

# The Just City

Susan S. Fainstein

Dept. of Urban Planning and Design

Harvard University Graduate School of Design

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## Purpose:

- to apply abstract arguments concerning justice of actual planning situations.
- To counter overemphasis on process in much of planning theory (rational model and communicative rationality)
- To respond to triumph of neo-liberalism in urban policy and planning

# Method

- Examination of principal texts in political philosophy
- Derivation of principles applicable to urban planning and policy making
- Examination of projects in NY, London, and Amsterdam

## 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.

## Communicative planning theory

*Habermas's ideal speech situation: interactions possess qualities of comprehensibility, sincerity, legitimacy, and truth. Argumentation carries power and produces effects.*

Forester: “The planner-mediator’s job is to ensure that affected voices not only speak but actively craft mutually acceptable agreements together, avoiding exclusionary deal making as they go.”

Healey: “This [social justice] meant a concern not merely with the justice of material outcomes but also with the processes through which policies . . . are articulated and implemented”

**Is this sufficient?**

## Reasons to emphasize outcomes

- Current regime of neo-liberalism is served by efforts to develop consensus among stakeholders. Competitiveness rather than justice is policy criterion.
- Commitment to justice cuts into vicious circle of disadvantage producing more disadvantage

## Just City model

- Does not exclude process considerations. 3 principles: democracy, diversity, and equity. But equity of outcomes receives priority.
- Critique of emphasis on process: can produce unjust results; is usually co-optative rather than transformative. Assumes away background conditions of inequality of power and resources. Literature on communicative planning evades discussion of structural inequality.



# YANKEE STADIUM

GATE 6

New York Yankees  
TEAM STORE

NO STANDING  
ANYTIME  
→





## London: envisioned Olympic Park





## Amsterdam Zuidas (future)



## 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.”

## Criteria: democracy, diversity, and equity

In relation to the broad issue areas of urban planning, values of equity, diversity, and democracy may pull in different ways. In each of these crucial policy arenas, context and historical moment make the choice of the most just policy indeterminate. Nevertheless, it is still possible to specify criteria by which to formulate and evaluate policy comparable to Martha Nussbaum's listing of capabilities even while we cannot enumerate policies independent of context. When the three values pull in different directions, equity should receive priority.