

# Planning and the Just City

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THE  
JUST  
CITY



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- Purpose: to apply abstract arguments concerning justice of actual planning situations.
- Response to triumph of neo-liberalism in planning doctrine.  
(Neo-liberalism refers to deregulation, privatization, prices set in markets, competitiveness as aim of city policy)

# Questions:

- How explain and evaluate typical planning outcomes?
- What principles should guide plan formulation and implementation?

**Criteria:** equity, democracy, diversity. Derived from works of Rawls, Nussbaum, Young, Fraser.

# Spatial dimensions of justice

- **Production of space:**
  - Space is socially produced
  - Differentials in power and resources incorporated in spatial forms (political jurisdictions, social segregation, built environment, property markets, “spatial fix”)
- **Distributional effects:** Spatial form usually reinforces power and resource differentials but intervention can change outcomes
- **Space is not an independent variable:**
  - Changing spatial relations will not restructure society but has potential of producing more just city
  - Inherent instability of local spatial restructuring (examples of metropolitan tax base sharing in Minneapolis & Johannesburg; social housing in Europe)

# Historical emphases of planning

1. City of desire
2. Comprehensiveness
3. Separation of politics and planning, insulation of expert
4. Rational model; planning process
5. Communication and negotiation (deliberative democracy)
6. Justice, right to the city.

## Historical emphases of designers

- Orderliness
- Environmental determinism
- Lack of concern with social relations
- Formalism

## White City—Chicago Exposition of 1893 (Burnham)



## Letchworth—Garden City



# London—Barbican—modernism



## Amsterdam Bijlmermeer



# NYC Public housing—Coney Island



# The new context for urban ideals—from the 1960s to the 20-tens

1. **The attack beginning in the 60s and 70s on top-down physical utopias**
  - The predations of urban redevelopment, highways and planning; the rise of opposition social movements; social housing and *grands ensembles* were attacked from all quarters
  - Assaults on expertise from the left and on state power from the right
  - The dreary model of Soviet urbanism
  - The rise of ethnic/racial consciousness and rejection of a unitary public interest advanced by “disinterested” reason

## The new context for urban ideals (cont.)

2. **From the late 1970s and 1980s onward—the restructuring of the global economy and its urban impacts further undermined comprehensive planning**
  - Deindustrialization and de-urbanization in the West undermined classic models that had reacted to the industrial city
  - Enormous international migrations facilitated an ever louder discourse of racial and ethnic difference

## Global restructuring (cont.)

- The sharply increased mobility of capital and labor made public planning and control more difficult
- The final collapse of the Soviet empire also buried its counter model to capitalism; so too did the Chinese conversion to a form of state capitalism
- We have witnessed the rise to dominance of a neo-liberal ideology of market rationality and competitiveness—of necessary and inevitable competition among people, cities, regions or whole nations.
- “Market realism” and economic growth have come to crowd out other values, much less those embodied in the visions of a just city advanced by early planners like Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier.

## Attack on modernism

- Modernism destroyed urban vitality, displaced businesses and residents, did not respond to people's needs
- Planners' / designers' post-Jane Jacobs concern with diversity (of uses, of buildings, social mix) merged with philosophers' concern with recognition
- But how plan diversity? Danger of simulacrum. Seemingly neither market nor planning create genuine diversity.

## Bijlmermeer reconstruction



NY--Battery Park City



“Staged authenticity”?—CityPlace—W. Palm Beach



- No necessary relationship between diversity and equity
- Crucial issue for planners in much of world: dispersal of poor or people of color/immigrant groups? In US location of African Americans and immigrant groups (ghettos and enclaves), in Europe immigrants, in Asia and Middle East rural migrants and contract workers.

Chicago: replacement of Cabrini Green public housing project



# NYC—Highline—diverse public space



# Amsterdam shopping street



# Democracy (Citizen participation)

- Justifications in 1960s and 70s: bureaucratic lack of responsiveness; “internal colonialism”; community power -> redistribution
- 1980s- Decline in demands for community control and routinization of community input
- Institutionalized citizen participation provides local knowledge, greater democracy, but problematic in re equity. Can lead to parochialism and corruption.

## Achieving equity: Alternative approaches

- Social housing in Amsterdam
- Public housing in Singapore

## Amsterdam

- Little differentiation between desirable and undesirable parts of the city. Social housing was not isolated but spread throughout. Substantial income heterogeneity, in most neighborhoods.
- No land speculation. Developers accept system as producing profit with no risk.
- **But**
- Large reduction in commitment to social housing and consequently much more price setting by market.
- Gentrification.
- “We are becoming a normal city.”

# Amsterdam Beguijnhof



## Amsterdam: Western Garden Suburb



## Singapore

- Singapore retains the goal of keeping the great majority (about 83 percent) of the “resident” population in the public housing sector. The government has raised the income limit for eligibility and lifted the standard at which the apartments are built. Newest buildings are comparable to all but the most expensive private condominiums.
- The Singapore system captures for the public much of the value of land. It is responding to recent inflation in resale prices by greatly increasing housing production.

The Pinnacle, newly built, high-style public housing in the center of Singapore, towers over earlier HDB housing and preserved shop houses.



## Social engineering: Singapore HDB housing—Modernism still



# Are the achievements of these two models exportable, stable?

- Context matters; 2 very different historic paths; role of perceived necessity; modes of government; geographic locations
- General principles:
  - Public ownership of land creates potential for good planning and for equity
  - Diversity can be handled in different ways
  - Democracy?
- Can the European model (Amsterdam, Vienna) withstand financial crisis, neo-liberal attack?

# Conclusion

In relation to the broad issue areas of urban planning and design, values of equity, diversity, and democracy may pull in different ways, but it is still possible to specify criteria by which to formulate and evaluate policy even while we cannot enumerate policies independent of context.

- Concepts of justice need not be either purely abstract or wholly relative. It is on this tenuous middle ground of being able to compare, of being able to say what is better and what is worse, even if we cannot say what is always good and what is always bad, of holding on to goals but being flexible in strategies, that we must land if we are to move toward spatial justice.
- Justice as governing principle causes different discourse from competitiveness.