

Article

Spinoza and Urban Imagination: Resilience as the Persistence of Hope

Jan Gabriel S. Boller

Abstract: This paper introduces Spinozist thought in informing the issues and complexities presented by the city. Drawing on various definitions of the city as a process characterized by complexity and multiplicity, I intend to reinterpret and approximate the city as a concept to Spinoza's notion of an individual where persistence, or what he terms as *conatus*, establishes itself as the individuating principle. Here, the gap between the individual and the city could be addressed through the philosopher's notion of imagination. By turning from the metaphysical and ontological signification of the individual in juxtaposition to the city as a process to a hopeful social configuration of ethical relations aided by the imagination, I demonstrate the relevance of Spinoza's thought in conceiving and philosophizing about the city. This includes its individuating principle, relational and affective capacities, and the notion of resilience as a double constitution of hope and fear, shaping our perception and imagination of the urban.

Keywords: Spinoza, imagination, persistence, resilience

Philosophy of the city as an emerging scholarship is abundant with concepts that can be interrogated and reinterpreted in order to establish new ways in thinking about the city. Philosophizing about the city means grasping it within the domain of concepts. On one hand, Johannes Mueller-Salo defines the concept of a city as a complex interplay of built structures, practices of culture and everyday actions.¹ On the other hand, Achilles Varzi notes that this complexity involves emerging properties that change how cities are defined but still remain evident enough for us to intimate ourselves with. As a city is continuously in flux, we can treat it as a process-like object.² Thus, by looking at a city from the level of concepts, we

¹ Johannes Mueller-Salo, "Three Ways of Doing Philosophy of the City," in *Philosophy of the City Journal*, 1:1 (2023), 19–30, <<https://doi.org/10.21827/potcj.1.1.40978>>.

² Achilles Varzi, "What is a City?," in *Topoi*, 40:2 (2021), 399–408, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-019-09647-4>>.

ascertain its metaphysical property: that it is processual, dynamic, and complex – yet maintain its familiarity for us to recognize, immerse, and engage with.

In this vein, I want to establish a philosophy of the city that is in close proximity to Spinoza by understanding the underpinnings of the philosopher's metaphysical doctrine. Through this, we can arrive at an understanding of the city as it is informed by the Dutch thinker. Thus, for the purposes of this paper, I intend to draw, quite preliminarily, a Spinozist metaphysics of the city and its dynamism through a relational assessment of particular individuals that make up what we commonly identify as a city. Here, I argue that through Spinoza's relational ontology, we can understand the concept of a city as a particular social configuration of ethical relations. In this context, resilience emerges as a particular approach toward interpreting individuals, communities, and cities as they affectively oscillate between hope and fear – a distinct duality in the Spinozist sense in which we can appropriate it with the kind of imaginary that we ascribe to the urban.

This paper is divided into four parts: (1) *Relationality and Individuality* discusses Spinoza's philosophical tenets regarding his ontology of relations; (2) *The Individual and the City* talks about the relationship between an individual and the city, and how one informs and transforms the other; (3) *Resilience: Configuring Hopeful Imaginaries* situates the idea of urban resilience as a particular conative configuration of the Spinozan individual; and lastly (4) the *conclusion* summarizes the arguments and discussions with allusions to hope as a distinct characteristic of resiliency I made from the preceding discussions.

Relationality and Individuality

Spinoza paints an intricate picture of an ecology of relations in his metaphysics of substance. However, this only surfaces and becomes quite explicit in the later part of his posthumous work, *Ethics*. Before arriving at a metaphysics of individuation and the relational individual, we first must, quite painstakingly, deal with his geometric exposition on the nature of god, mind, and the physics of emotions. As he seeks to overturn Cartesian dualism that favors the mind over the body, and posits the transcendence and immortality of the soul, he nonetheless established substance monism, that which he calls God or nature. By treating substance as “that which is conceived in and through itself” Spinoza posits an immanent ontology, as opposed to Descartes' transcendental principle.³ As he states that “God is the immanent and not the transient cause of all things,” he further solidifies his

³ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. by Clare Carlisle, trans. by George Eliot (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 73.

position that everything is in God or nature as modifications of substance, seen in the attribute of thought and extension.⁴

This immanent ontology allows Spinoza to rethink how we view individuals as modes of the substance. Through the attributes, substance expresses itself. There are two moments here. First, the expression of substance in its attributes pertains to its essence. Second, attributes express themselves in turn through modifications (or modes) of their respective attribute.⁵ The former establishes what he calls a “genealogy of the essence of substance,” while the latter explains the production of particular things. This manifests in Spinoza’s double constitution of substance as *natura naturans* (expression of itself prior to its implications) and *natura naturata* (production of modes as attributes express themselves). The matter of expression allows us to rethink Spinoza’s idea of substance.⁶ By having the substance turn around modes at the second moment, modes in turn gain an ontological upper hand, a significance that puts individual things at the front, representing substance through the diversity of attributes (thought and extension). In turn, interpreting Spinoza in this way alleviates the danger of attributing pantheism to the philosopher by allowing for a more robust understanding of the power of the individual.⁷

The focus on the individual precipitated by Spinoza’s principles of substance monism gave way for a turn on contemporary understanding to engage more on the modes as expression rather than merely seen as static and passive products of substance. As Spinoza understands individuals or particular things as “modes by which the attributes of God are expressed in a certain and determinate manner,” it lends itself into a complex web of relations.⁸ Lee Rice explains that “it is the relation among its parts, and not the parts themselves, upon which Spinoza fixes in order to characterize an individual.”⁹ This is not without controversies, of course. For example, he brings up criticisms aimed at Spinoza’s idea of the individual not being an agent because of the exclusion of freewill in his system, and that an individual’s existence is dependent upon an infinite chain of causes—the former looking at an inherent characteristic of a human individual while the latter accounts for a temporal regressive analysis of production of individual

⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. by Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 13.

⁶ Jayson Jimenez, “Expressionism, Univocity, and Sense: Rethinking Deleuze’s Spinoza,” in *Cosmos & History*, 18:1 (2022), 331–354, <<https://cosmosandhistory.org/index.php/journal/article/view/996>>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 95.

⁹ Lee Rice, “Spinoza on Individuation,” in *The Monist*, 55:4 (1971), 640–659, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27902233>>.

things. These are valid criticisms aimed towards Spinoza. As the philosopher himself does not allow contingency in his system, the question of freewill and agency of a human individual would surface, leaving the question concerning human actions in the hands of necessity. This has been the theme among some of the controversies in relation to Spinozism. Another example I would like to mention is that in the 18th century Germany, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi accused Gotthold Ephraim Lessing of his inclination to Spinoza where the former argues that Spinozism, or any rationally obtained philosophical principles for that matter, lead to fatalism and atheism.¹⁰ But, as I would further argue, necessity in Spinoza's system is hinged on substance as *natura naturans*, or God or nature's free expression and *natura naturata*, or particular modes as the expression of the attributes of substance which in turn demonstrates emphasis on the relational aspect of his ontology provides a richer understanding of an individual as a mode in relation to others. By highlighting this, we would be able to give particular attention to an individual as the locus of action, where the parallelism of thought and extension as attributes of substance allows for the connection of relations between individuals.

Relationality is the principle which holds that every individual continuously shapes, informs, and transforms every other individual through an affective process of determination. Although Spinoza himself has little to say about relations, he nonetheless expresses a relational account of metaphysics to which his physics of emotions, the tenets of the free individual, and the establishment of the city is based upon.¹¹ Here, it is important to note the philosopher's employment of the term *affect*. He defines it as "those affections of the body by which its power of acting is increased or diminished."¹² Emphasized here is the capacity of bodies to configure other bodies in a continuous relationship with it. By recognizing how a body is affected, we can specify the determinations it undergoes. This means that to think of the Spinozan individual means to think of the individual in relation to the whole. We must analyze the workings of the relations between individuals and what constitutes them. This is what Juliana Merçon identifies as an individual in the Spinozist sense: not as self-contained, but as relational. Therefore, an individual as a mode indicates an opening.¹³

¹⁰ Myriam Bienenstock, "The Pantheism Controversy in the 1780s," in *Oxford History of Modern German Theology*, ed. by Kaplan Grant and Kevin Vander Schel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 221–238.

¹¹ Zachary Gartenberg, "Spinoza on Relations," in *A Companion to Spinoza*, ed. by Yitzak Melamed (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021), 179–188.

¹² Spinoza, *Ethics*, 163.

¹³ Juliana Merçon, "Relationality and Individuality in Spinoza," in *Revista Conatus: Filosofia de Spinoza*, 1:2 (2007), 51–59, <<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=4016348>>.

In one of his letters, Spinoza associates our perception of individuality similar to a worm in a vein.¹⁴ When we are unaware of our relation to other entities in the bloodstream, or to the human body at large, we commit the mistake of thinking of ourselves as individuals that are self-contained and independent. This kind of thinking is inadequate as he warns us that “men suppose themselves free because they are conscious of their volitions and appetites, and do not even dream of the causes by which they are disposed to desire and will, because of these they are ignorant.”¹⁵ In this expression, we are encouraged to pay attention not only to ourselves and particular individuals in order to know the nature or essence of things, but also to the relations that invite us to acknowledge this challenge. Here, as Aurelia Armstrong argues, Spinoza’s rejection of autonomy that is dependent upon an idea of an isolated individual informs us that we should not look at an individual in isolationist terms that divorces us from the network of relations in which we are situated.¹⁶

In the context of an ontology of relations, we are taken to a renewed concept of the individual. In this sense, there are no subjects nor objects. Nor are there humans and non-humans, only individuals. Vittorio Morfino puts it this way: that “the individual is a relation between an outside and an inside paradoxically constituted by this very relation.”¹⁷ Or, as Spinoza reminds us, there are no teleological determinations that are bequeathed upon human individuals. This relational principle brings us to an understanding of the complex web of ecology of relations to a recognition of sociability in terms of a social configuration of ethical relations. Constitutive to this is the space between individuals that allows for a collective life and striving.¹⁸ As I will discuss in the next section, and in close proximity to Spinoza’s philosophy, the city as a dynamic process of various configurations presents this particular arrangement. By juxtaposing the individual to the city and vice versa, we can pin down how one informs and transforms the other in forming the “the urban,” both as a concept and as a material reality in all its complexities, modes, and configurations.

¹⁴ Benedict de Spinoza, “Letter 32, to Oldenburg,” in *Spinoza Collected Works*, ed. & trans. by Edwin Curley (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988).

¹⁵ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 105.

¹⁶ Aurelia Armstrong, “Autonomy and the Relational Individual,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza*, ed. by Moira Gatens (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 43–63.

¹⁷ Vittorio Morfino, “Spinoza: An Ontology of Relation?,” in *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 27:1 (2006), 103–127, <<https://doi.org/10.5840/gfpj200627115>>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

The Individual and the City

Here, I present the city in contradistinction to the individual. From a metaphysical point of view, the former is fundamentally what Steven Barbone calls a quasi-individual, devoid of essence where it can establish itself as a real category of the latter.¹⁹ However, essentialism in this sense would be counterproductive. It is in the nature of cities, as a dynamic process, to change. Cities change, and their identity is not established as it affects an individual in a particular manner. In this, we see a parallel in Spinoza's line of argument that a single individual is capable of affecting us in many ways.²⁰ Considering this thought, we are presented with a paradox. As Ramoneda and Kochhar-Lindgren argue: the identity of a city is its non-identity.²¹ Whenever we refer to a particular city, such as Manila, we attach not only its physical, sociological, psychological, and political characteristics, but also its metaphysical properties, to what makes it a city. Hence, at the level of the concept, cities demonstrate a resistance towards a particular definition that hints at an identity that shortchanges the multiplicity of its constitution. It is in this sense where Henri Lefebvre warns us that in terms of thinking the city as an absolute identity, we reduce and extrapolate it in simplistic terms.²² Furthermore, Anna Bloom-Christen articulates that in order to know a city, we must also understand its social capacity besides its material and spatial reality.²³ Consider Manila again. Beyond its narrow roads, winding rivers, and historical landmarks, it is a city that has undergone significant changes. Beyond its borders, the city invites us to delve deeper into its complexities and variations not only spatiotemporally, but also our conception of it, and how it is denoted in both experience and thought. These, as Varzi concludes, are the enthralling elements that are present when we philosophize about the city as a process-like dynamism.²⁴ Building on this idea, I would like to add a Spinozist twist to this dynamic by incorporating a naturalized view of the

¹⁹ Steven Barbone, "What counts as an Individual for Spinoza?," in *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes*, ed. by Olli Koistinen and John Ivan Biro (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 89–112.

²⁰ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 129.

²¹ Josep Ramoneda, "A philosophical idea of the city," transcript of lecture at Yale University (2003), <<https://www.publicspace.org/multimedia/-/post/a-philosophical-idea-of-the-city>>. Also see Gray Kochhar-Lindgren, *Urban Arabesques: Philosophy, Hong Kong, Transversality* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 15.

²² Henri Lefebvre, "Philosophy of the City and Planning Ideology" in *Philosophy and the City: Classic to Contemporary Writings*, ed. by Sharon Meagher (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 136–139.

²³ Anna Bloom-Christen, "Knowing the City," in *Philosophy of the City Journal*, 1:1 (2023), 1–9, <<https://doi.org/10.21827/potcj.1.1.40776>>

²⁴ Varzi, "What is a City?"

human individual and integrating it with our conceptualization of this dynamism.

We can trace the genesis of the concept of a city in Spinoza's *Ethics* as a form of sociability.²⁵ This particular point in his work is where the philosopher derives, through a form or semblance of social contract, how a state is configured from mutual interests of individuals occupying a particular place, informing how we understand a community. He writes: "the good which everyone who desires virtue follows for himself, he desires for all human beings, and the more, in proportion as he has greater knowledge of God."²⁶ As he proceeds to demonstrate this further, he ascertains that, following his notion of striving to persevere or *conatus* in relation to the civilized man in a city, "they give up their natural right and give mutual security that they will not do anything to each other's injury."²⁷ Here, there is a sense of belongingness that one is expected to act in a certain manner in order to contribute to the flourishing of a community. This understanding of the *State*, however rudimentary it could be based on Spinoza's definition, may be translated into our contemporary idea of the city: as a process-like dynamism that is based on human beings' natural drive to persist and strive towards what they deem as good, determined by the relations that affect them. What makes a 'good' city' is how it affects its citizens positively – or in Spinoza's words – joyfully, by increasing their power and capacity to act. Conversely, a 'bad' city brings about sadness, restraining one's power of acting. Here, Spinoza signals the affective relational capacity of the city as it informs and transforms the citizen in its affective and rational dimensions.

Etienne Balibar sees a double constitution in this configuration. He refers to Spinoza's whole philosophical project with an objective of composing various modes of communication which utilizes affects and rationalization.²⁸ In other words, Spinoza's interconnected model of

²⁵ Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part 4, Proposition 37.

²⁶ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 251.

²⁷ *Ibid.* Spinoza refers to natural right as "the very laws or rules of nature, in accordance with which everything takes place, in other words, the power of nature itself." See Spinoza, "Political Treatise" in *Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. by R.H.M. Elwes. One of the most important aspects of Spinoza's metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics is his concept of *conatus* or persistence. In e3p6, he articulates it as the essence by which every individual thing maintains its own existence. In relation to Spinoza's naturalized view of the human individual, there are no particular ends assigned to them at an ontological level. They are seen as modes of the substance expressed through certain attributes such as thought and extension. Therefore, good and evil only arises based on how a particular individual relates to a particular thing, as affection. These affections affect an individual on two levels: experience (which informs imagination) and reason.

²⁸ Etienne Balibar, "Philosophies of the Transindividual: Spinoza, Marx, Freud," in *Australasian Philosophical Review*, 2:1 (2018), 5–25, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/24740500.2018.1514958>>.

substance metaphysics influences individuals both at the level of affective constitution and the dictates of reason. Here, Balibar introduces his understanding of the Spinozan *transindividual*, which, borrowing the term from Gilbert Simondon, is inherently relational, and where it is through the emphasis of relations that we can understand movements, activities, and motivations of an individual. It is in this argument where he rejoins Gilles Deleuze; that it is in the “capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality.”²⁹ Therefore, an individual’s singularity cannot be isolated from a network of relations with others. This is the transition where Spinoza articulates the city as a form of social configuration of ethical relations. For him, it is through the common notion of benefit as the reason that we form a state, or in this case, a city, in order to enjoy mutual harmony, preserve, and advance the interest of individuals. It is through the relations of individuals, and not individuals themselves, that allow us to form a city that protects us from harm by instituting laws, building infrastructures, inventing and maintaining cultural practices, and forming economies.

The formation of a city is an affective rationalization as a collective form of love and enjoyment. Here, reason takes on a mimetic activity. As affectivity is at all times present in a sociability, it becomes the primary mode by which reason imitates, through politics, the constitution of a community.³⁰ As Spinoza demonstrates further, “the good which everyone who follows virtue desires for himself, he will desire for all human beings.” This mimetic dimension in Spinoza’s proto-political philosophy begins with the affective state of individuals that make them produce a community of mutuality. In this sense, as Thomas Minguy states, politics forms citizens as it is in the community of rational human beings to imitate affective states that give joy and reduce such that bring about sadness.

In a similar vein, Alexandre Matheron presents an understanding that implicates Spinoza’s requirement of a city. Still referring to the particular passage presented above (*Ethics* 4, Proposition 37), he exposes Spinoza’s implicit demand of forming a political society (i.e., a city) where human individuals can achieve three requirements: (1) that they could peacefully enjoy the pleasures of the senses; (2) that they live in economic comfort; and (3) that they spread honors (democracy and institutionalization of the people’s welfare and interests).³¹ These underpin an implication that in order

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. by Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 123.

³⁰ Thomas Minguy, “The Desiring Constitutions of Community: A two-fold reading of Spinoza’s social philosophy in the *Ethics*,” in *Journal of Spinoza Studies*, 2:1 (2023), 64–82, <<https://doi.org/10.21827/jss.2.1.38195>>.

³¹ Alexandre Matheron, *Politics, Ontology and Knowledge in Spinoza: Essays by Alexandre Matheron*, ed. by Filippo Del Lucchese, David Maruzzella and Gil Morejon, trans. by David Maruzzella and Gil Morejon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 115.

for human beings to live harmoniously, they must reside in a society, where a political unit such as a city exhibits the multiplicative power greater than that of the single, isolated individual. This political society, for Spinoza, functions only as a pure and simple operational model, which, as Matheron states, is only projected ontologically, since in the Spinozan model of human nature, there is no such end or goal for an individual, only desires.³² Antonio Negri unveils this ontological projection as an ethical surplus which penetrates into the individual's field of subjectivation and politics. The process by which one's will, translated in consciousness as desire, transforms this ontological surplus into a particular individual orientation wherein the power of passions becomes demonstrated at the ontological level.³³ Therefore, Spinoza's passage "nothing is more useful to man than man" tells us less about the mechanical utility of individuals, but more about his concept of the multitude, enriched with the notion of transindividuality at the heart of his substance monism.³⁴ The idea behind the multitude in Spinoza is not an organic one. Negri affirms that there is no multitude in nature. It is, ontologically speaking, the tendency of individuals to form a politics based on encounters.³⁵ As a particular mode of thought of a collective which projects a social configuration of relations, a multitude is one that is constitutive of the dynamism and optimism of reason, and classifying such configuration as a city properly fits this denotation. Through reason's ontological scheme, it produces a common society or a city, where its power lies on its generative ability in creating laws and maintaining rights of an individual.

Going further, in understanding the philosopher's notion of right, we must understand it simply as power. As Spinoza states, "the right of the individual is co-extensive with its determinate power."³⁶ The idea of right as power is coherent with the philosopher's *conatus* doctrine. That is, through an individual's persistence that continuously defines and redefines its individuation, it strives to exist in a community. Here, resilience emerges as a particular orientation of an individual in its inclination to persist, transforming into right or power as it participates in a social configuration of ethical relations known as the city. With the aid of imagination as it is informed by the various experiences of the individual complemented by its rational thought, hope becomes the object by which an individual strives, thereby becoming resilient in the process. In the next section, I show the

³² *Ibid.*, 108.

³³ Antonio Negri, "Spinoza, Necessity and Freedom," in *Spinoza: Then and Now*, trans. by Ed Emery (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 72–87.

³⁴ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 240.

³⁵ Negri, "Concerning the Concept of Multitude," in *Spinoza: Then and Now*, 47–58.

³⁶ Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. by Jonathan Israel, trans. by Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 196.

plasticity of the concept of resilience and how it becomes a way in which the imagination (in Spinozan terms) utilizes it as a form of persistence.

Resilience: Configuring Hopeful Imaginaries

We can see traces of persistence in the previous discussions regarding the city as a conglomeration of transindividuals in multitude. It is in this light where we can make sense of Spinoza's *conatus* principle as the driving force which accommodates complexities and conflicts in terms of thinking the urban. For Iris Marion Young, it is in urbanity where we presuppose and define our relationship with the material surroundings, structures, and other individuals in our immediate consciousness.³⁷ City dwellers are not necessarily identical in a sense that they all possess the same philosophical, political, economic, and social identities. So, apart from looking at a city as a single, static, monolithic thing, we must also understand its complexities through its processual and personal affective capacities. Here, Caroline Williams asserts that we can use Spinoza's *conatus* principle as a device in thinking a way out of this reductionist approach. By thinking of *conatus* as that which is beyond the individual and into the relations among them as a field of forces that enables the production of subjectivity and materiality, it exhibits the various asymmetrical modes of existence by which an individual thing participates in a particular field.³⁸ This understanding of Spinoza's *conatus* in terms of participatory politics allows for a continuous construction and reconstruction of individuals in a particular scene we refer to – in this case, a city.

Imagination is an aspect that informs an individual's *conatus* or persistence to exist. Beginning from the level of experience, it forms and produces ideas which are neither true nor false. What makes imagination closely tied to an individual's mode of persistence is that it directly involves the way in which an individual perceives, for example, its urban reality. Here, representations matter. Moira Gatens argues that Spinozistic imagination in close proximity to political, institutional, and social narratives helps us to understand the way in which a human individual becomes immersed in a particular affective constitution, where it regards signs, symbols, images, and representations as constructive of its own persistence, or *conatus*. Here, the interplay between imagination and an individual's conative inclination becomes explicit, helping us to appropriate it in the perspective of resilience

³⁷ Iris Marion Young, "City Life as a Normative Ideal," in *Philosophy and the City: Classic to Contemporary Writings*, 163–174.

³⁸ Caroline Williams, "Unravelling the subject with Spinoza: Towards a Morphological Analysis of the Scene of Subjectivity," in *Contemporary Political Theory*, 16 (2017), 342–362, <<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-016-0063-1>>.

as a form of persistence in the context of the urban imaginary. Ultimately, I argue that resilience is one of the conative configurations of an individual in terms of thinking and traversing the city.

Resilience, according to Kevin Grove, is an infinitely elastic concept.³⁹ As an object of research, it presents itself in multiple ways. For example, it is seen by Fridolin Simon Brand and Kurt Jax not only as a descriptive concept that represents various facets of reality, but also as a normative one that dictates human-environmental relations. For Ben Anderson, we use the term resiliency as a blanket to avoid specificities when we use it as ideology, governmental rationality, or a metaphor in characterizing teleological ends as normative ideals. It can also be used as a tool for maintaining political and economic status quo, according to Coaffee and Rogers. While, as Folke and Wilson maintain, it can advocate for a transformative social and political change. All these examples, however, imply normative commitments and ethical demands.⁴⁰

As a site of contestation, resilience, in essence, is a contested concept. These are concepts that not only have multiple, often disconnected and contradictory meanings, but are also loaded with contested normative implications that reflect social realities. Hence, resilience is among one of the many configurations in which an individual is oriented to. As a response to the insecurities and uncertainties we experience, such as the climate crisis and the wider implications of the Anthropocene, economic instability of the world market, transport crisis, housing crisis, to name a few, resilience refers to the particularities of our responses to these experiences, as they sometimes overlap with each other pertaining to their interconnectedness in some ways, all the while maintaining their own, as particular phenomena with underlying implications they also produce.⁴¹ In this context, urban resilience is one of the characteristics most cities and citizens of the world must take up, in order to persist and keep their mode of sociability as a community of mutual security, belongingness, and flourishing.

Underneath the narratives of resilience, we are always faced with two affections: of hope and fear. For Spinoza, hope is the “inconstant pleasure arising from [the idea of] a past or future thing, concerning the issue of which we are doubtful”.⁴² This is in contrast to fear, as it is pain instead of pleasure that arises from the same fact. This double constitution of the same affective compound alludes to the idea that there is no hope without fear, and fear without hope.⁴³ Such interplay between hope and fear, pleasure and pain

³⁹ Kevin Grove, *Resilience* (London: Routledge, 2018), 33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Spinoza, *Ethics*, 212.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

from the idea of a past or a future, situated into the context of resilience, involves a particularity when it comes to understanding ourselves in the midst of insecurities and uncertainties that we face. Most importantly, through collective imaginings, we may utilize this affective compound into informing a powerful politics that performs actions that bring about transformative change.⁴⁴

In relation to the urban reality that we face today, configuring resilient cities mean that there is a level of anticipation when it comes to the challenges and conflicts that they may face in the future, based on past experience. Anticipation helps us, to make sense of what the future brings. On the one hand, hope fuels resilience in such a way that there is an anticipation of a future that may bring pleasure, or that which increases our power of acting. On the other hand, fear informs resilience by reminding us that there is a need to overcome the pain that we may experience in the future. So, resiliency as a concept involves a hopeful way of looking forward in relation to the fear of the past that brought harm, in order to determine a future that minimizes pain in our persistence in achieving joyful configuration of ethical relations. In this double bind, or the dual nature of resilience, there is a need to employ different strategies and methods: scientific, economic, political, social, and philosophical. Becoming resilient requires that we look not only at the infrastructure and economy of the city, but also the perception and capacities of the citizens. In this way, configuring hopeful imaginaries in the urban means actively understanding and reevaluating the way in which we view ourselves in relation not only to our immediate environment in the city, but the whole ecology to which we are situated in, and more importantly – how our actions inform and transform ourselves and our communities.

Conclusion

As a way of concluding this paper, I will summarize the points I made in this particular study. First, I elaborated Spinoza's philosophical principles on relationality and individuality. This demonstrates an understanding of the individual based on how it is related to others. Ultimately allowing us to reinterpret the involvement of individuals in an ecology of relations. Second, intimating Spinoza's dynamic ecology of relations to a conceptual understanding of the city as dynamic and processual provides us a renewed perspective that exhibits the philosopher's relational ontology as a social configuration of ethical relations. Lastly, through

⁴⁴ Moira Gatens, et al., "Spinoza: thoughts on hope in our political present," in *Contemporary Political Theory*, 20:1 (2021), 200–231, <<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-020-00406-4>>.

persistence, such configurations are determined and maintained by their persistence to exist, this is where the contemporary notion of resilience becomes relevant as it is between the dual nature of resilience to oscillate between hope and fear.

It is through these arguments that I, at least preliminarily, address how resilience as an affective configuration with a double aspect of hope and fear that we can begin to recognize the contemporary urban condition. As we reorient ourselves towards an understanding of the immanent processes of our urban reality, we understand the relational properties among individuals as they affect, inform, and transform one another. Through Spinoza's philosophy, we can treat the contemporary urban condition as a way of finding the balance and relations between the individual and the city as they both navigate the challenges and risks that threaten their persistence and striving for joyful existence.

*Department of Humanities and Philosophy
Polytechnic University of the Philippines, The Philippines*

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