

Social Justice and the “Green” City¹

Justiça social e a cidade “verde”

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Abstract

A transition to a new, greener urbanism is increasingly imperative in the face of environmental crises. However, such a transition is not possible without considering social justice. This essay examines some tensions between social justice and urban sustainability and some of the reasons why a social justice approach to urban sustainability is often marginalized by a neoliberal sustainability ontology. This essay first engages with various normative concepts of social justice and its long existing but unfulfilled claim in the city. It then considers some gains toward greener urbanism but contends that urban sustainability responses have generally been more preoccupied with ecological modernization and the reproduction of best practices rather than with socio-spatial justice. In looking at some workings of green neoliberalism, the essay points to how the ecological is easily recuperated for neoliberal ends. The last section addresses some reasons why the social is de-privileged in the dominant sustainability discourses and practices, and how social justice serves, through citizenship practices, as a claim to urban change where participation is not a bureaucratized process but an everyday practice. Overall, the essay cautions against certain sustainability discourses and green neoliberalism without addressing its ingrained inequalities.

Keywords: Social justice. Just city. Good city. Greening. Green neoliberalism.

Resumo

A transição em direção a um urbanismo “mais verde” se faz cada vez mais necessária devido a crise ambiental. Contudo, essa transição somente é possível se acompanhada de justiça social. Assim, tem-se por objetivo investigar algumas tensões entre a justiça social e a sustentabilidade urbana, bem como algumas das razões pelas quais uma abordagem de justiça social voltada à sustentabilidade urbana é frequentemente marginalizada por uma ontologia sustentável neoliberal. Este artigo se inicia com a apresentação de diversos conceitos

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normativos de justiça social e sua longa reivindicação (existente, mas não suprida) na cidade. Posteriormente são discutidos alguns benefícios decorrentes de um urbanismo "mais verde", alegando-se, contudo, que as ações de sustentabilidade urbana têm, de forma geral, concentrado-se mais em aspectos relacionados à modernização ecológica e reprodução de boas práticas do que em questões voltadas à justiça socioespacial. Ao se analisarem trabalhos sobre "neoliberalismo verde", o artigo evidencia como o tema da ecologia é restabelecido para objetivos neoliberais. A última seção debate o motivo pelo qual o aspecto social é relegado a segundo plano no discurso e prática dominante de sustentabilidade e a forma pela qual a justiça social serve, por meio das práticas de cidadania, como reivindicação para transformações urbanas em locais onde a participação popular encontra-se arraigada na prática diária. Em linhas gerais, o artigo alerta contra determinados discursos de sustentabilidade e "neoliberalismo verde" sem abordar suas desigualdades arraigadas.

Palavras-chave: *Justiça social. Cidade justa. Boa cidade. Greening. Neoliberalismo verde.*

Sustainability is both an honorable goal for carefully defined purposes and a camouflaged trap for the well-intentioned unwary (MARCUSE, 1998, p. 104).

Introduction

In his very influential book, *Social Justice and the City*, published forty years ago and still of great relevance in the face of widening urban inequalities produced by neoliberal capitalism, David Harvey (1973, p. 314) contends that a revolutionary practice can only accomplish the transition from "[...] an urbanism based in exploitation to an urbanism appropriate for the human [and other] species." In many urban contexts, such transition is increasingly presented as an imperative in the face of ecological destruction and obsolete urban infrastructure. Without rejecting the need for an "ecological" revolution, a "green" urban transition seems impossible without a redistributive purpose, social justice, and social change.

This essay contends that social justice, as a claim and means for addressing equity deficits, has often been neglected in dominant sustainability discourses that drive the development of "greener" cities. Such an argument is not necessarily new but remains critical because sustainability, often articulated in the economic language of the triple bottom line, mobilizes the environment at the service of profit-driven agendas, which further exacerbate social divides (AGYEMAN; BULLARD; EVANS,

2012; DAVIDSON et al., 2012). To speak of social justice is not simply to demand a redistribution of environmental and economic opportunities but to recognize that some practices deemed 'sustainable' hide and aggravate already existing equity deficits. Social justice, in theory and in practice, seeks to alleviate and close these equity deficits without rejecting the promises of a more ecologically friendly or economically vibrant city. To be skeptical of dominant sustainability discourses does not mean denying the possibilities of urban transitions and social change.

A focus on social justice reveals the misleading balance depicted in the rhetoric of the three pillars of sustainability: economy, environment and society. The metaphor of the three pillars, often graphically depicted as three identical and slightly overlapping circles, three similar mutually chasing green arrows or three perfectly matching architectural columns, obscures the unequal relationships between the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability (or other synonymous triads, such as profit, planet, people). Although sustainability and sustainable development has multiple meanings and inevitably, multiple performances, the economic pillar is often recognized as having a greater bearing over the social and environmental components

(MARCUSE, 1998; FOLADORI, 1999; AGYEMAN; BULLARD; EVANS, 2012; DAVIDSON et al., 2012; LUKE, 2013). Despite their interdependence, social and environmental concerns appear more easily trivialized and marginalized at the profit of economic growth. Increasing poverty and the growing gulf between the “haves” and the “have nots”, irreversible environmental changes, continuous resource depletion and the constant degradation of natural environments all demonstrate that sustainability as an integrated approach remains an ideological goal and a constant challenge. By focusing on social justice, my objective is not only to point to deficiencies in the ‘green’ city model but also to insist on the possibility and necessity to bridge such gaps and hold the idea of sustainability to its professed goals. However, to hold sustainability to its ideals, social justice in the city must address past and continuing uneven development processes in urban spaces. This is not a simple task given the accumulated social and environmental injustices in the city, and particularly in lower-income neighborhoods, which are rarely the objective of innovative green agendas. Social justice and urban sustainability are contested terms and may not always share compatible objectives, but their multiple and elastic meanings may nevertheless provide some room for overlap and significant change (DOBSON, 2012).

This essay examines some tensions between social justice and urban sustainability and some of the reasons why a social justice approach to urban sustainability is often marginalized by a neoliberal sustainability ontology. This essay first engages with various normative concepts of social justice and its long existing but unfulfilled claim in the city. The paper then considers some gains in greener urbanism but contends that urban sustainability responses have generally been more preoccupied with ecological modernization and the reproduction of best practices rather than with socio-spatial justice. In looking at some workings of green neoliberalism, the essay points to how the ecological is easily recuperated for neoliberal ends. The last section addresses some reasons why the social is de-privileged in the dominant sustainability discourses and practices, and how social justice serves, through citizenship practices, as a claim to urban change where participation

is not a bureaucratized process but an everyday practice.

Social justice in the city

Harvey (1973, p. 97) defines social justice as “[...] a particular application of just principles to conflicts arising out of the necessity for social cooperation in seeking individual advancement.” Such a definition, with all of its normative and ideological underpinnings, makes obvious that cities are spaces of marginalization and discrimination that necessitate some redress in both “the division of benefits and the allocation of burdens” associated with urban production and distribution if we are to live up to the expectations of a just city (HARVEY, 1973, p. 97) For Harvey (1973, p. 101), social justice is first contingent on the “just distribution” of opportunities along class lines, and he considers “need, contribution to common good, and merit” as three basic criteria for a “territorial distributive justice.” Although need is a highly relative concept, it is here understood as basic activities (e.g., food, housing, health care, education, etc.), and Harvey (1973, p. 107) astutely points to the “difference between needs and actual allocations” as a practical means to evaluate injustices. Additionally, this difference enables us to see how the production of a “common good” (or “common bad” for that matter) benefits or marginalizes particular groups and individuals in the city. For Harvey (1973, p. 107), merit is not associated with individual worth but rather with security, access and the redistribution of resources necessary to “compensate for the degree of social and natural environmental difficulty” extended to particular groups, individuals, and neighborhoods. Harvey (1973) describes social justice as a set of principles necessary for resolving conflicting claims arising from the social and institutional arrangements associated with production and distribution activities. Harvey’s particular contribution rests on the emphasis of both the distribution of opportunities and the rarely acknowledged social production of surpluses or scarcity in the city. Observing how surplus is distributed in “socially undesirable ways” for populations that additionally often bear the brunt of scarcity, Harvey (1973, p. 115) summarizes the

challenge of aspiring to social justice in the city when he writes:

[i]n contemporary "advanced" societies the problem is to devise alternatives to the market mechanism which allow the transference of productive power and the distribution of surplus to sectors and territories where the social necessities are so patently obvious.

Drawing on Harvey (1973), many urban scholars have attempted normative definitions of 'just' or 'good' city. Susan Fainstein (2010, 2005) contends that in the 'just city', justice should be the moral basis for urban planning. Urban justice, for Fainstein (2010, 2005), is based on the principles of diversity, democracy, and equity, and such principles ought to be considered and mindfully furthered in planning practices and policies. While emphasizing these principles, Fainstein recognizes the conflicting and even contradictory tensions between them but nevertheless insists that material equality, equal opportunity and recognition of difference are crucial in determining what is distributed and who benefits from such distribution. In Fainstein's 'just city', justice intervention seeks equitable or redistributive outcomes for people through a critique of the dominant neoliberal approach to planning. Fainstein's urban theory of justice is therefore a call to redirect practitioners from neoliberal economic development to social equity. In her view, justice should be "the first evaluative criterion used in policy making" (FAINSTEIN, 2010, p. 6). Fainstein (2010) specifically calls for considering social equity in the production of the city (by illustrating equity deficits in empirical cases), but her focus is geared particularly toward the politics of urban growth and planning rather than toward Harvey (1973) larger conceptual formulations and capitalist economic processes (i.e., the systematic causes of equity deficits).

The 'good city' is a sibling concept of the 'just city'. With more than fifty years of thinking about cities in the Global South and North, John Friedmann (2000, 2002) identifies human flourishing and multiplicity as the foundations of what he sees as the 'good city'. The materiality of the 'good city' is found concretely in affordable housing and health care, adequate work and social provisions, and the good

governance of these outcomes. Friedmann (2002), similar to Fainstein (2010), calls for planners to engage in the material and structural transformation of cities to address ongoing inequalities. As in the 'just city', equity is the central foundation of the 'good city'. Thus, for Friedmann (2000, p. 466), "[e]very human being has the right, by nature, to the full development of their innate intellectual, physical and spiritual potentials in the context of wider communities." Such a right, Friedmann (2000) contends, is the most basic human right. However, such a right implies an intrinsic mutuality because, for Friedmann (2000, p. 465), "[...] no group can be completely free until freedom [from oppression] has been achieved for every group." Here rests the challenge and the promise of Friedmann's (1987) radical transformative practice for freedom and justice to be rendered and enacted more equitably. Building on Friedmann, Ash Amin (2006, p. 1013) suggests that the 'good city' and the politics of 'living together' can be thought of as a challenge to fashion a "[...] progressive politics of well-being and emancipation out of multiplicity and difference and from the particularities of the urban experience." In doing so, Amin (2006, p. 1013) suggests "four registers of urban solidarity" (repair, relatedness, rights and re-enchantment) that engage with multiplicity through everyday urban life. For Amin (2006, p. 1016), solidarity means ensuring universal and affordable access to basics services (shelter, sanitation, sustenance, etc.) as well as amending the "[...] damage wrought by the fear, hate and anxiety that feeds on division and envy in urban life [...]". To do so, Amin (2006) argues for the right of all citizens to participate in urban life and to benefit from it in the form of "participative parity" (FRASER, 2005, p. 87) rather than routinized participation serving processes, ideas, and the people in power.

What these normative attempts to define the 'just city' or the 'good city' have in common are the practice of justice, access, right, and redress of inequalities. While normative definitions are certainly problematic when they pretend a universality, the discussion around the 'just city' and the 'good city' seeks to address rather than occult urban injustices. By articulating principles of social justice, equality and mutuality, the concepts of 'just city' and 'good city' clearly state

the needs to review processes of urban planning production and distribution in order to alleviate its discriminatory effects and live up the ideals of equity and social justice.

In 2000, Polèse and Stren used the specific language of social sustainability to examine how urban political and physical infrastructures were to address the growing diversity and the management of change. Polèse and Stren (2000, p. 15-16) define social sustainability as

development (or growth) that is compatible with the harmonious evolution of civil society, fostering and environment conducive to the compatible cohabitation of culturally and socially diverse groups while at the same time encouraging social integration, with improvements in the quality of life for all segments of the population.

Similarly to others social justice scholars, the authors insisted that the achievement of social sustainability requires local institutions and governments to

[...] reduce both the level of exclusion of marginal and/or disadvantaged groups, and the degree of social and spatial fragmentation that both encourages and reflects this exclusionary pattern [...] (POLÈSE; STREN, 2000, p. 16).

Although a broad concept, social sustainability ought to be more than an element of the sustainability trialectics, adding social actors into the mix of more popularized discourses of environmental and economic sustainability. In considering social sustainability as a challenge to exclusion and marginalization rather than a complementary instrument or component of a prosperous economy balanced with ecological integrity, social justice demands a rearticulation of the material processes of the city. Peter Marcuse (1998) insightfully notes that the current discourse of sustainability does not necessarily insure social justice - i.e., building a new social order based on equality and justice for all in every aspect of social life - and has rather been more frequently used to sustain an unjust status quo. Yet the prevalent tropes of social sustainability, such as empowerment, social cohesion, social capital, well-being and quality

of life, resilience and livability have perhaps at times shifted our attention away from addressing persistent inequalities and democratic deficits. If social sustainability is to become more than rhetoric, social justice is required to redress the continuing marginalization that has long existed in racialized, low-income and immigrant communities and neighborhoods. When speaking of diversity and difference in the city, it is tempting to conclude that what has been sustained over time, despite the best planning intentions of the past decades, is exclusion and marginalization. Social sustainability cannot be simplistically understood as the establishment of social arrangements that enable democratic politics (DAVIDSON, 2009). Such arrangements require institutional transformations that first question how such arrangements are produced and reproduce social exclusion and marginalization as well as environmental deterioration.

Urban sustainability

Since 1987 and the Brundtland Commission Report's (WCED, 1987, p. 41) oft-quoted definition of sustainable development as "[...] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs," sustainability has become a dominant discourse, treating development and environment as one single (arguably oxymoronic) issue. The sustainability of cities and the need to develop and foster an integrated holistic vision for urban sustainability has been generally promoted through a double discourse of urgency. On the one hand, the world has increasingly become urbanized with more than half of the world's population already living in cities. On the other hand, cities have often been seen as ecologically destructive, 'unnatural', and the antithesis of nature. Despite the growing scholarship examining cities and nature as interacting and inextricably connected processes - best captured by David Harvey (1996) claim that there is nothing 'unnatural' about New York City - the discourse of urban sustainability has been particularly focused on mitigating the detrimental and harmful effects of urban development (KEIL, 2003; BRAUN, 2005; GANDY, 2002). Beatley (1999) refers to green urbanism

as the practice of creating communities mutually beneficial to humans and the environment (i.e., ecological processes).

Urban sustainability and green urbanism are also a call for urban planners and designers to do things differently. Prior to sustainability being naturalized into urban planning and policy in the 1990s, early ecological activists and innovators (e.g., Buckminster Fuller, John Todd, Ian McHarg, etc.) argued the urgent need to promote sustainability and strongly believed that the environmental crisis was in fact a design crisis (VAN DER RYN; COWAN, 1996). For example, experimental architecture based on renewable sources of energy was a way to prove our technological ability to support human needs in the face of the finite resources of the planet. Problems of unsustainability were generally perceived as a matter of better integrating cities with their physical environments (HOUGH, 1995; VAN DER RYN; COWAN, 1996; BEATLEY, 1999). Thus, ecological designers embraced sustainability for its ecological tenets and emphasized the obligation to redefine the relations between ecological systems and between people and the environment. Some conventional urban planning practices were slowly replaced by a greener, ecological, more sustainable rationality where environmental problems were often relegated to technological considerations. Such ecological modernization or sustainability fix approaches were perceived as the most efficient and effective use and management of resources but showed limited preoccupation with social and economic issues. Often emphasizing the protection or restoration of ecological processes, ecological design through a sustainable or greening city agenda focused on solving problems "by changing the city, not by changing society" (BRAUN, 2005, p. 638). In this sense, the greening of cities has often been considered "largely atheoretical and apolitical" (BRAUN, 2005, p. 638).

The ongoing difficulty of reconciling the social, economic and ecological imperatives of urban sustainability does not mean that there have not been some successful efforts or achievements in terms of greater energy efficiency, ecological processes restoration, and waste recycling. Urban planning and design have long relied on historical precedence as a way of studying, comparing and conceiving plans. In recent years, many so-called

'best practices' of urban sustainability have been traveling as aspiring norms and inspiring benchmarks toward greater urban sustainability. In fact, best practices are often seen as effective means for promoting urban sustainability (BULKELEY, 2006). Numerous non-governmental organizations and transnational networks dedicated to the promotion of urban sustainability (e.g., UN- Habitat Sustainable Cities Program or ICLEI) and numerous scholarly books (BEATLEY, 1999; ZETTER; WATSON, 2006; COLANTONIO; DIXON, 2011; HALL, 2013) spotlight examples of green urban revitalization ranging from climate initiatives to greener transport, from energy efficient buildings to waste production and management programs, and from greener infrastructure and services to green management governance practices (e.g., sustainable procurement, eco-budgeting, etc.). Many cities have used their green plans and developments as competitive advantages, positioning themselves as best practices to emulate. Among the most celebrated examples of urban sustainability, cities such as Stockholm, Hamburg, Copenhagen, San Francisco, Vancouver as well as Curitiba, Medellín and Songa are recognized as leaders in committing to green initiatives and achieving environmental standards. Ranking the greenest cities has become a growing popular global endeavor led by a multitude of actors, such as *The Economist* in collaboration with the technological company Siemens (2012), Reuters Environmental forum (2010), *Organic Gardening* (2014) and Globe Award (2014), among many others.

Urban sustainability has brought the beginning of a much needed ecological consciousness to urban planning (related to energy consumption, integrity of habitats, green spaces, reuse and recycling materials, housing density, and levels of pollution of air and water, among other issues) but best practices also represent a political rationality through which cities, organizations, and networks promote and legitimate their particular vision of urban sustainability. Their hope is that their initiatives, programs, and agendas will inspire policy change elsewhere, notwithstanding local conditions or capacities. Little concern is given to the "underlying premises and beliefs, with processes of learning confined to those of lesson drawing" and the "consequent implications for the governing of urban sustainability" (BULKELEY, 2006, p. 1033,

1035). There are certainly some benefits to shared learning about urban sustainability's best practices to encourage a "sustainable" vision of cities. However, there are obvious difficulties linked to numerical measurement and ranking something as subjective, dynamic and evolving as cities. The capacity of current assessment tools, indicators and indexes to measure the complexities of sustainability has also been increasingly contested. Davidson et al. (2012) point to the fact that the conventional liberal model of sustainability (and its three pillars) tends to prioritize the economy as the most important sphere of sustainability and to oversimplify the idea of harmony between economic, environmental and social dimensions. As Davidson et al. (2012, p. 58) remind us, there are also problems related to

[...] the lack of definitional clarity in some assessment tools about what is being measured, weak epistemological links between the definition of sustainability and indicators, limited emphasis of social sustainability and the entrenchment of an economic paradigm in these assessment tools.

Moreover, as Bulkeley (2006, p. 1029) rightly states:

In the promotion of urban sustainability in national and international arenas, numerous initiatives and programs have been put in place to facilitate the creation and the dissemination of 'best practice' through which to promote policy transfer and learning. However, despite the vast array of available best practices, little is known about the ways in which best practice is constructed, used, and contested, or of its implications for urban sustainability.

The discourse of sustainability has been naturalized in cities, often at the detriment of local knowledge, particularly governance cultures, place-specific intricacies, and historical specificities. In the context of cities, 'sustainable' is often used interchangeably with a series of catchy, indefinite and equivocal terms, such as green, resilient, livable, healthy, happy, biodiverse, biophilic, and so forth. The predominant commitments of urban sustainability and green urbanism for renewable energy, zero waste, spatial mobility,

ecosystem integrity, and food security (all good things) rarely name the pre-existing social inequalities and injustices that characterize cities. When they do address social issues, such as the ICLEI's (INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES, 2013) definition of green urban economy as "productive and socially inclusive", this inclusivity is increasingly expressed in the prospect of green jobs. Work is certainly a crucial component of social inclusivity but it may not be sufficient to fully address social inequalities because, as Davidson et al. (2012, p. 59) note,

[t]he classic conflict between jobs and the environmental more often than not results in economic development taking precedence with a degree of environmental compromise being applied.

If, as David Harvey (1973, p. 156) reminds us, urbanism is "[...] a set of social relationships which reflects the relationships established throughout society as a whole [...]," then green urbanism should not only feature a greener approach but should also run counter to vested interests that produce and regulate unjust and inequitable urbanism. Urbanism as a social form is not limited to the built environment but also includes its actual mode of production. Too often, greening is limited to the form or outcome rather than a challenge to the market forces tapping into environmental sustainability rhetoric. Thus, key questions remain: what is sustained, and who benefits and loses from sustainability discourse and programs?

Green neoliberalism

Who does not want to live in a sustainable world? Who does not want a greener economy that promotes or invigorates economic growth while also preventing climate change, the dwindling of natural resources, food insecurity, the loss of biodiversity and ecosystems? In the last decade, green neoliberalism (i.e., the convergence of market forces and environmentally friendly logic) has permeated many aspects of our lives from wide-ranging eco-friendly products to corporate eco-manifestos to governmental agendas bolstering

green jobs. Although there have been sincere green efforts (e.g., towards ecological protection), much of the sustainability rhetoric embodied in green neoliberalism and its variations of eco-capitalism, green consumerism, bio-economy and corporate eco-credentials often amount to more trumpeting than action. Greenwashing has been a perverse way to stimulate the market for more consumer goods and services. Despite their best intentions, greening discourse (and its underlying moral discourse of responsibility, scarcity and altruism) endorsed by some businesses, governments, non-profit organizations and consumers alike adhere to constant externalization, vague tropes, misleading claims or outright falsification to convince the general public that they are 'doing the right thing' to save the planet. Green neoliberalism is still neoliberalism that favors invasion of market processes in social and political life. It is not enough to promote the recycling of plastic bottles without questioning the privatization of water. Luke (2013, 89) vividly illustrates the neoliberal ethic of 'reduce-reuse-recycle' when he states:

[b]y using recycled steel, plastic bottles, tires, blue jeans and cotton to build a new 2013 Ford car body, dashboard, engine gaskets, carpet and sound dampening, what was old and worthless becomes newly profitable again,

and neither the automotive industry and car reliance nor the global oil crisis are questioned. As Khosla (2005, p. 23) remarks

[i]n this age of magical marketing, ideological tricks are being manipulated with new zeal, and it behooves us to look deeper than the surface symptoms, signs and symbols of oppression.

Green neoliberalism does not challenge the current economic and political systems, and for some businesses, governments and organizations, its nonthreatening appeal is highly profitable. As Luke (2013, p. 83) reminds us:

[...] the ethics behind the uneasy merger of sustainability and development are aimed at preserving not the Earth, but rather the power, privilege and position attained by businesses developing their markets.

Eco-efficiency, for example, is environmentally good and commendable but also highly profitable when it ignores the social costs for individuals or groups who bear the brunt of that cost. The so-called "triple bottom line" (allegedly reconciling profits, planet and people) often sums up into a "reshaping of environmental crisis to the market's ends" (ROGERS, 2009). Green(er) capitalism rarely divulges full information to consumers or, as Žižek's (2011) comments, surreptitiously packages it into a "Starbucks logic" where customers are not only buying a commodity but also buying a logic of ethical and environmental consciousness (i.e., ethical sourcing and responsibly grown coffee, global environmental stewardship, and local community involvement) embodied in the product and corporate image. As Harvey (1973, p. 156) argues, commodity refers to a specific product but also to a set of social relationships. Rogers (2009) succinctly summarizes the functioning of this "greener" logic of neoliberalism when she writes

[i]nstead of our greater environmental consciousness transforming the way business is conducted, what we more often see is the market contorting ecological problems so they fit into some sort of profitable framework.

Yet, Rogers (2009) insists that consumers should not be paralyzed by such logic but rather politicized because "[t]o bring about change we must experience ourselves as political actors and not simply shoppers who are supposed to vote with our wallets." Greening, or the process of transforming spaces and lifestyles into allegedly more environmentally friendly practices, however, should be at the service of redistributive justice rather than solely competitiveness and growth. A green or sustainable economy does not automatically fulfill redistributive justice if what is sustained is the same urbanism driven by profits and inequalities – even when presented in a slightly greener shade.

Sustaining Social Justice

There are various reasons why the social is often relegated to lower or after-thought considerations.

The quantitative prominence of the economic dimension and the difficulty to balance the social and environmental implications of sustainability tend to avoid the far more difficult need for relational or interdependency analysis. Sustainability is holistic and interdisciplinary in intention but not necessary in measurement practices (DAVIDSON et al., 2012; FOLADORI, 1999). Measuring sustainability is more often than not approached from a disciplinary perspective (FOLADORI, 1999). Economic measurements are based on the methodology of liberal economics where intergenerational and intragenerational (equity) social relations and social differences are difficult to account for and are at best average, thus obscuring rather than detecting differences (FOLADORI, 1999). Although it is possible to quantify social inequality, such measurements often remain detached from historical economic organization (production, distribution and consumption of services and activities) and their social relationships (HARVEY, 1973; MARCUSE, 1998; FOLADORI, 1999). Moreover, although sustainability is inevitably an interdisciplinary concept, measurements and policy mandates tend to be fragmented along jurisdictional and geographical lines (FOLADORI, 1999; DAVIDSON et al., 2012). Thus, the tensions between the three pillars of sustainability are not only due to the facts that capitalism is built on social inequalities and environmental injustices but also in the fact that the environmental and social are weighted differently and manipulated more easily in such system. State and planning institutions have long professed to be concerned with equity without necessarily delivering equitable outcomes. As Dale, Dushenko and Robinson (2012, p.13-14) remind us

[a]fter twenty-odd years of struggling with sustainable development at the local scale, we as practitioners, scholars and educators find ourselves with an implementation deficit... The implementation gap appears to be underpinned by a fundamental gridlock of overlapping and often conflicting government jurisdictions, path dependencies, technological lock-in and institutional rigidities.

This implementation gap limits and erodes the possibility of everyday citizenship.

Everyday citizenship has been an object of struggle for different groups to claim various rights for themselves; it has been a fundamental vehicle through which people have sought social justice, recognition of their marginalization and needs, and participation in the political realm. This performance of substantive and differentiated citizenship sought to enable groups and individuals to make particular claims to reaffirm and rearticulate their rights. The struggle for recognition and social justice generally revolves around claims for inclusion in the polity in which one justly seeks membership in a qualitatively different way. Whatever their particular identities, interests or spatial scales, political citizenship actions aim at breaking down the processes producing inequalities. The city becomes the political space where the articulation and claiming of new citizenship rights becomes possible because it is the sphere of everyday interactions where changing mentalities become possible through battles over urban issues and urban policies (often as a proxy for larger struggles). As Edward Soja (1989, p. 6) reminds us,

[w]e must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences for us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life.

Thus, the urban is both the sphere of where citizenship becomes rhizomatic, i.e., connecting to any or multiple communities, and where mobilizations of residents, networks, and institutions potentially arise against unequal relationships of power.

Central to social justice is the right to participate, the right to difference. Lefebvre's (1968) right to difference was motivated by the rapid changes of industrialization and urbanization of the 1960s. Lefebvre (1968) develops the concept of "difference" as a challenge to the ideology of alienation, homogeneity, and marginalization. The right to difference is a fundamental principle in the struggle for democracy – and holding the tenets of democratic freedom and equality to its professed ideals. For Lefebvre (1968), the right to difference is expressed through the right to the city, i.e., the right to resist dominating and oppressive conditions by engaging and participating in an alternative that

reasserts social realities into political ideologies and market strategies. The right to difference is the right to claim, to struggle, and to redefine the relationship between alienation and appropriation. It is the right to urban change.

The reinsertion of the social into the political and economic enables the practices and performances of everyday rights (right to work, education, health, housing, services, etc.) – the right to claim rights. As David Harvey (2008, p. 23) claims:

The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right because this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.

The right to appropriate urban space is carried through the right to participation, i.e., the involvement of residents/citizens/inhabitants to institutionalized control over urban life, including participation in political life, and the management and administration of the city (DIKEÇ, 2001). However, participation must be meaningful to yield change and cannot be routinized as an administrative or bureaucratized process, as we often see, for example, in planning or urban (re) development processes. Lefebvre's (1968) right to the city is a claim for active participation in society without parameters established by the status quo. The right to the city and to difference is aimed at fighting discrimination and repression through a reinvention or redefinition of the political and the development of a new urban/societal ethics. The right to the city calls for the right not to be excluded. It calls for a new centrality, a renewed urban society, a different urban mode of production – one that embodies social justice and an ecological consciousness. For Lefebvre (1968) and Harvey (2003), the right to the city is not only a right to access the existing but explicitly a right to transform, a right to remake ourselves

by creating a different type of urbanism, a new urban future.

Conclusion

The discourses of sustainability and greening do not necessarily take us to the future but rather to the status quo if redressing inequality is not at the core of such agendas. Claims for social justice are not about political correctness or environmental awareness but about claims of inclusion for people who have been marginalized by urban processes. Justice and equity claims are challenging to realize but social justice remains an important concept that should be closely examined. Additionally, the differences between discourses and the materialities of sustainability, between social needs and urban allocations, between planning ideology and implementation, between what Marcuse (1998, p. 104) sees as the contested performance of sustainability as an "honourable goal" and as a "camouflaged trap" should be denounced. Urban transitions motivated by green neoliberalism will only aggravate existing polarization given that such urban transition generally occurs on the backs of marginalized communities, further silencing them. A just urban transition will not only improve ineffective transportation systems and create new green jobs, it will also give a voice and the ability to act to the people. Envisioning and transitioning toward a greener urbanism is not simply an exercise in planning for the future; it must also account for past and present injustices. In calling our attention to the hidden assumptions of urbanism, Lipsitz (1998, p. 2) calls for "a presence of mind" (drawing from Walter Benjamin) – an awareness of the present moment to shape a different future. Urban transition should not be an excuse to disguise or ignore the exploitative practices of conventional or green urbanism because, as David Harvey (1973, p. 43) states: "we cannot resolve difficulties by pretending they do not exist". Such an approach has been predominant for too long and any urban transition toward a greener urbanism without social justice blunts its revolutionary potential.

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