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SOCIÁLNÍCH VĚD  
Univerzita Karlova

Course:  
Lecture:

**Critical Urban Sociology**  
*Urban planning, gentrification and heritage protection*

# Urban planning, gentrification and heritage protection

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**ISS FSV UK**

**JSB421 Critical Urban Sociology**



## Structure of the lecture:

- Inner city revitalization & gentrification
- Urban semiotics
- Planning and the role of planners



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# Revitalization of the inner city



## Discussion:

What is gentrification?

Do you consider it as rather negative or positive process?

How did gentrification started? What are the causes?

What is the future of cities in capitalized world in terms of urban renewal and social constitution?



## Revitalization – necessary process for urban sustainability

- Connected to **gentrification** processes -> involves „socioeconomic changes in a less affluent urban space that forces the existing, typically working-class residents out of their neighborhood
- Movement into an area by a more professional, high consuming labor force + displacement of original residents
- Ruth Glass (1964): example of England’s middle class moving into the working-class sections of London
  - > gentrification as the result of the consumption patterns of the wealthier residents, who invest in home improvements to increase the home’s value -> drives up the cost of housing in the area



## Basic criteria of gentrification (Gottdiener et al.)

- a) Supply-Side
- b) Demand-Side
- c) Displacement



## Supply-Side

- The role of economic investment, different levels of government subsidies, the role of the real estate sector to sell the neighborhood to more affluent and white-collar workers
  - The role of capital's interest in maximizing rent or profit from urban space and investing in local places to supply new consumer places that would revitalize the city
  - Government policies often accompany capital investment itself (comp. Madden & Marcuse 2016)
  - Inner city revitalization = complex process with many actors -> local politicians, real estate speculators, presence of new, more professional people drawn to the location by job opportunities
  - Supply-side facets of gentrification = part of the second circuit of capital
    - > switches of the capital between circuits = often because of recession in one sector or the other, rents or profits can be more stable and acquired) + higher return promise than investing in the primary circuit of capital
  - Consequences – overdevelopment, real estate bubbles, uneven development, racial & class antagonisms
-



## Demand-Side

- Pull factor -> makes a neighborhood attractive to prospective new residents
  - Pull factors => construction of luxury apartments including indoor resident parking, private fitness rooms etc, fashionable restaurants newly opened in the area, boutique shops
    - > more affluent people may be attracted to a gentrifying area because it retains something of its original urban character (incl. amount of original residents)
    - > necessity of governmental guarantee of safety -> increased police presence and swifter response times for criminal or medical emergencies (condition of gentrification)
  - Changes in the role of consumer culture and cultural orientations + political influence caused by the movement of new, more affluent social classes into a neighborhood
  - Brown-Saracino (2017): „uneasy“ role of wealthier gentrifiers -> social preservation by trying to prevent the displacement of some original residents – old-timers essential for maintaining an „authentic“ community
  - Hyra (2017): occasional occurrence of crime and violence as „edgy and authentic“ for new residents
-



## Displacement

- Lefebvre: people (and especially marginalized groups – minorities, women, elderly, LGBTQ+...) have no existence as groups until they appropriate a space of their own – importance of spatial component of their culture (basis for participation in decision making)
- Importance of cultural factors – feeling of place belonging & place attachment, free use of amenities such as churches, community centers, parks, shops...
- Some views on gentrification = solution to urban decay, way to promote economic development, revitalization of deindustrialized areas
- Paton (2014) – some municipalities often uncritically cheer gentrification processes; gentrification as *de facto* policy of revitalization (despite its consequences of displacement);
- Difference between middle-class and working class in gentrification = degree of control that each group possesses over their lives (ability of consumer choices – housing, goods in the neighborhood...)



## The Lower Eastside – example of gentrification

- 1960s -> social mix (racial – whites, black, and Hispanic residents; class – working class, artists – beat generation)
- CBGB's – punkrock club since the 70s
- Abandoned buildings – transformed into squats (Alphabet City – about 30 squats)
- 1988 – Tompkins Square Park riots – organization against gentrification -> protesters attacked by police, tipping point of gentrification process
- 1980s - upper-class whites moving into the East Village (many worked on Wall Street)
- Connection with neoliberal turn in American politics – Wall Street as supply-side pull factor that brought new classes
- Movie tip: CBGB (Alan Rickman as the club owner)









## Gentrified areas in Prague





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- Gentrification not a universal feature of cities/metropolitan areas (CZ: big cities)
- Opposite process -> disinvestment, population decline (comp. *uneven development*), no revitalization
  - > urban social problems -> abandonment, social upheaval, poverty, violence...
  - Rousseau (2009; 2012): such areas are victims of the uneven development of global capitalism; concept of „loser cities“
- Important role of municipalities (both supply- and demand- side -> policies, investments)
  - > revitalization of neighborhoods, community events („Shakespeare in the park“, municipal zoos, children’s day...)
- Process of „*embourgeoisement*“ -> movement of more affluent people into an area because of its locational advantage without thought of making a profit on capital investment
  - Role of students -> displacement of poorer residents (taking over apartments and being willing to pay higher rents including putting up with roommates that share space)
  - usually in post-industrial cities (most affluent people usually never really abandon the historical inner city even if they also own property in other areas of the MCMR or in other regions)



- Maloutas (2011): much urban renewal of neighborhoods creates landscapes that look the same in every inner city
  - > warehouses, abandoned factories -> loft apartments
  - > boutique shops
  - > barber shops
  - > international, unified restaurants
  - > coffee shops, local breweries
- ⇒ Main outcome of gentrification = expensive housing -> lower buying power
- ⇒ High cost of shelter = the greatest impediment to the quality of life in our society (Gottdiener)



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# Remaking the central city and urban semiotics



- Importance of language when speaking about the city – attributes, attractiveness
- Process of social constructing the identity of space (place described as „cool“, run-down, friendly...)
- Location´s identity constructed by social actors – government place marketing, expert public, broad public, tourist accounts, newspapers, media...investors, landlords...
- Identity partly constructed by marketers – giving brand, accent of positive images, combat negative sentiments associated with place (Kavaratzis 2004, Ward 1998)
- Paulsen 2004: „place character“ – conceptual tool for understanding how qualities of a location combine with local patterns of meaning and action
- Meaning of a place includes subjective views about a destination, its social history, cultural heritage, style of architecture & life



## Urban semiotics

Discussion: What are the main signs through which you perceive the urban space? (Roads? Buildings? Shops? Public spaces?...)



- > relationship between the material/built environment and symbols of meanings to urban space
- > output of semiotic analysis -> where, when and by whom or for what reason a specific sign or symbol was created and sustained in the local culture
- > identification of the role of powerful and influential authority actors in creating reputations that have a disproportionate influence over the meaning of place
  - => exercise of power -> stronger position of a speaker (esp. Developers, planners, government officials...)



- ⇒ Extreme importance of discourse construction process and social positioning within the discursive frame
- > hegemony (Gramsci) -> execution of power and ideology domination, discourse as crucial instrument
  - Symbols and frames can be created also by local residents -> place attachment, emotions + sentiments as method of resistance against larger constructed narrative of „place boosters“
  - > theming of urban spaces as a response to uneven development (Gottdiener 1997: 105)
    - > a reaction by developers to revitalize declining areas through symbolic differentiation and distinctions attached to development projects
    - > Prague: brownfields, new projects in declining areas (Nákladové nádraží Žižkov, Bubny, Smíchov...)
    - > USA: Las Vegas, gentrified areas
  - Redefining a place = top-down effort to shape a location's character
  - Theming = branding, creates secured experiences (restaurants -> strategy of big food chains)



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## Role of Historic Central Business District

- MCMR's historical centers -> usually a cluster of significant government buildings, courts, economic buildings, law offices...-> classical CBD (comp. Burgess – concentric model)
  - > x MCMR -> relocation of some former functions to the suburbs (banks, services, offices...) + local centers with administrative buildings in each suburban town
  - => administrative & business diffusion in MCMR
  - > + important role of culture & entertainment (theatres, sports, nightlife) – still located mainly in historical center



## Cultural Tourism

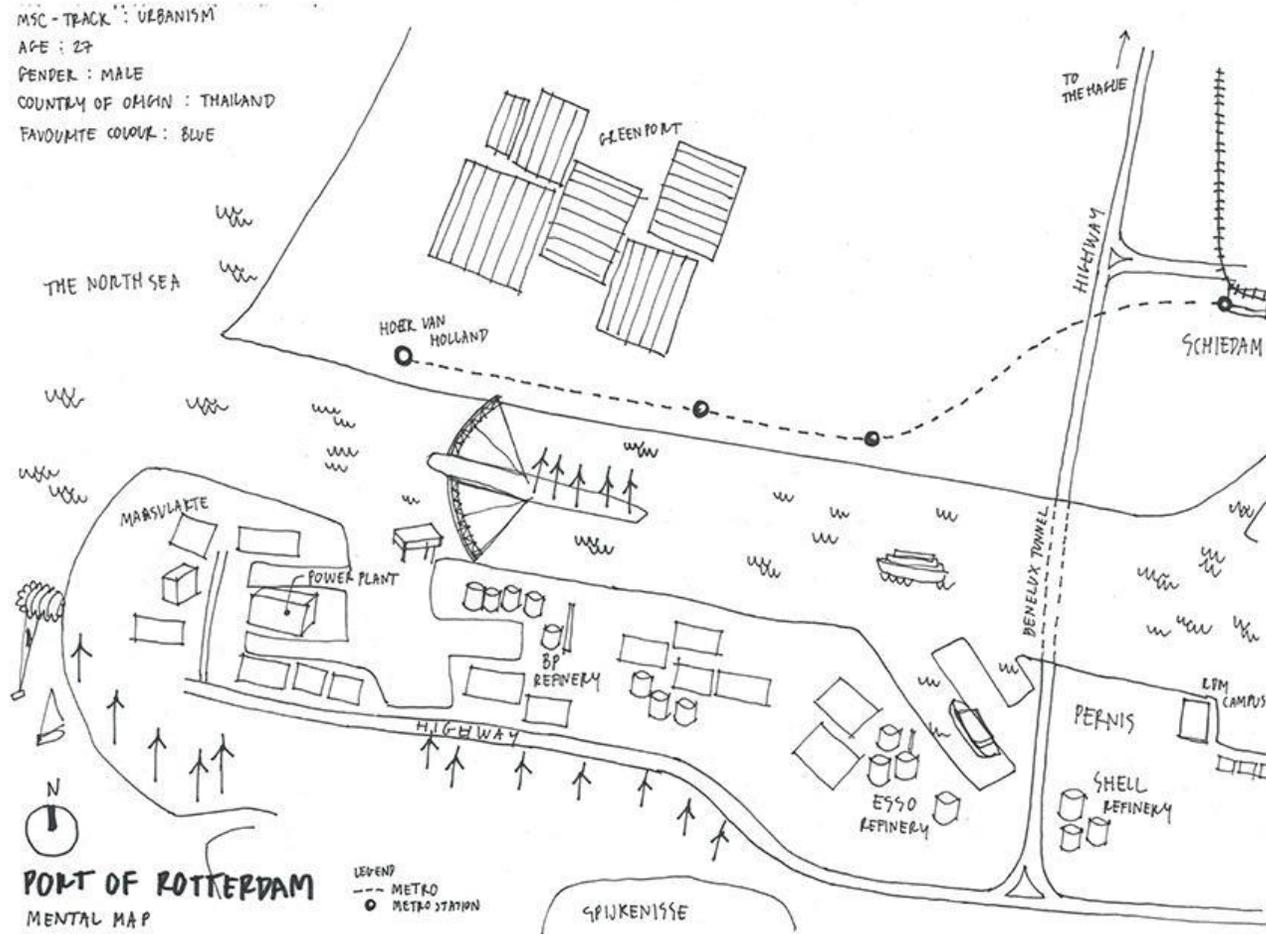
- Related & parallel trend in the city center (+ rural places -> local products = tourism in broader area of MCMRs)
  - Tourism = global industry
  - Use of semiotic marketing
  - Clash between „new“ culture constructed by semiotic instruments and „old“ culture – connected to local neighborhoods (semiotic conflicts as important part of gentrification)
  
  - Spierings (2006)
  - Lefebvre – „spaces of consumption“
    - > restructuralization of inner city businesses in order to attract consumers from suburbia
    - > ignoration of the needs of local, less affluent residents (= part of gentrification process)
    - > focus on attempts by historical inner cities to attract upper-middle class consumers, mobile class, interest in shopping experience
-



## Urban Images, Signs & Mental Maps

- Cities & suburbs => physical spaces with meanings
- Spaces with attached emotions & meaningful associations, movement in the space through different routines and interactions
  - > construction of unique individual mental maps and image of the city
- ⇒ Mental mapping -> used as a methodological tool to explore individual perceptions of space
- ⇒ Common results -> differences in class status, reflection of social stratification, relationships of power, racial differences
  - > identification of dominant signs







## Kevin Lynch – Image of the City (1960)

- > subjective understandings of characteristics of a city crystalize into socially meaningful conceptions
- > social construction of location's identity through lived experience, objective observations and subjective perceptions of the built environment
- > greater *imageability* of urban environment through familiarity -> better understanding of a city as built environment
  
- ⇒ Symbolic nature of places we memorize & give meaning
  - > we know them by functions
  - > study of spatial semiotics – Barthes 1986
  - ⇒ mental map ⇒ individual perception + social factors of place's image



# Planning and the role of planners



## The Advisory Role of Planners

- > Urban planners' influence over the built environment = **institutional location within the state + particular form of expertise**
- > movement within politically constrained milieu (area) by exercising their influence on developers, speculators, homeowners, renters, local community activists, and public officials (Weiss 1987)
- > employed by business and government; work out the ordinary details of mandated land use and construction requirements
- > drafting site usage plans for developers
- > reviewing and updating zoning maps for local governments
- > assessing traffic studies
- > collect & review demographic information
- > participate on municipal strategies & plans (Prague: Strategical Plan, Strategy of Climate Change Adaptation...)



## Zoning

- Mainly since 19th century (Czechia – specific development plans since Karel IV. -> Nové město)
- Partitions metropolitan space into distinct areas (mainly according to their function)
  - > f. e. protection from negative impacts of industry on housing areas etc.
  - > zones reserved for residential use, commercial activities, industrial work, greenery...
- Realization of urbanistic vision
- Tool for planning of infrastructure (traffic + energies lines, sewer...)
- Approval of local authorities
- Possibility of public participation on planning



## Utopian Schemes: Howard, Le Corbusier, Wright

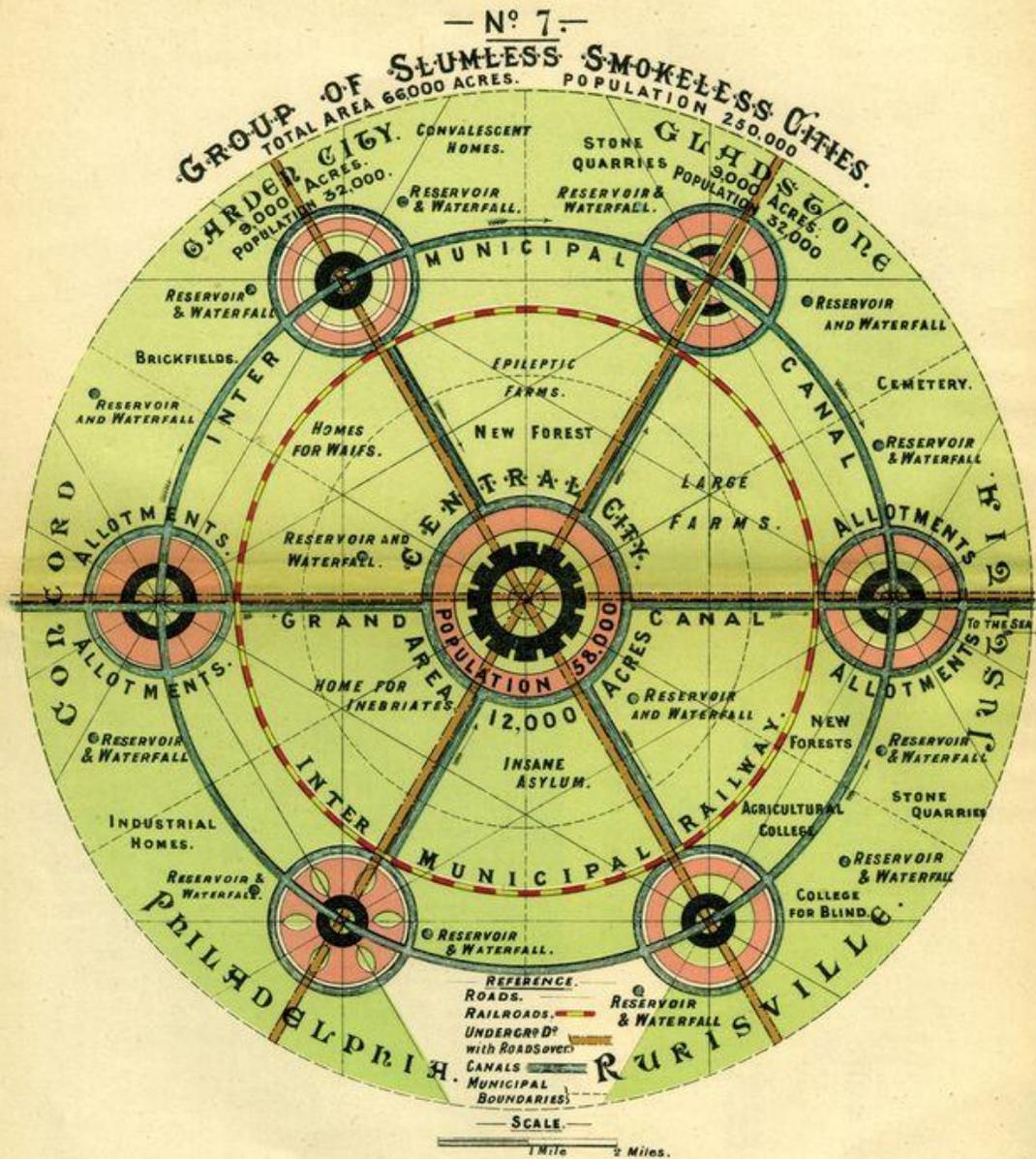
- Utopia = modernist theme of progress
- Dystopia = fears about the myth of progress
- Heterotopia = imaginary place/space representation within our mind (Lefebvre 1991)
  - > functional tool for planners
- From 20th century -> architectural manifestos and schemes of the entire city space (utopian visions)
- > Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright



## The Garden City

- Ebenezer Howard (1850 – 1928)
- Interest in the social costs of British industrialization
- Cities as the future of economic growth x „lousy“ place to live
  - => combination of urban and rural life in Howard´s vision
  - => all new industrial growth channeled to new locations in outlying areas; combination of industrial employment with country living => „garden cities“
- Influential and enduring heterotopia -> opposite to capitalist industrialization & urbanization in 19th/20th century
  - > influence of the „new town“ movement in England
  - > influence of 1960s development of Florence, Italy
  - > construction of Garden City, New York; Baldwin Hills, Los Angeles

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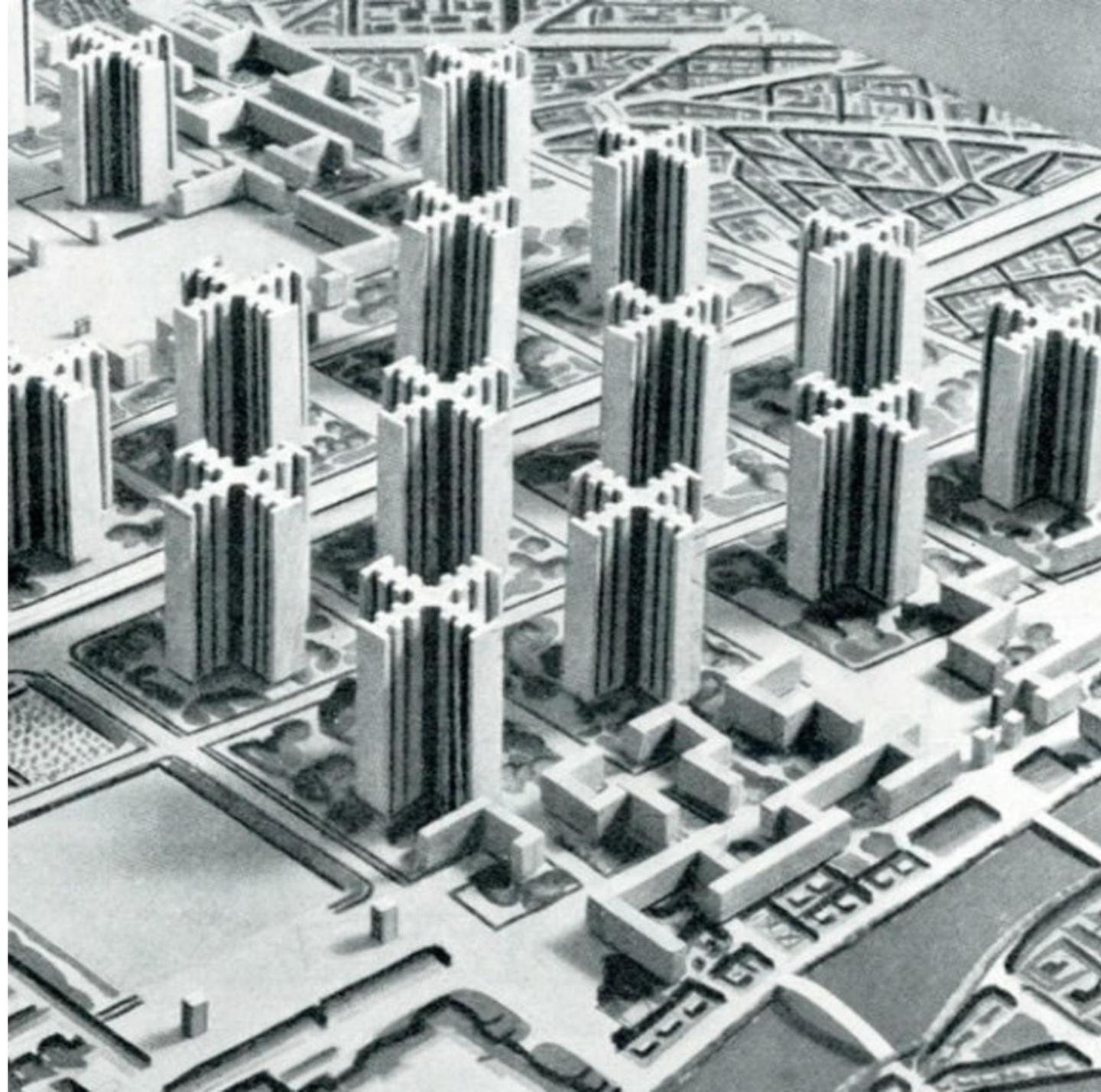




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## The Radiant City

- Le Corbusier / Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (1887 – 1965)
- Along with Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe considered the founder and one of the leaders of „modernism“
- Idea of modernist movement in architecture -> social life could be improved by the acquisition and application of knowledge – scientific, technological, architectural, social, psychological
  - > role of architecture and urban planning in solving social problems
- clean, straightforward, rectangular buildings
- Important architectural style until the postmodern architectural revolt in the 1980s
- Buildings = „machines for living“ – most efficient design for the sustenance of everyday activities
- „Architecture or Revolution“ – reaction on social costs of industrialization
- ⇒ Heterotopia of *radiant city* -> mixed urban development including residential, business, and administrative buildings along with large open spaces
- ⇒ High-rise buildings, public spaces, „death of the street“, important role of transportation (pedestrian unfriendly space) – bad functioning (examples: Pruitt-Igoe project/St.Louis, Brasilia)



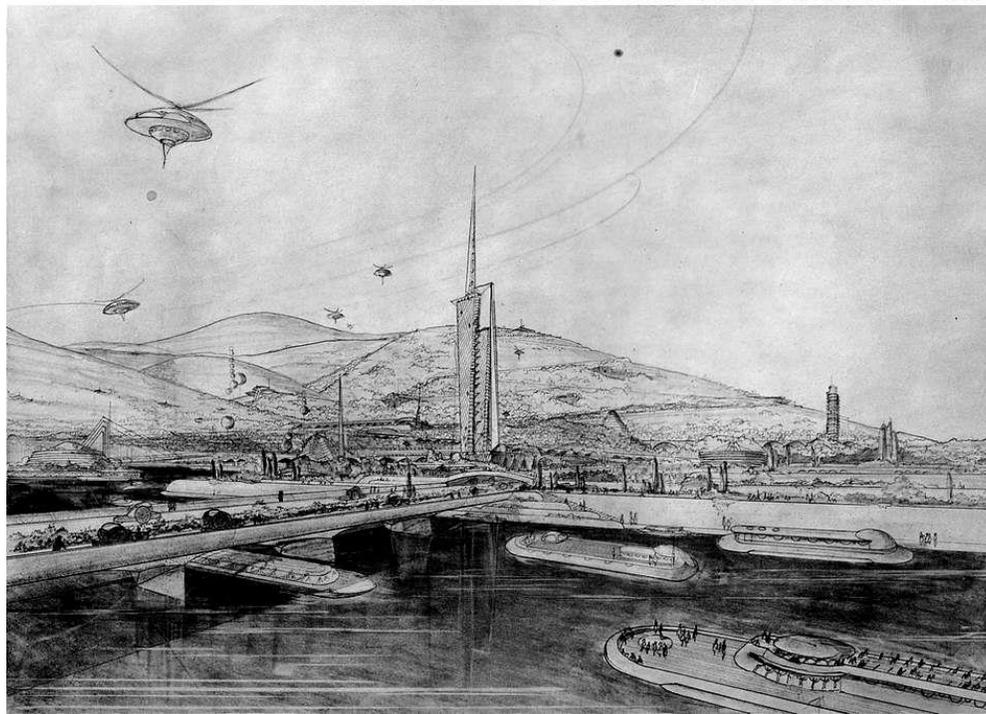
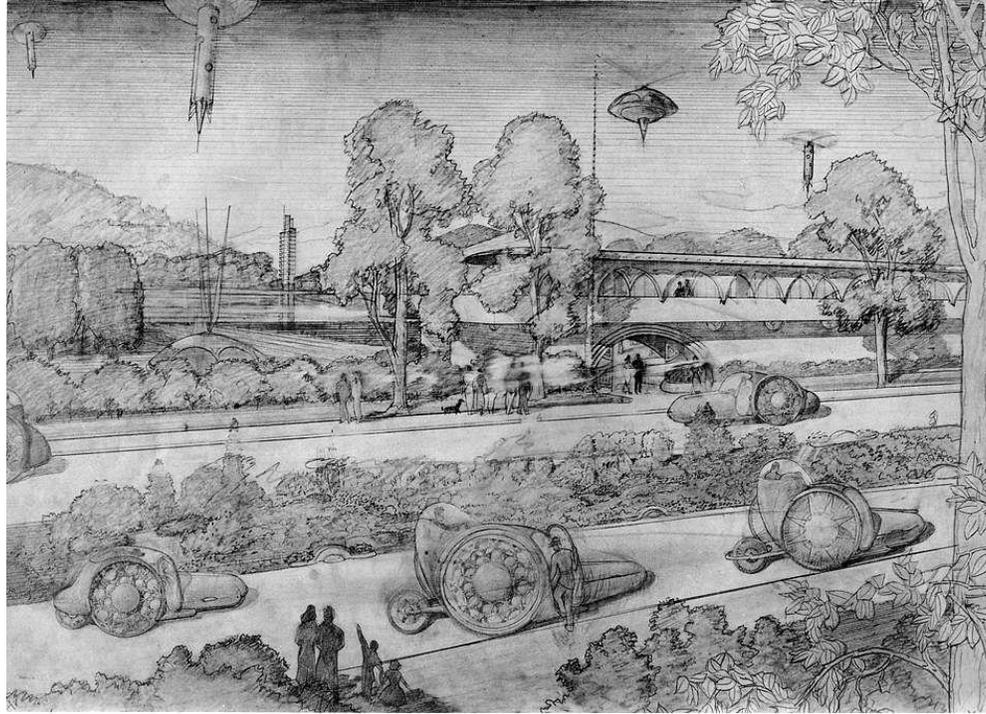




## Broadacre City

- Frank Lloyd Wright (1869 – 1959)
- Not a modernist, influenced by Asian and Japanese architecture
- Structures as organic extensions of natural environments
- Fluid connection with the world outside, construction as celebration of natural materials and settings
- Increase of density = bad urban process; critique of skyscrapers construction
- Broadacre city = low density, single-family homes built on an acre land; possibility of own food growing, own space modification
- Shopping in regularly spaced minicenters (one of the earliest visions of a shopping center), automobile as basic means of transportation – highways & roads, industry isolated in specifically designed factory areas (similarity to today's industrial parks)
- Similarity to massive suburban environments





Falling Water House /  
Pittsburgh (1936)





## Jane Jacobs (1916 – 2006)

- Journalist & activist
- Important & influential person of urban planning & urban activism; critic of utopian planners & modernist movement
- Leader of urban social movement in Greenwich Village (NYC) -> case of resistance against planned expressway
- 2016 -> „Jane’s Walk“ in 212 cities -> 100th birthday memory celebration
- „humane cities“ -> „walkable cities“ and mixed-use development as a goal
- Jacobs’ thoughts used as a real-estate marketing (UN Habitat III Conference in Toronto)
- *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961)





- Sidewalks = lifeblood of city culture; crowded sidewalks = indication of a vibrant neighborhood
- Diversity of buildings, multitude of real uses of different social groups
- Could something like active urban space be ever planned?
- Urban planning needs to reflect social interaction, can not limit public or social space
- ⇒ Mixed use as an antidote to modernist urban planning
- ⇒ Primary use of place = reason you go to some place (work, hospital, office building, university...high density of people)
- ⇒ Secondary use of place = local aspect – local stores and establishments
- ⇒ Combination of primary and secondary = places used day and night
- ⇒ Short city blocks preference (sense of safety); healthy amount of older buildings (smaller spaces & cheaper rent)
- ⇒ Mixed use -> combination of residential and retails spaces; adopted by planners and real estate developers (gentrification)
- ⇒ Urban culture dependent on diversity, relationship between personal interactions and public space



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## New urbanism

- Architecture and planning -> relatively low reflection of social needs & thoughts embedded within social space
- Utopian planners => human life, behaviors, and cultural tastes can be controlled and improved through urban design; physical design alone will determine personal behavior => *physical determinism* privileges the abstract space of the planning professional over social space
- Planners and architects seem to ignore the social basis of behavior
  - => critique => Jane Jacobs, Leon Krier – predecessors of „new urbanism“
    - > most important = human scale of cities, best neighborhoods are pedestrian places
- Basic premise of new urbanism -> no longer necessary to separate residential from all industrial or profit making activities of work
- Prominent contemporary architects and planners (A. Suany, E. Plater-Zyberk, J. Correa, S. Peterson, B. Littenberg, D. Solomon...)
- Calthorpe and Fulton (2001): planning for cities based on a mix of residential, commercial, and manufacturing or global economic functions



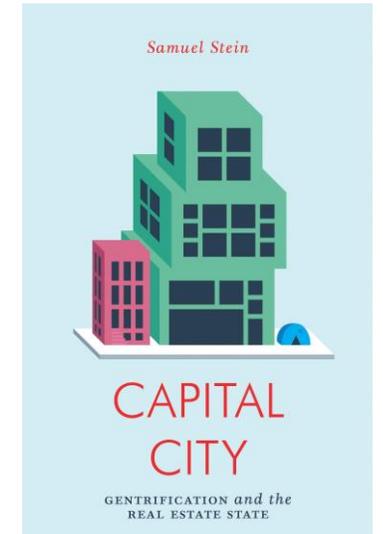
- Bottom-up approach to urban planning
- Commitment to re-establish the relationship between building and making of community through citizen-based participatory planning and design (Fincham and Fowler 2003: 18)
- Duany, Plater-Zyberk: social goals such as encouraging neighboring and stemming sprawl can be achieved through the physical means of design and construction
  - > designs feature houses with porches, emphasize pedestrian pathways rather than streets for automobiles
- Criticism -> belief that the behavior of people can be altered for the better through more enlightened architectural design
  - > primary element = human element
  - > high cost of living in such developments (another form of gentrification)





## Samuel Stein – The Capital City

- Geographer at the CUNY
- Book about gentrification, planning & real estate and development in NYC
- Gentrification through the lens of urban planning
- Analysis of the rise of „real estate state“, its instruments of power, arguments of its defenders & connected ethnic and class cleansing of American cities (New York)
- Appeal for better understanding of the rising political influence of real estate interests within local and national governments
- „This book is about planners in cities run by real estate. It describes how real estate came to rule, and what planners do under these circumstances. Planners provide a window into the practical dynamics of urban change“





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- The real estate industry is now worth \$217 trillion, which is 36 times the value of all the gold in the world
  - it forms 60 per cent of global assets
  - the emergence of the 'real estate state' -> vicious gentrification, concomitant displacement of working-class people, remade our cities as temples of luxury development, rendering global cities increasingly inaccessible to all but an elite few
  - to understand gentrification, we must understand the rising political influence of **real estate interests within local and national governments**
    - > how these interests are actualised in a paradigm driven both by the growth imperative of capitalist development and the neoliberal state – that is, through urban planning and urban planners themselves
    - => describes the dynamic that emerges between planners and real estate interests within the capitalist mode of production
    - => we must unpack the nature of urban planning itself
    - the *practice* of planning is as old as human settlement, the *profession* of planning is a more recent phenomenon
-



- Planning is intrinsically linked to the expansion of capitalism, lies at the heart of the spatial and economic development of the city
- the modus operandi of capitalist planning is to produce value through space
- „Most planners do not seek to line the pockets of wealthy elites or displace the poor. And yet this is exactly what has happened again and again in city after city across the United States and throughout the capitalist world.“
- just as planners play a role in capitalist development, so too must they have an important role in the development of a more equal city
- + case study of gentrification in New York, role of Trump



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