Human dignity and spatial justice

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Human dignity and spatial justice

Ben Davy

One Commercial Street
London 2015
Human dignity and spatial justice

Can equitable plans result in humiliation?

Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area
Cape Town 2015

ACSP 55th Annual Congress, 22—25 October, 2015, Houston (Texas, USA)
What is the relationship between human dignity and spatial justice?
My main point: Justice can be quite humiliating. Planners need to respect and promote human dignity!
One Commercial Street (London)

»One Commercial Street towers twenty-one storeys above Aldgate East like a blade of light, its glass fin protruding dramatically to add a sculptural quality to Redrow London’s first flagship development. «

https://www.redrow.co.uk/london/developments/one-commercial-street#development-location
'Poor doors' scandal: Separate entrances for wealthy and housing association tenants at apartment block

17:59, 2 AUGUST 2014 | BY GEMMA ALDRIDGE

Wealth apartheid means housing association tenants are BANNED from mixing with wealthier neighbours at mixed developments.
One Commercial Street (London)

Planners demanded from developer Redrow to include a number of affordable housing units.

The tenants of affordable units pay much less service fees than the tenants of high-end apartments.

Separate entrances make separate fees possible, but result in »poor door« v. »posh door« debate.
One Commercial Street (London)

»Donna, 32, and her neighbours in social housing are victims of the wealth apartheid becoming increasingly popular among property developers....

›I don't want my kids thinking they deserve to be treated differently. It's humiliating and wrong.‹ «

www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/poor-doors-scandal-separate-entrances-3954389
One Commercial Street (London)

FACT: No person with only moderate an income can afford a home in the gentrified Aldgate East area of London.

PARADOX: The planners demanded social justice and inclusion ... and got the »poor door,« a new variety of social exclusion!
Justice v. dignity

That’s a new one!
In order to prepare South Africa for the 2010 FIFA world championship, the post-apartheid (!) planners (DA) invented the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area. The residents call this place **Blikkiesdorp** (»blikkie« is Afrikaans for a small tin can).

A container camp. A tin can town.
Blikkiesdorp (Cape Town)

»Blikkiesdorp ... has been described as Cape Town’s asshole, the muscle through which the city shits out the parts it does not want. That is about right.... It is the ultimate ghetto, its residents hemmed in by distance, by poverty and by their own personal histories.«

Johnny Steinberg (2015)
A Man of Good Hope
The spatial plan of creating and locating the Symphony Way TRA is based on exclusion by distance and invisibility. Blikkiesdorp is the result of spatial injustice. And yet ...
...the »knitting ladies« of Blikkiesdorp defy spatial injustice by producing blankets for distribution on Nelson Mandela Day.

The »knitting ladies« of Blikkiesdorp understand: Human dignity is more important than allowing yourself to become a victim of spatial injustice.
Spatial planning manages proximity and distance

»A nuisance may be merely a right thing in the wrong place,—like a pig in the parlor instead of the barnyard.«

Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co., 272 U.S. 365 (1926) 388 (J. Sutherland on zoning)
Spatial planning manages proximity and distance

Planners often assess proximity and distance, or inclusion and exclusion, under standards of justice and/or efficiency.

- Does the plan result in an equitable outcome, achieved by a fair process?
- Does the plan organize land uses which do not waste space, but use spaces wisely?
Spatial planning manages proximity and distance

Planners cannot appreciate the two cases

• «poor door» and «wealth apartheid» at One Commercial Street and

• Blikkiesdorp (Cape Town), the post-apartheid ghetto, only from the perspective of justice or efficiency.
Spatial planning manages proximity and distance

Human dignity adds an awkward standard to planners’ assessment criteria:

- Does the plan consider humans as means to an end or as ends?
- Do humans affected by a spatial plan have a reason to feel humiliated?
Comparing justice and dignity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spatial justice</th>
<th>Human dignity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... directs the distribution of benefits and burdens</td>
<td>... determines the inalienable core of individual rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... defines collective values</td>
<td>... defines individual values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... applies to non-human entities (e.g., corporations, countries)</td>
<td>... only applies to women, men, children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... is subject to public deliberation and debate</td>
<td>... is subject to self-determination and intimate appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... offers relatively broad range for negotiation and compensation</td>
<td>... offers narrow or no options for negotiation and compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... cannot heal a violation of human dignity</td>
<td>... can heal or mitigate an incident of spatial injustice</td>
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Planners, dignity, and justice

- Non-humiliating planning is not a necessary consequence of equitable planning.

- A »dignity test« helps mitigate the plight of the victims of essential injustice.

- Planners must avoid to humiliate anybody. But more importantly, planners need to create spatial patterns conducive to human dignity.
Non-humiliating plans!
A human rights approach

Benjamin Davy

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