

Reading Tips and Study Questions: For Session 18

Required reading:

1. David Brooks, "Gangsta in French," *New York Times* (November 10, 2005), p.A31.
2. Pp.1-2, pp.5-7 ("Looking for a common code" section), 10-11 ("Conclusion" and "Looking forward") in Xavier de Souza Briggs, "Doing democracy up close: Culture, power and communication in community building," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 18(3):1-13 (1998).
3. PP.13-21 in Leonie Sandercock, "When strangers become neighbors: Managing cities of difference," *Planning Theory & Practice* 1(1):13-30 (2000).
4. Pp.3-7, 12-16 in Susan S. Fainstein, "Cities and diversity: Should we want it? Can we plan for it?" *Urban Affairs Review* 41(1):3-19 (2005).

Further reading (not required):

5. Xavier de Souza Briggs, "Civilization in color: The multicultural city in three millennia," *City & Community* 3(4):311-342 (2004).

Tips and questions

Debates about planning and human diversity are many and varied, and we have seen a few of the classic ones already this semester. First, we looked at crisis response and the risks in top-down planning led by a non-representative group that assumed, rather than developed, a legitimate mandate for action (Rebuild Los Angeles case). Next, we considered broad participation in planning and the power and limits of physical design to counter inter-group inequalities and racial isolation (in Boston public housing case). Third, we analyzed a controversial case of planning as a trigger for displacing members of historically marginalized and poor caste groups in India (Narmada case). Fourth and finally, we thought about how to harness the market to promote equitable development—rather than an unchecked, exclusionary "growth machine"—in America's highly segregated capital city, where east of the River communities face serious and long-standing social and economic barriers (Anacostia case). In all these cases, planning struggles even where significant reforms and alternatives are sought, because the past casts a long shadow and the future holds risks of its own: Mistrust of new plans, and often the planners who bring them, runs deep.

The very brief excerpts on our reading list are designed to introduce you to some of the most important debates in planning theory and practice. In class, we'll use focused small-group work and some revealing images to think about where planning has come from and where it could go on this front. And we may have some prospective students with us (visitors to the DUSP Open House), so I hope you'll help me welcome them to class. - Xav

1. About two weeks ago, two young men of Arab descent were electrocuted—accidentally, say public officials—while being chased by police in a Paris suburb that is home to many low-income immigrants. Rioting there and in other French cities has claimed lives and injured many, and considerable media attention has focused on the social conditions in France's immigrant communities—isolation, unemployment, discrimination by the wider society, and more—as well as government response. **Brooks** writes of another facet—the use of “gangsta” images in American rap by young people in other countries, including immigrant youth in France. How should planners think about or use cultural symbols, especially in an era of rapid global exchange?
2. What are the blindspots in planning research that **Briggs** underlines, and, in the “Looking for a common code” section, what key risks and opportunities does he identify for planning practice?
3. **Sandercock** draws a distinction between the planning system *itself* being grounded in, or biased to suit, a dominant culture and the planning system being *used* by one group to control the behavior of another. Which of these does her brief case example of the Buddhist temple in suburban Melbourne reflect?
4. **Fainstein** argues for an approach to the city that “does not privilege difference over other goods,” a focus on capacities and the creation of *collective* identity (through “the just city”). She further worries that a focus on diversity, far from making democracy more vibrant, can undermine it. What, in your view, are the most compelling and constructive elements of her central argument? And what are the riskiest? What's left unexplained?