and relational notions of responsibility in human geography**

In order to go beyond this, Massey (2004) advocates the possibility of a more extended **relational groundedness**. By relying on a relational rethinking of place, she finds a position that transcends the particularism of communitarianism and the universalism of liberalism (cfr. Bridge 2000). For Massey (2005, p. 184), it is not problematic that responsibilities are grounded in places we associate ourselves with. In her eyes, there is a crucial difference, however, between place-bound and place-based responsibilities. While the former rely on territorial understandings of place identities, the latter take into account the way in which the identities of places are dependent upon relations with other places. Massey (2005, p. 178-179) argues that “identities are (...) elements within a wider, configurational, distributed, geography”. This raises “the question of the real geography of relations through which any particular identity is established and maintained”. “For it is from those relations”, she concludes, “that would spring a geography of responsibility”.

At the time when Massey formulated her theories, her call to expose an alternative geography of responsibility mainly generated attention for the **question of engagement in propinquity** (visualized in the lower left cell in table 2). In her own words, “the focus has been overwhelmingly on (...) the internal multiplicities, the decenterings, the fragmentations of identity and so forth” (Massey 2007b, p. 179). Inspired by the debate on the provision of health benefits to illegal immigrants, Dwyer (2004, p. 40) questions, for example, why societies would “take responsibility for people it tried to keep out

of its territory". For nationalists, he argues, people who do not have the right to be in a country also do not have the right to claim health benefits. For humanists, he says, access to health is a basic human right and should be provided to everyone. From his own perspective, neither view is adequate. He emphasizes, in-stead, that illegal immigrants "may be diligent workers, good neighbors, concerned parents and active participants in community life" and that they should be counted, therefore, as members of society (Dwyer 2004, p. 40).

According to Massey (2004, 2005), our thinking about responsibility should not only be based on the "question of the stranger within the gates", but also on the "question of the stranger without" or the **question of engagement though connectivity** (lower right cell in table 2). If we only feel responsible for 'strangers' we encounter in our daily lives, but not for 'unseen others', then the ethics arising out of a relational notion of space are still very restricted (Popke 2006, p. 507). If spaces are connected with other spaces through flows of people, goods, services and meanings, it has to be questioned whether we cannot come "to a form of social responsibility to those with whom we have no direct social interaction" and "to challenge the out of sight out of mind mentality that would appear to be a feature of our geographical experience" (Popke 2003, p. 300). Towards the end of "For space", Massey argues, in fact, against a "localisation of ethical commitment at the very moment of increasingly geographically expansive interconnectedness" (Massey 2005, p. 187). In the penultimate paragraph she states that "cultural diversity is certainly, in part and increasingly, internal to individual societies; but it is implacable also a question of different others in distant lands" (Massey, 2005, p. 194). As such, we can suppose that Massey would criticize the DieGem focus on settings of forced propinquity. In her words, "it would be a grave myopia were we to ignore that wider geography, to forego that aspect of outwardlookingness in the lived geographical imagination" (ibid.).

Commentators of Massey's work generally underline that responsibilities towards strangers in our midst cannot be separated from responsibilities towards strangers living, working and travelling elsewhere. That is also why the line between the two lower cells of table 2 is not full, but dashed. Based on a literature review of Massey's work, Darling (2009, p. 1947) concludes, for instance, that a "relational politics suggests that it is no longer possible, or indeed desirable, to separate the **interrelated political concerns of propinquity and connectivity**". In his eyes, Massey's plea simultaneously entails the need to negotiate the multiplicity of people involved in place making processes and the call to take responsibility for the network connections which help to constitute this multiplicity in place. Referring to Castree (2004), he argues that "the concern is to consider how a responsibility towards distant others might be reconciled with the demands of internal and constitutive heterogeneity" (Darling 2009, p. 1947). In a similar way, Amin (2006, p. 1015) asserts



that the inhabitants of a socially just city should “recognise the constitutive of the distant other in whatever counts as the social ‘ours’, rather than, as has been the case in the history of modern welfare, drawn on a solidarity or charity or instrumentalist support for the fallen insider within a predefined community of belonging (national, ethnic or other)”. “The result”, Amin infers, “ is an equal duty of care towards the insider and the outsider” (ibid.).

In his investigation of Sheffield as a “**City of Sanctuary**”, Darling (2010) attempts to understand how such a reconciliation of engagement in propinquity and connectivity could work in practice. Drawing on interviews, documents and media reports, he concludes that the movement to turn Sheffield into a welcoming place for refugees and asylum seekers does not only focus on the issue of propinquity, but also on connectivity and urban outwardlookingness. On the one hand, he claims that the City of Sanctuary movement raises attention for the responsibilities that the city of Sheffield has towards those refugees and asylum seekers who are part of the ongoing construction of the city (2010, p. 132). They do so by asking local organizations to sign a declaration, by handing out flyers and by putting up posters. On the other hand, he also stresses that the movement invests a lot of energy in the contestation of the political situations through with the existing asylum system works (2010, p. 133). For Darling (2010, p. 127), this outward-lookingness demonstrates that “the political challenge of relational thinking might be captured in accommodating the negotiations of both proximate diversity and distant connectivity which construct specific places”. He acknowledges, however, that it more difficult to establish such a connectivity for asylum policies which are dictated by the territorialized logic of the nation-state than it is for fair trade products: “it is easier to ‘think space relationally’ in some cases than in others” (Darling 2010, p. 137).

### ***3.4. Geographies of care***

Over the last decade, human geographers have shown a growing attention for **geographies of care** (Conradson 2003, Lawson 2007, McEwan and Goodman 2010). In their definition, care is “the provision of practical or emotional support” (Milligan and Wiles 2010, p. 737). Based on this definition, an important distinction is made between ‘caring for’ and ‘caring about’. **Caring for** refers to the word ‘practical’ in the definition and entails an act between clearly identifiable agents at both the giving and the receiving end. **Caring about**, on the other hand, refers to the ‘emotional’ aspects in the definition of care and does not necessarily involve an act between care-givers and care-receivers. (Milligan and Wiles 2010). In both cases, care is relational, however. In order to care, you need to be responsive and attentive to the needs of the other (Barnett and Land 2007).

The **relational character of care** is not only apparent in interpersonal relations, however, but also in the relations between people and places. This is illustrated by Milligan and Wiles (2010, p. 736) when they state that “care and relationships are located in, shaped by, and shape particular places that stretch from the global to the local”. In discussions around caring at a distance, there is often a lack of distinction between distance and difference, however, so that caring at a distance comes down to caring for ‘strangers’ (Barnett and Land 2007). It is important to differentiate between the two and to clarify whether distance is understood in spatial or emotional terms (Milligan and Wiles 2010). Both ‘caring for’ and ‘caring about’ can be either global or local. Both can also relate to people emotionally close or distant. Table 3, therefore, does not only disentangle the disparities between caring for and caring about (in block letters), but also the differences between care across spatial distances (in the horizontal plane) and emotional distances (in the vertical plane).

Most obvious examples of care are to be found in the upper left cell of table 3. They relate to instances of practical care between people who are **both emotionally and geographically close**. In this category, we typically think of intimate and personal forms of care such as the care for children or aging parents at home (Tronto 2005). In these cases, caring for and caring about generally overlap.

	<b>SPATIALLY CLOSE</b>	<b>SPATIALLY DISTANT</b>
<b>EMOTIONALLY CLOSE</b>	CARING FOR children and aging parents at home, generally stimulated by CARING ABOUT (Tronto 2005)	CARING FOR friends and family members who migrated or stayed home, e.g. remittances, entangled with CARING ABOUT (Kankonde 2010, Cohen 2011)
<b>EMOTIONALLY DISTANT</b>	CARING FOR people and homes by domestic worker, babysitter, cleaner or au pair, not necessarily stimulated by CARING ABOUT (England 2010)  CARING FOR close others: not really addressed in the literature	CARING ABOUT distant others: moral geographies of fair trade products, establishment of relational ethic of care across distance through information (Goodman 2004, Popke 2006)

**Table 3: Geographies of care across spatial and emotional distances**

Feminist geographers challenge the notion that care is restricted to the near and the private. Moving away from established gender roles, they underline that care has mainly been reserved for housewives, but that this situation has changed because of the growing involvement of women in

the labor economy, the deepening of migration and the erosion of the welfare state (England 2010, McEwan and Goodman 2010, Parry et al. 2005). Nowadays, a lot of privileged families employ domestic workers, babysitters, cleaners and au pairs. These care-givers are still predominantly female, but often recent immigrants (England 2010, Williams 2001). An emotional connection can result from the **paid care-work**, but is not necessarily there beforehand (Schuermans 2013).

Taking into account that many migrant families are scattered around the world, feminist geographers also consider **care for a friend or family member at distance**. From a relational perspective, it is obvious that remittances connect places economically (Cohen 2011). Perhaps even more than an economic value, remittances also hold a strong emotional value, however. Kankonde (2010, p. 229) suggests that they are “probably the most emotionally meaningful objects in contemporary transnational familial relations”. While he identifies altruism, self-interest, mutual beneficiary arrangements, perceived obligation and prestige as the main motivations behind remittances, he also clarifies that remittances rely on emotional closeness with people and communities who are spatially distant. As such, they are positioned within the upper right cell of table 3.

While the different positions in table 3 help us to understand different types of care, it is difficult to observe such singularities in the real world. Starting from the fictitious example of an African girl taking care of her siblings while her mother looks after the children of a friend working as a nanny in Europe, Hochschild (2000, p. 41) elaborates the concept of a **‘global care chain’**: “a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring”. By disentangling the complex relationships of care between different people, it becomes obvious that all of us are supported in our everyday lives by huge amounts of care (Tronto 2005). The recognition that people are at some times care-givers and at other times the ones cared-for allows us to see that care is not necessarily a state of undesired dependency (Bowlby 2012). Feminists geographers emphasize, however, that care is still distributed very unequally. The most privileged generally care the least, while the most disadvantaged care the most (Cox 2010).

So far, this section has discussed examples of ‘caring for’. Yet, geographers also look at the social potential and the spatial limits of **‘caring about’**. This literature is mainly concerned with the challenge of emotional care across distance. For Lawson (2007, p. 6), the central question is whether “care ethics [can] move beyond the interpersonal, the near and familiar, to care for **distant others**” (cfr. Milligan & Wiles 2010, p. 741). Often, it is supposed that it is hard to establish care across social boundaries and over spatial distances. This also explains why critical geographers feel uncomfortable to develop a social ethics on care rather than on justice and equality. According to Barnett and Land

(2007, p. 1066), “geographers are (...) loath to wholeheartedly embrace the value of care precisely because of its implied affirmation of the unavoidably partial nature of any and all ethical judgement”. “The value of care”, they explain, “is necessarily derived from it being a virtue of partiality, extended to some particular others on the grounds of attachments of feeling or emotion”.

More recently, geographers underline that relationality opens up alternative configurations of care, distance and difference. These configurations disturb the mental chain between justice, universality, impartiality and distance, on the one hand, and care, particularity, partiality and proximity, on the other (Barnett and Land, 2007, p. 1066). According to Lawson (2007, p. 7), relational thinking “challenges us to be attentive and responsive to our own location within circuits of power and privilege that connect our daily lives to those who are constructed as distant from us”. So far, such a relational perspective on care has been elaborated the most in-depth in relation to **moral geographies of consumption** (Popke 2006, Cox 2010, Goodman, Maye and Holloway 2010). The proliferation of fair trade products provides a clear example of caring about invisible others in faraway places. In trying to explain why such caring exists, geographers point at the central place of information (Popke, 2006, p. 509). You won’t look for alternative consumption practices, if you do not know that the purchase of a T-shirt reproduces a complex system of unequal labor relations. This implies that an expanded domain of care can only be established through the provision of information about the circumstances under which commodities are produced. By reducing the psychological distance between consumers and producers, a relational ethic of care can work across distance (Goodman 2004, Popke 2006).

While geographers have paid a lot of attention to the establishment of care between actors in different places, the development of **care for close others** has received much less scrutiny. Looking at the lowest row in table 3, the cell on the right hand side is much easier to fill with empirical studies than the cell on the left hand side. In the spatial vocabulary of Amin (2004), the research agenda of human geographers clearly prioritizes care in connectivity over care in propinquity. As such, there is still a lot of room for empirical studies which look at (the lack of) care between people from different families, communities and identities in the same place. Care requires a bigger effort in interactions with people we perceive to be different than with people we identify with (Tarrant, Dazeley and Cottom 2009, Noddings 2010, p. 11). Experiments by social psychologists have demonstrated that we generally respond more empathetically in encounters with in-group members. Can proximity help to establish care for close others? Does such care for close others facilitate the establishment of care for distant others? Only by answering these questions, we can establish an account of the relational ethics of care that transcends the local and territorial focus of the Matryoshka model of care.

## 4. Social mix and the geographies of encounter

### 4.1. *The need to ground relational thinking*

In a review article, Jones (2009, p. 496) stresses that there are two different readings of relationality. While realists assert that relational understandings of space transpire in empirical observations, idealists present relational spaces as a normative ideal. According to Jones (2009), it is problematic that the academic work on ‘thinking space relationally’ falls largely into the last category. As geographical engagements with relational space are more normative than descriptive, he infers that the literature **lacks an empirical basis**. By bringing the theoretical notion of relational space to the everyday world, Jones suggests, it would become clear that theorists have been too enthusiastic in assuming that (groups of) individuals can adopt a relational understanding of their own identities and the places in which they live. In the same way, Barnett and Land (2007, p. 1069) warn that “Massey's focus upon distant others hides the ways in which caring action is motivated not in monological reflection of one's own obligations, but by encounters with others”.

As a tentative answer to these critiques, this section will summarize ways in which geographers and others have understood everyday interactions with difference. This literature is dominated by two highly contrasting visions (Mitchell 2003, p. 125, Bauman 2003). On the one hand, scholars see the **city as a site of conflict and segregation**. In this vision, the city is characterized by the retreat of fearful middle classes in gated communities and shopping malls. In such places, the bodily confrontation with poverty, heterogeneity and difference is said to be avoided and replaced by a simulated publicness that excludes abject others (Sibley 1995, De Caeter 2004). Difference is not considered to be something positive to be celebrated and learnt-from, but to be feared and excluded (Bannister and Fyfe 2001, England and Simon 2010). In general, this vision is based on the reinforcement of boundaries and essentialist place identities. More often than not, it also entails a territorial politics of place and a Matryoshka model of responsibility, care and solidarity.

On the other hand, the urban studies literature is also infused with the more optimistic image of the **city as a site of encounter and interaction**. In this view, the city allows different people to socialize and to learn to live with each others’ differences (Sennett 1970, Amin 2002). In the words of Young (1990, p. 119), it is a city “where one should expect to encounter and hear from those who are different, whose social perspectives, experiences and affiliations are different”. Over the last decade,

the 'geographies of encounter' literature has stimulated a resurgence of the last vision (Valentine 2008). The basic argument is that meanings, discomforts and anxieties around race, class, ethnicity or sexuality can be re-configured through meaningful contacts with diverse groups of people (Matejskova and Leitner 2011, Wilson 2011). In doing so, this literature suggests that a relational ethics of care and responsibility can be established in everyday settings of propinquity.

In the following sections, we will give more details about both visions. In the next section, we will summarize the literature on social mix and neighborhood effects. The basic question there is whether spatial segregation hampers the chances of disadvantaged people to climb the social ladder. Looking at the ambiguous realities of five different neighborhood effects, a related question is whether policy makers should try to establish a social mix in residential neighborhoods and schools. While that section is pre-occupied with the socio-economic effects of interaction, the following ones summarize scholarship on more cultural consequences. Drawing on the social psychology of Allport and the micro-sociology of Goffman and Simmel, this field questions whether interactions and encounters can help to reconsider essentialist identities, ethnocentric assumptions and racist prejudices. By combining the conclusions of both strands of literature, we hope to point at empirical routes through which the politics of propinquity and connectivity - and the responsibilities that go with them - can be enacted in the negotiation of everyday lives.

#### ***4.2. Neighborhood effects and the ideal of social mix***

Worldwide, policy makers seem to assume that inhabitants of disadvantaged neighborhoods benefit from **social mix**. A lot of Western European countries deploy housing diversification measures, social housing allocations and desegregation policies to counteract socio-economic segregation (van Kempen and Bolt 2009). In Northern America, public housing complexes are being redeveloped as mixed-income communities (Chaskin and Joseph 2011). In countries such as Malaysia and South Africa, inclusionary housing policies are enforced as well (Calavita 2010, Klug 2013). For the Flemish case, De Decker (2004, p. 477) asserted that social mix should even be catalogued as an 'evergreen'. In his analysis, every policy document about urban renewal that has been ratified since the 1970's has been grounded in the idea that the poor have more chances to climb the social ladder when they share their living environment with the rich.

While policy makers seem to be sure that social mix at the neighborhood level brings a lot of benefits, many scholars question its desirability and feasibility. In Flanders, the realization of social mix generally does not rest upon the opening of rich neighborhoods to poor households, but upon

the attraction of double income families into disadvantaged ones (Loopmans, De Decker and Kesteloot 2010). International research has demonstrated that the application of such strategies in unregulated housing markets often leads to the **displacement** of the most vulnerable residents (Davidson 2008, Lees 2008, Walks and Maaranen 2008). As the ones that are supposed to benefit from mixed neighborhoods cannot afford the rising property prices, the realization of social mix through the attraction of middle classes families been compared with “the rearrangement of the chairs on the deck of the Titanic” (De Decker, Meert and Peleman 2001).

Even if displacement does not take place, many critical scholars question the effects of social mix policies. In the **neighborhood effects** literature, it is generally asserted that the spatial concentration of poor people in poor neighborhoods (or poor schools) has an effect upon their educational achievements (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000) or employment situation (Galster et al. 2008). In a review article, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) asserted, for instance, that methodologically sound studies on rich data sets generally infer that the presence of richer and better educated neighbors has a positive effect on school results and average incomes. Other researchers conclude, however, that the limited gains of social mix policies do not outweigh their costs. Drawing on research in the Netherlands, Musterd (2003) explains, for instance, that welfare states have better and less expensive means to combat poverty. Certainly in European cities with rather moderate levels of segregation, researchers conclude that educational programs and labor market strategies at the neighborhood level are more effective than the creation of heterogeneous residential environments (Ostendorf, Musterd and De Vos 2001, Musterd, Ostendorf and De Vos 2003). In fact, a number of researchers even argue that desegregation could work against the interests of underprivileged people (Van Kempen and Özüekren 1998, p. 1635-1636). Based on qualitative research in Antwerp, Peleman (2002) concluded, for instance, that a lot of Moroccan women do not want to move out of so-called concentration neighborhoods because advantages relating to the presence of religious institutions, ethnic entrepreneurs and social networks make up for their disadvantages.

While the academic community has not come to an agreement about the importance of neighborhood effects in the reproduction of poverty, there is even less consensus about the mechanisms behind them. Out of four mechanisms which are regularly cited, a first one relates to the **provision of services**. Neighborhoods with an overrepresentation of people with a weak socio-economic profile are said to have more difficulties to attract shops with good quality products against low prices (Alwitt and Donley 1997). Evidence from the US has been rather univocal in saying that neighborhoods with higher percentages of low income groups are ‘food-deserts’ with less opportunities to buy healthy food (Cummins and Macintyre 2006). In strong welfare states, the

quantity, the quality and the diversity of medical services, police stations or state-provided kindergartens is supposed to differ less significantly between rich and poor neighborhoods than in more neoliberal countries.

A second argument focuses on the role of **social networks**. The underlying assumption is that people with a different socio-economic profile have access to different goods and services. Hence, social networks are expected to be less extensive and less rewarding in homogeneous neighborhoods than in mixed ones. Based on a qualitative study in some of England's poorest neighborhoods, MacDonald et al. (2005) confirmed this way of thinking. Their conclusion was that the social networks limited the residents' possibilities to escape social exclusion. Granovetter's (1995) difference between weak, but heterogeneous ties and strong, but homogeneous ties is often invoked in this literature. Drawing on a longitudinal study in Sweden, Musterd et al. (2008) asserted, for instance, that new immigrants strongly depend upon the intense networks within their own ethno-cultural group for support and information, but that more ambitious individuals generally benefit from weaker, but more heterogeneous social networks to get a good job.

A third mechanism behind neighborhood effects relates to **socialization** processes. Due to a lack of positive role models, early school-leaving, teenage pregnancy, crime, drug abuse and welfare state dependency are supposed to be more socially accepted in poor neighborhoods than in the rest of society. Research on socialization outcomes has inferred, for instance, that children living in deprived neighborhoods have more behavioral problems regardless of the socio-economic situation of their parents (Kalff et al. 2001). It has also been proposed that the educational achievements of underprivileged youngsters are not only influenced by the social networks in disadvantaged neighborhoods, but also by the lack of positive examples with a higher education degree (Ainsworth 2002). Based on similar arguments, Wilson (1987) asserted that the social isolation of poor, black people in American urban ghettos severely worsened the impact of historical discrimination and structural shifts in the economy.

To explain why some neighborhoods generate more social mobility than others, researchers also focus on practices of **stigmatization**. Slater and Anderson (2012) underline, for example, that the deprivation of the St. Paul's neighborhood in Bristol should not only be explained by socio-economic structures, but also by misrepresentation in the rest of the city. Along the same line Warr (2005, p. 289) argues that "stigma is crucial for understanding the processes through which social and economic disadvantage becomes entrenched and suggests a significant barrier for social welfare interventions to develop social capital in disadvantaged community". This demonstrates that stigmatization is not only important because of the negative repercussions of territorial stereotyping



by outsiders (e.g. on employment chances), but also because it results in the fragmentation of the neighborhood dwellers. While potential employers may associate an address with the capacity to do a good job or the willingness to work hard (Bauder 2001), inhabitants of the concerned neighborhoods might start to scapegoat each other in an attempt to pass the stigma from one group of residents to another (Wacquant 2008). As such, neighborhood stereotypes may not only contribute to lower-participation in social networks. They can also hinder the development of interpersonal trust and cooperation (Cattell 2001, Warr 2005).

### **4.3. *The contact hypothesis***

Over the last years, neighborhood effects have not only been related to socio-economic outcomes, but also to more cultural issues. The key question then is not whether spatial separation impacts upon social mobility, but whether segregation affects the development of identities, stereotypes and prejudices. While the literature cited in the previous section is almost exclusively preoccupied with effects on the underprivileged, the studies cited in the three following sections mainly focuses on the values and the attitudes held by the privileged. Obviously, the paragraph on stigmatization on top of this page should have made clear that the convictions of the rich can have a serious effect on the living circumstances of the poor.

A notable exception to the focus on the privileged is instigated by worries about the capacity to assimilate immigrants in the culture of the host country. In many Western European countries, the exclamation of the 'end of multiculturalism' has shifted the debate on ethnic minority clustering from an obstacle to socio-economic mobility towards an impediment of **socio-cultural integration** (Phillips 2006 & 2010). In Britain, Kalra and Kapoor (2009, p. 1397) remarked, for instance, that "any attempt to advocate desegregation as a way to promote material equality has been replaced by its use to promote the removal of cultural difference". Empirical studies indicate, however, that the link between segregation and integration is more complex in reality than it seems to be in the minds of a lot of policy makers. Some researchers conclude that ethnic concentration impedes inter-ethnic contacts and delays language proficiency (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007). "When ethnic minorities live isolated from native Dutch", this line of reasoning goes, "they have less contact with native Dutch; consequently, they do not acquire an adequate command of the Dutch language, are not likely to adopt 'Dutch' norms and values and will not succeed in socioeconomic terms" (van der Laan Bouma-Doff 2007, p. 1000). Other researchers infer, however, that social mix does not have a positive effect

on social integration and that strong ethnic concentration can even facilitate integration (Bolt, Özüekren and Phillips 2010).

Central to the development of social psychology, **the contact hypothesis** by Allport (1954) is an important source of inspiration in research on majority groups. Basically, it entails that negative attitudes towards people from other groups can be reduced by contact with members of this group, but only under certain circumstances. Over the years, social psychologists have seriously lengthened the list of these circumstances, however. In the most recent formulations, contact is said to reduce prejudice under the condition that the members of both groups are mutually interdependent, that they share a common goal, that they have equal status, that the contact moments are interpersonal and informal, that multiple contacts with members of the other group take place and that there are social norms of equality (Pettigrew 1998, Aronson, Wilson and Akert 2005). At the same time, other social psychologists question whether contact is necessary to reduce the social distance between members of two groups. The **mere-exposure effect** of Zajonc (1968) entails that repeated exposure to a stimulus can be enough to have more positive attitudes towards it. Drawing on 20 years of research on this effect, Bornstein (1989) concluded that just seeing people regularly can, indeed, increase positive attitudes towards them.

Over the years, any simple translation of these theories to real life situations has been criticized from a number of sources. Amongst others, political scientists have indicated, for instance, that contact cannot only lead to the reduction of prejudice, but also to the **intensification of tensions and conflicts**. Based on a study on ethnocentrism in ethnically diverse classrooms in Belgium, Dejaeghere, Hooghe and Claes (2012) found that high levels of ethnocentrism are often related to the perception of ethnical tensions at school. In Australia and the United States, Barlow et al. (2012) compared the effect of negative and positive intergroup experiences on prejudice. Although positive intergroup contact was related to a reduction in prejudice, there was an even stronger association between negative contact and increased prejudice. Barlow et al. (2012) inferred that this process is responsible for inter-group antipathy in ethnically diverse areas.

Sociologists call for attention for the **macro-sociological underpinnings of contact**. Starting from analytical deduction, Blau (1977) infers that it is logical that minority groups have relatively more contact with people from majority groups than the other way around. "If there are 1 million pairs of mutual best friends between a majority of 100 million and a minority of 10 million persons", Blau (1977, p. 38) calculates, "1% of the majority and 10% of the minority have such a friend" . If the amount of intergroup friend pairs would increase to 3 million, only 3% percent of the majority

members and as much as 30% of minority members would have a friend from the other group. According to Blau, this implies that the inequality in intergroup contact becomes more pronounced when blatant forms of discrimination become more rare. In his own words, “a decline in discrimination, while helping to integrate minorities in society, moves the social experience provided by intergroup life of most minority members and most majority members further apart” (Blau 1977, p. 39).

#### ***4.4. Segregation and capsularization***

While geographers have taken inspiration from the contact hypothesis (e.g. Valentine 2008, Matejskova and Leitner 2011), they are generally also very critical of it. Just like the sociologists quoted above, they are focused on the structural conditions under which contact emerges. As such, they indicate, first of all, that **spatial proximity is not enough to guarantee contact and interaction**. In his study on Oud-Berchem, Loopmans (2000) showed, for instance, that the social mix of a heterogeneous Belgian neighborhood does not automatically lead to diverse social networks or mixed meeting places. In the same way, the research of Beyers (2004) in the mine sites of Zwartberg demonstrates that people from different immigration backgrounds often have different lifestyles and hardly meet in their everyday lives. In this way, the appearance of ethnic and cultural integration at the scale of the neighborhood masks the reality of segregation at smaller spatial scales. “Because of the strong focus on the scale of the neighborhood”, Loopmans (2000, p. 28) concludes, “social processes at other spatial scales are underexposed”.

Closely related to this, is the observation that **contact is often deliberately avoided**. In countries such as the United States, South Africa or Brazil, the proliferation of shopping malls can be taken as an example. The mushrooming of shopping malls is there often understood as a retreat into a purified, sanitized and privatized place from which homeless people, street traders and other ‘strangers’ are forcefully excluded. Because the average public of a shopping mall does not represent the population as a whole, malls have been said to be ‘pseudo public spaces’ where the expression of social diversity has been replaced by the spectacle of a consumption landscape. According to Mitchell (2003, p. 140), the retreat into malls leads, therefore, to “the increasing alienation of people from the possibilities of unmediated social interaction”. He refers to Crilley (1993)’s observation that malls foster the “illusion of a homogenized public” by filtering out “the social heterogeneity of the crowd” and by providing “minimal exposure to the horrifying level of homelessness and racialized poverty that characterizes [the] street environment”. Similar arguments have been raised about cars

(Mitchell 2005), fortified houses (Schuermans 2013), gated communities (Low 2001) or suburbs (Kesteloot and De Maesschalck 2001). In the words of Low (2005, p. 247), “from its earliest beginnings, the suburb was an ‘anti-urban’ community where first upper-class followed by middle class residents searched for sameness, status and security”.

Based on these observations, it needs to be underlined that any project on the generation of alternative forms of solidarity in settings of forced propinquity needs to take into account that a lot of people circumvent such settings deliberately. After all, this observation seriously limits the amount of people who are involved in the kind of projects we are looking for. On the one hand, it can be inferred that the longing for homogeneous, ‘capsularized’ territories **constrains the development of a real politics of propinquity** because bodily confrontation with abject others is avoided (De Caeter 2004, p. 45-46). On the other hand, ‘capsularization’ also **counteracts the prospective of a true politics of connectivity**. Because ‘encapsulated’ individuals restrict their social interactions to individuals within the capsular nodes where they feel ontologically secure, they only build up distanced relations with other places and other individuals that lie within the purified nodes of the capsularized network (De Caeter 2004, p. 90-91). In any case, we need to be attentive for the structural conditions which shape, or do not shape, settings of propinquity.

#### ***4.5. Geographies of encounter***

Consistent with the second vision on urbanity and difference outlined in the first paragraphs of this section, there is a growing literature on the **geographies of encounter**. Mainly drawing on qualitative research with majority groups, researchers in this field are interested in the practices and the outcomes of interpersonal interactions in so-called contact zones (Askins and Pain 2011) or spaces of encounters (Leitner 2012). Places that have been studied in this vein include streets (Leitner 2012), schools (Wilson 2013), community centers (Matejskova and Leitner 2011), corner shops (Everts 2010), trains (Bissell 2010) and buses (Wilson 2011). In all these places, scholars are interested in the ways in which prevailing meanings, discomforts and anxieties around race, class, ethnicity and sexuality can be re-configured through everyday contacts in propinquity. In the words of Valentine and Waite (2012, p. 475) “this research is exploring the significance of contact – as a product of shared space – in mediating difference”. All in all, this literature comes to very ambiguous and ambivalent conclusions. While some scholars conclude that interpersonal encounters have meaningful effects on feelings of identity, community and solidarity (e.g. Wilson 2013), other researchers infer that contact, more often than not, hardens prejudices (e.g. Matejskova and Leitner

2011). Below, we will clarify that a lot of this ambiguity stems from the fact that researchers have looked at places and interactions with completely different characteristics.

In general, the geographies of encounter literature mainly focuses on interactions taking place in streets, squares and neighborhood parks. Based on case-studies in these places, it is often concluded that public space interactions do not spur significant transformations as they provide, at worst, opportunities for fleeting exchanges which harden negative stereotypes and, at best, incidental encounters which comply with norms of civility (Matejskova and Leitner 2011, p. 728). Based on a qualitative study on middle class Whites in England, Valentine (2008, p. 325) concluded, for example, that attitudes towards minority populations did not necessarily change in interactions. Some of her more racist informants argued, in fact, that they felt such a **big need to be 'politically correct'** in everyday encounters that they curtailed the public expression of their prejudices and stereotypes (Valentine, 2008, p. 329). Because a seemingly positive attitude in a one-to-one encounter did not necessarily entail a feeling of solidarity and care and for the people at the other side of the binary, Valentine (2008, p. 325) concludes that "some of the writing about cosmopolitanism and new urban citizenship appears to be laced with a worrying romanticization of urban encounter and to implicitly reproduce a potentially naive assumption that contact with 'others' necessarily translates into respect for difference".

In 'Orientalism', Said (1978) already remarked that encounters with individual 'Orientals' could rarely disturb the essentialist dichotomy between the Orient and the Occident. In fact, Said stressed that such **encounters** generally even **strengthened the representational divide** between them. In the words of Said (1978, p. 102), "it is as if, on the one hand, a bin called "Oriental" existed into which all the authoritative, anonymous and traditional Western attitudes to the East were dumped unthinkingly, while on the other, true to the anecdotic tradition of storytelling, one could nevertheless tell of experiences with or in the Orient that had little to do with the generally serviceable bin". In a Danish study, Haldrup, Koefoed and Simonsen (2006 & 2008) reached an equally pessimist conclusion. With the term on 'practical Orientalism', they stretched the concept of orientalism beyond its institutional dimensions so that it covers "the *banal* and *intimate* means by which orientalism is (re)produced in everyday life" (Haldrup, Koefoed and Simonsen 2006, p. 175, emphasis in original). As such, they recognize that orientalism is not only enforced and reinforced through political discourses and regimes of knowledge – as Said (1978) powerfully demonstrated – but also "profoundly rooted in everyday encounters between immigrants and ethnic Danes" that have been less prominent in the discussion so far (Haldrup, Koefoed, Simonsen, 2006, p. 180; cfr. Billig 1995).

That being said, there are still a lot of geographers who are convinced that **encounters with others can have meaningful effects**. This conclusion is not only reached in places where people interact on a daily basis, but also in fleeting contacts between strangers who do not meet each other regularly. In the first instance, the effect of the interaction is generally supposed to work through cognitive processes (Andersson et al. 2011). In a study of primary schools in England, Hemming (2011) concluded, for instance, that everyday interactions in diverse classes and playgrounds are 'meaningful' as they allow children from different cultures and religions to develop friendships and social networks outside their own communities. In this way, children learn to understand each other's habits and cultures. In the second category, more attention is paid to affective processes (Bissell 2010, Wise 2010). Based on observations on a bus line in Birmingham, Wilson (2011, p; 635) inferred, for instance, that the everyday encounters on the bus can shape "our perception of others – both on and off the bus, at other times and other places". Even when passengers do not talk with each other, she is convinced that the atmosphere on the bus might allow for "new modes of living with difference to emerge and to be demanded" (Wilson 2011, p. 646).

Whether the effects of encounters are mediated by cognitive or affective processes, the question remains to what extent they can be scaled up to places and times outside the immediacy of the encounter (Valentine 2008, p. 325). In this context, geographers generally tend to assume that proximity in public space alone is not sufficient to reconcile ethnic and cultural differences. Instead, they argue that fundamental changes in intercultural practices and values might best be achieved in the kind of **micro-publics** described by Amin (2002). Van Eijk (2011, p. 327) concludes, for instance, that "we need to distance ourselves from the focus on the neighborhood concept and shift our attention towards the real (potential) nodes of interaction: the activities and settings that bring together different categories of people". Engaging with strangers in a common activity at the workplace, the school, the youth center or the sports club, Amin (2002, p. 970) agrees, "disrupts easy labeling of the stranger as enemy and initiates new attachments". Recurring interactions in these places "are moments of cultural destabilization", he insists, "offering individuals the chance to break out of fixed relations and fixed notions, and through this, to learn to become different through new patterns of social interaction" (ibid.).

## 5. Conclusion

We started this status quaestionis by saying that solidarity has never been a key concept in human geography. Nevertheless, we hope that we have convinced the reader that a spatial understanding of the interrelations between community, diversity and solidarity adds to the project we have embarked on. If that would not be the case yet, this conclusion is our last effort to achieve this. Spread over three subsections, we will look at 1.) contributions of human geographers to the conceptualization of solidarity; 2.) spatial perspectives on identity and community as a basis for solidarity and 3.) the significance of geographies of encounter in the nurturing of solidarity.

### *5.1. Solidarity in diversity*

In section 3.2., we clarified that geographers understand solidarity in a rather narrow way. The concept has been used mostly by scholars who are interested – and often also engaged – in struggles against oppression, injustice or inequality. Drawing on the way in which geographers use the concept within studies of underprivileged communities, autonomous communities, global justice networks, transnational labor unions and academia, we inferred that a distinction can be made between **solidarity rooted in homogeneity or heterogeneity**, on the one hand, and **intra- or inter-border solidarities**, on the other hand.

While a deeper engagement with the use of solidarity by human geographers would already provide us with an understanding of the connections between diversity, community, solidarity and proximity, we opted to broaden the scope of this status quaestionis by giving an overview of geographical work on responsibility and care. Even though these concepts do not completely overlap with the notion of solidarity (as elaborated in the sociological status quaestionis), we are convinced that they teach us two lessons for a conceptualization of solidarity in diversity. The first one relates to the difference between 'caring for' and 'caring about'. In section 3.4., we explained that caring for always involves an act, but that caring about does not. Caring for corresponds with the provision of practical help; caring about with the transmission of emotional support. Relating to the elaboration of citizenship practices and acts of citizenship in the status quaestionis of the political scientists, this suggests an essential **difference between discursive and/or affective enactments of solidarity** ("I care about

you”, “We declare ourselves to be in solidarity with your situation”) **and concrete performances of solidarity** (“I care for you”, “We do something about it”).

A second lesson is based on the conceptualization of responsibility (section 3.3). Referring to the example of sweatshops, Iris Marion Young asserted that ethical and political responsibilities stem from the fact that we are involved in structural processes of exclusion. For Massey, responsibility does not spring directly from participation in such processes, however, but from the fact that this participation is identity-forming. Building upon the writings of Gatens and Lloyd, she explains that responsibility is grounded in the way we develop notions of who we are. For Massey, responsibility depends upon the fact that selfhoods, communities and place identities are not being constructed in isolation of the wider world, but in relation to others. Taking this as our point of departure, the next section will develop spatial perspectives on **community and identity as a basis for responsibility, care or solidarity**.

## ***5.2. Identity and community as a basis for solidarity***

The main contribution of our discipline to a reconceptualization of solidarity in diversity rests on the **relational rethinking of space and place** (section 2.2). This rethinking is rooted in economic, cultural and social dimensions of globalization. Among geographers, it is considered to be both descriptive (“what already is”) and normative (“what ought to be”). The relational perspective does not only differ from traditional (often called territorial) ones with regards to the construction of place-based identities and communities, but also in relation to the resulting politics and ethics. Please keep in mind, however, that the real division between the two may not be as caricatural as it is presented here and that the two are often said to exist next to each other.

For human geographers, place denotes a location on earth that (groups of) people associate with. As such, place making is an integral part of **the formation of group identities and the building of communities** (section 2.1.). Traditional understandings of place rely on boundaries. By demarcating a ‘here’ from a ‘there’, these boundaries separate a ‘self’ from an ‘other’ and an ‘us’ from a ‘them’ (section 2.3.). In relational understandings, the identity of a place is not defined by its counterposition to other places, but by its connections with other places. Hence, relational places are not only characterized by the connections with the rest of the world, but also by the internal multiplicity which stems from these connections. By way of illustration, Massey (1991) asserted that the specificity of a multicultural shopping street is not dependent upon its internal history, but upon



the economic relations, the social networks and the cultural webs which link that street with places all over the world. In traditional conceptualizations of place, communities are homogeneous, place-bound and scale-bound. In relational understandings, place-based communities are inescapably characterized by social mix. The members do not necessarily have to share a place either. Communities can also exist in multi-scalar networks across places.

According to traditional theories, communities are dependent upon a territorial **politics of place making**. In discursive and material struggles to redefine place identities, dominant and dominated groups engage in “attempts to fix the meaning of places, to enclose and defend, to construct singular, fixed and static identities for places” (Massey, 1994, p. 168). Massey’s viewpoint that places are unique points of connection within wider networks facilitates an alternative politics of place making, however. Amin explains that a relational politics of place making simultaneously encompasses a politics of propinquity and connectivity. In the politics of propinquity, it is fundamental to negotiate the inescapable heterogeneity of places and communities. In the politics of connectivity, place making can (and should) be based on a recognition of the networks through which any place is connected with other places (section 2.2.). While territorial politics of place making depend upon the exclusion of individuals who are supposed to be ‘out of place’ and the forced assimilation of the ones being ‘in place’, a relational politics of propinquity and connectivity leaves room for more inclusionary alliances between scales and across places (sections 2.3. and 2.4.).

In traditional understandings, the ethics of place are understood with the help of the Matryoshka model. In this territorial, localized and scaled model, it is supposed that we care the most and feel the most responsible for the ones who are socially and spatially the closest to us. In the same way, it is assumed that feelings and practices of solidarity will gradually decrease as we move from the smallest to the largest doll, from the closest to the furthest place (see section 3.3.). Based on a relational reading of place, recent scholarship on the geographies of **solidarity, care and responsibility** goes beyond this imaginative geography, however. By showing that people do not only care for children and aging parents in their own homes, but also for friends and family members abroad (remittances) and for close and distant others (City of Sanctuary; fair trade products), this literature subverts the particularist connotations of proximity and the universalist undertones of distance (sections 3.2 to 3.4). Two remarks need to be made, however. First of all, geographers underline that solidarity across places can be transformatory and accomodationist (section 3.2.). Secondly, they emphasize that it is impossible to separate the ethical implications of propinquity from those of connectivity. Paraphrasing Darling (2009, p. 1947), the concern is how the demands of internal multiplicity can be reconciled with solidarity with distant others.

### ***5.3. Stimulating solidarity through encounters***

Geographers assume that solidarity is not just stimulated by philosophical reflections of responsibilities to others. Especially in the **geographies of encounter** literature, there is a hope – and evidence – that interpersonal interactions can reconfigure the boundaries of communities and the solidarities arising from them. This literature is based on the optimistic image of the city as an amalgam of contact zones. While scholars accept that contacts are often superficial or guided by political correctness, they are also confident that the cognitive and affective processes involved in encounters have meaningful effects stretching beyond their place and time. Especially in so-called micro-publics, people are said to learn to live with each others' differences (sections 4.3. and 4.5., cfr. status quaestionis educationalists). These conclusions are contradicted, however, in the more pessimistic literature on the city as a site of segregation. In this vision, cross-cultural and cross-class contacts are said to be deliberately avoided. The development of a politics and ethics of propinquity and connectivity is, then, counteracted by the retreat in supposedly homogeneous spaces (section 4.4.). Through processes of socialization and stigmatization, the segregation of the rich and the poor reproduces poverty and wealth (section 4.2.)

In our view, this literature on everyday interactions points at three different, but interrelated issues to take up in the DieGem project. First of all, the existing research in this field clarifies that propinquity does not necessarily lead to encounters with difference, just like encounters do not always bring about care, responsibility or solidarity either. In fact, a lot of empirical evidence suggests that engagement with close others can confirm stereotypes and reproduce practices of exclusion or disengagement. Secondly, it needs to be underlined that most research in this field infers that meaningful effects are most easily reached in places where people work, study or play together on a daily basis, rather than in superficial contacts with strangers on busses, trains, streets, squares or parks. This conclusion is in line with the general DieGem hypothesis, but points at the need to pay close attention to the social, cultural and geographical dimensions of the settings of propinquity we are going to study. A third issue to take up in the project relates to the supposed effects of encounters. While superficial interactions with difference may bring about a feeling of conviviality, closer interactions may lead to something more. Yet, the geographies of encounter literature lacks a consensus on what this something more may be. By conceptualizing solidarity in relation to propinquity, our project could provide a meaningful contribution to this debate.

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