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"Urban Management and Social Justice. Space, power and modernity"

## INTRODUCTION

Although providing a definition of development is still object of controversy, there is substantial agreement that it should correspond to a general improvement in living conditions. Much of the controversy actually concerns the means by which such improvement can be achieved. A possible way of looking at development issues is by considering their inherently moral nature: an overall betterment in living standards can be and usually is advocated on the basis that all human beings deserve to live in decent conditions so as to allow them to enjoy equal opportunities. More than that, morality also reflects a concern with how differential treatment can be justified in society. In providing a background for the whole development discourse, the theme of social justice thus becomes an expression of the moral interrogatives raised in the allocation of the conditions by which improvements in living conditions can be arrived at, as well as in the definition of the measures to arrive at such conditions. As a consequence, also the significance attached to social justice can be very diverse, as an expression of different views of the world and hence of different sets of normative tools to act within it.

In the field of urban development in the Third World, the last two decades have witnessed the ascendancy of urban management programmes as probably the most significant force in shaping the direction of development interventions in human settlements. If, on one side, the return of interest for ideas of social justice is the expression of a strongly felt need to address issues of equality and equity in society in a historical moment of increasing social disparity and exclusion, the analysis that follows will argue that, on the other side, the prevailing models of urban management do not represent a viable instrument to tackle these issues. By reviewing the origins, the conceptual premises and the normative tools of urban management, it is in fact possible to highlight how its practices contribute to create a separation between the theme of efficiency and that of equity. In the typically modernist view of social justice it proposes, a just distribution is that which is arrived at through the workings of market mechanisms. By contrast, based on a recognition of the political nature of urban crisis, social justice will be here conceptualised not only as a matter of distribution of material and economic resources according to criteria of efficiency, but, more broadly, as regarding institutional aspects of social relations. Social justice goes beyond mere distributive patterns to include such matters as decision-making procedures, division of labour and culture, that is the main social mechanisms by which opportunities are allocated and sources of injustice and oppression are created. A further examination of the relationship between social processes and space will illustrate the nature of the interaction between territory and social justice, the importance of power relations in the allocation of opportunities and hence the inadequacy of the technicist approach advocated by urban management programmes in tackling issues which are inherently political. In the final section the notion of urban governance will be proposed as a possible 'interface' between urban management and social justice, in that it highlights a view of institutional development which, unlike the neo-liberal version of urban management, provides the conditions for the discussion of the causes of inequity and injustice.

## 1 Social Justice

## 1.1 The Return to Social Justice

### *1.1.1 Methodology And Values*

Among the dichotomies and dualisms of an increasingly complex world, one which seems to be quite pertinent to the field of development studies is that between **science**, as expression of positive thinking, and **morality**, as expression of normative thinking. To the latter belongs the concept of social justice, as related to categories of 'just' and 'good'.

As the aim of the present paper is not that of providing a thorough analysis of the evolution of philosophical thinking and of the structures of western culture, this section will attempt to narrow the field and focus on how considerations of morality have first been excluded from the realm of science and social analysis and then reincluded. This will reveal central in the further explanation of the meaning of social justice and of its importance in relation to social analysis and social processes. The theme of development in urban areas will provide a more circumscribed context within which the separation between science and morality can be discussed.

It is a central feature of modern era that sciences, both physical and social, should be concerned with the neutral observation, description and explanation of phenomena. Such 'positive analysis' requires rationality as the main tool for the construction of a 'healthy' theory, the aim being that of avoiding ideologies and values and hence 'dangerous' personal judgements on what is good or bad, right or wrong. The origin of this position can be found in the civilisation project of Enlightenment (Latouche, 1997) and in the relevant view that scientists should be the vehicle for the liberation of society from the burden of superstition and should hence have a position of neutrality towards the object of their analysis. The obvious consequence of this intellectual stance is the creation of a **division between the realms of science's positive analysis and that of morality's normative prescriptions**.

Nevertheless, scientists from various fields of study - geographers and planners included - are today showing a growing interest in the issue of social justice, as an expression of a need for a scientific enquiry which takes into account also a moral dimension. The tendency to regard with increasing reluctance the separation of scientific and moral perspectives, is supported not only by personal convictions and beliefs, but also by other more general considerations such as:

- the recognition that scientists, as human beings, are also inevitably moral beings; as such, also in their attempts to explain the world, they make judgements based on values and on their perception of the world;
- with regard to the object of analysis rather than the subject, the detachment of methodology - tools of analysis - from philosophy entails that "facts are regarded as separate from values, objects as independent from subjects, things as possessing an identity independent from human perception and action" (Harvey, 1988, p. 11);
- 'scientific criteria' cannot be regarded as universally valid as they are not capable of grasping the nature of the relation between the object itself and the meaning attributed to it by virtue of its position within a social context. The relationship between space and society described in a later section will serve as an example at this regard;
- the advent of postmodernist critiques of modern rationality and of the limitations of its methods in explaining social realities, with a particular emphasis on the recognition of diversity. Particularly relevant to social and geographical enquiries is the relationship between the creation of diverse systems of meanings and moral codes and the dynamics of social formations over space;
- global processes of change (social, institutional, political, environmental but especially economic - globalisation and adjustment - ) have entailed outcomes which, especially in the Third World, have increased levels of social polarisation and disparity between the rich and the poor. In the face of the technical and moral failures of capitalist markets in addressing issues of welfare and of quality of life - not only in urban areas and not only in the South - a response is coming from a greater awareness of social issues and from the consequently increased analytical efforts in relation to issues of inequality and distribution.

The return to morality in scientific enquiry can therefore be explained on the basis of two set of considerations: firstly, a shift in the notion of morality itself has implied the rejection of ethical dogmatism and universalism as basis for the explanation of how moral codes are generated (see section 1.2.1); secondly, an increasingly felt need for new normative tools to guide sciences, so as to enable them to provide better tools to guide action towards improvements in human condition. One might also, as a consequence, infer a new position for scientific enquiry: no longer only as mere description, but a more pro-active tool for the engagement with human practice towards social change.

## 1.2 The contents of social justice

The notions of justice and of social justice are normative concepts, that is they belong to the field of knowledge which is concerned with 'what should be', as opposed to positive knowledge which is about what actually 'is'; for this reason until recently they have not been part of geographical methods of enquiry, which derive from classical location theories based on the application of the criterion of efficiency to human activities and behaviour in relation to space. In order to propose a possible use of normative knowledge for geographical and spatial principles, it is necessary to specify the nature of the processes which lead to the construction of the idea of justice as well as to describe the contents of social justice.

### 1.2.1 From *Eternal Justice* To A '*Social*' View Of Justice

Although justice in general is a very broad concept, as a starting point it can be described as a specific aspect of the more general problem of morality, or how people should act. The object of what is called moral philosophy is the definition of what is good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust. A first problem arises as to the nature of what is meant by 'good', as the term might refer to judgements which are not only moral, but also of aesthetic and technical value. A *moral norm* is characterised by the fact that it is related to the quality of human behaviour in the interaction between individuals. Elements of morality which are normally identified by philosophers for the definition of such norms are duty, right, virtue and justice itself; the aim of a moral theory would be that of adjudicating between them in the definition of the contents of morality (Smith, 1994).

As far as the idea of *justice* is concerned, its meaning is commonly made to correspond to notions of fairness, equity, impartiality and so forth. But how is the definition of these meanings arrived at? In western history, probably the most influential definition of a 'universal good' which all individuals would be expected to follow, has been provided by religion's systems of dogmas and values. However, the process of secularisation which has taken place in the last century has entailed a growing agreement among philosophers and social scientists that morality as system of behavioural norms cannot be defined through the words of God, as in the theological tradition. Similarly, the possibility of arriving at a definition of morality through empirical observation, as in the conventional scientific mode of enquiry, has also been questioned. The possibility that all the interrogatives around morality could be answered once for all is no longer plausible. The meanings of morality and hence of justice are neither discovered nor revealed.

Probably the first time in the history of philosophy when morality and justice have been treated as something separate from ideas of 'universality' has been with Marx. Paying little regard for arguments of eternal truth and the like, Marx constructed his critique on the basis of a notion of justice which stems from human practice - that of the social relations under the capitalist mode of production - rather than from universal principles which are first established and then mechanically applied to judge reality (Harvey, 1988). In other words, the reason for the presence in each person's mind of a set of beliefs which we might call sense of justice is not related to a philosophical abstraction, but to the interaction within the social milieu and, inevitably, to the nature of the context within which social relations take place. Of course, experience shows that we can reject the possibility of the existence of situations of 'egoistic moral atomism' whereas each individual builds his/her own moral code and sense of justice. A sense of morality is generated by the fact itself of being part of a social milieu with a given organised mode of interaction. It is therefore the way society is organised and the way people interact which determines a bottom-line for the emergence of a definition of morality.

Thus, there appears to be a rather strong tension between tendencies of ethical universalism and others of relativism; current debates around modernism and postmodernism are very much centred around this kind of tension, with the latter stressing the importance of 'situatedness' (Young, 1990), the role played by spatial and

cultural specificity in the construction of 'difference'. In the field of morality, however, a position of compromise between the two extremes can be found. One is suggested, even if in different terms, by Habermas' discursive ethics (1990) and by Harvey (1988): *the contents of justice and the sense of morality are made, invented or arrived at as part of living in a society through communication between individuals, groups and communities*. In highlighting the importance of local context and culture in the establishment of norms of behaviour, this assertion might leave considerable room for relativism. However, attention should focus not on the quality of local specificity, but rather on the *communicative process* through which this 'intersubjective agreement' is reached. As morality becomes a reflection of social relations, the introduction of the element of morality in the analysis of society and of its spatial context allows a better understanding of the nature and quality of social relations. Furthermore, this view also allows the possibility to look at the issue of justice from a point of view which is not only strictly normative but also related to social practice, thus examining social realities and relations from the perspective of morality and looking at how such codes of morality are constructed and implemented through social relations. It is through this sort of perspective that geographical and spatial enquiry can also look at social dynamics in relation to the mechanisms of the transformation of the built environment.

### 1.2.2 Social Justice As Equal Distribution

The attribute 'social' which is added to the noun 'justice' refers not only to how moral codes are arrived at, but more specifically indicates a concern with *a*) processes which take place socially, and *b*) a *shared idea* of what constitutes 'justice'.

Notions which are often used to give a social dimension to the term 'justice' are those of equal value of and respect for people, and those of human rights. The former has been articulated by Kant, who described all human beings as **equal moral** creatures and on this basis, therefore, deserving of equal treatment (Reath et Al., 1996). In their universality **human rights** too make a strong appeal to principles of equality; the fact that they may not be universally accepted, however, does not undermine their egalitarian character, as they are based on the belief of the equal moral worth of all human beings (Smith, 1994). Social justice, therefore, appears to be tightly bound to the *implementation of principles of equity and equality in society*. In order to better appreciate the nature of this relationship, it is necessary to look at the reason why the concept of social justice itself arises.

In its account on the relationship between social justice, society and urban space, David Harvey described social justice as "a particular application of just principles for resolving competing claims and conflicts which arise out of the necessity for social cooperation in seeking individual advancement" (Harvey, 1988, p. 97). In other words, from the social nature of human beings derives the necessity for cooperation; in turn from this interaction competing claims are generated as to the equal distribution of the outcomes of such cooperation. As far as the **criteria for such distribution** is concerned, the idea of arithmetical equality - everyone getting the same quantity of something - clearly is not practically as well as morally acceptable (Smith, 1994); among the other criteria which have been suggested, the most common ones are the following (Harvey, 1988): *a*) need, with reference to a number of categories of basic needs (e.g. food, housing, medical care, education, social and physical services and infrastructure and so on) whose availability is essential in enabling people not only to survive but also to take part in the various aspects of social interaction; *b*) deserve or contribution to common good; *c*) merit, in relation to adverse environmental circumstances which can justify claims on what is distributed.

The nature of the **object of redistribution** is also a matter of philosophical and sociological debate. When applied to social contexts, as in this case, justice should however not be seen only as economic justice and therefore as concerned only with material aspects of life (holdings, material goods, services, ...). In fact it includes but is not restricted to economic justice. As the notion of justice is established relationally, the object of distribution is also conceptualised on the basis of webs of social relations, thus including not only material but also immaterial aspects of social life, such as power, opportunities and access to the political system. Looking at justice from a relational point of view also allows one to have a better appreciation of issues and processes of oppression and domination which an economic-materialistic perspective would otherwise overlook.

In this perspective social justice has been described *a*) as centrally concerned with the distribution of sources of well-being (Smith, 1994), *b*) as 'equality of opportunities' (Rawls, 1972), *c*) as distribution of income, where income is to be seen in its broader meaning of "command over scarce resources" (Harvey, 1988). To sum up, Young (1990) has underlined how social justice as distribution contains elements of *institutional* nature, in that

they do not affect directly material aspects but the *capacity of individuals to exercise their capacities*, ultimately also to have access to material-economic resources. Therefore, social justice is to be seen as a moral principle according to which the means to compete to achieve collectively agreed goals should be distributed equally among the members of society, following criteria among which the most important is that of need. In those situations where such means are lacking, the State, as superior authority in charge of the regulation of distribution among society, should intervene targeting such circumstances with policy interventions so as to re-establish balance.

It thus becomes apparent how, in the current context of the globalising mode of production, social justice can constitute not only a complex philosophical construct, but more importantly a potentially disruptive force: it is politically highly problematic, as it might provide an entry-point for challenges to vested interests concerned with the conservation of the status quo, and socially it constitutes a powerful mobilising force which might prompt political struggle towards a more equal distribution of scarce resources and ultimately a more equal social organisation. For these same reasons looking at development issues from a perspective focused on social justice allows one to better appreciate how the causes of underdevelopment and of other forms of oppression - or injustice - are actually based on processes which take place socially between groups; it is through these processes that distribution is negotiated and it is to such negotiation that many groups do not have access, thus relegating them to positions of exclusion and marginalisation, which in the case of urban development, can assume also a physical character.

### ***1.2.3 Social Justice And The Territory***

Traditionally geography and hence the analysis of space and space-based processes have shared with other scientific methods a strong predisposition towards positive enquiry, showing little interest in making judgements on whether a given situation was good or bad (Smith, 1994). For this reason normative concepts such as that of social justice have never been included. The normative tools characteristically used by geographers to examine location problems were and still are derived from classical location theory (Harvey, 1988, 1996), which typically relies on the criterion of efficiency. In this case efficiency amounts to minimising the aggregate costs of movement within a particular spatial system. As a consequence, if spatial planning is to be directed towards this sort of efficiency objectives, the limits of what can be accomplished are largely if not entirely technical; it is apparent that moral problems regarding the redistributive consequences on income of locational decisions are not taken into considerations, probably, as suggested by Harvey, because they involve unwelcome ethical and political judgements.

The need to readdress, also in the field of spatial enquiry, issues of distribution is directly linked with one of the central arguments in Marx's analysis: under the capitalist system, distribution aspects are seen as separated from productions, because it is assumed that distribution will be taken care of through the workings of the market mechanism. The consequence is that **efficiency** (in the production) is delinked from **equity** (in the distribution). This appears to find confirmation in a rather simple argument: in today's capitalist system the market - operating according criteria of efficiency - is the main allocation principle for the distribution of resources in society and over territory. In relation to the category of space, capital flows with no relation to the conditions of need of the least advantaged groups, but the allocation of resources follows the criterion of the maximisation of the rate of return; since the rates of return normally do not correspond with the most depressed areas, there arises a paradox of capital withdrawing from the areas of greatest need. According to the normative tools of liberal and neo-liberal thinking, as well as to those of classic location theories, this behaviour is described as rational and good in that it satisfies the condition identified as necessary to arrive at an optimal allocation of resources. The same kind of dynamics will be discussed with regard to theories of urban management and their tendency to regard the problems of urban development as technical issues.

Whether one accepts Marx's ideological position and analytical conclusions or not, the moral implications of this sort of mechanisms are immense, and so are the spatial ones. In response to them and to the shortcomings of efficiency-led approaches, a growing number of studies attempt to include a moral dimension into geographical and spatial analysis in order to 'update' the discipline and to allow more investigation into the processes through which injustice manifests itself on the territory. A common starting point, and indeed a very central one, is the conceptualisation of the category of space and, as a consequence, of the urban phenomenon. **Space** is not to be seen as a passive and inanimate object on which social processes unfold; it rather *contains social processes just as much social processes are inherently spatial* (Harvey, 1988). And that is so not only because what happens within

society in many instances necessarily requires a physical support or dimensions to which it can be referred, but also because social activities are often based on very peculiar conceptualisations of specific parts of the physical environment. The perception of space is of pivotal importance, because according to different types of social relations, different meanings and values are attached to it; and in turn these same values and symbolic meanings determine the nature of many social relations. Therefore social interaction not only takes place *on* space, but it is also determined *by* the symbolic meanings we attach to it. It thus becomes clear that the relationship between space and society can be extremely complex and that traditional approaches such as those described above can provide a very distorted interpretation of the quality of the built environment. Consequently, urbanism can no longer be considered as a thing in itself, a testing ground for propositions and theories of the single disciplines (Harvey, 1988): so far the city, as spatial entity, and society have often been regarded as unrelated. In suggesting the necessity of integrating geographical and social imagination, Harvey offers a view which looks on one side at space as a system of containers of social relations and on the other at social relations as both contained in spatial form and determined by perceptions of space. Urbanism therefore becomes a 'mirror' of this complex interrelation: in other words "spatial forms and social processes are two different ways of thinking about the same thing" (Harvey, 1988, p. 26). Strategies of social and spatial transformation are thus to be seen as complementary, not as alternatives, as it has often been the case in the field of urban development.

As to the context of spatial analysis (and of urban development), the interaction between **social** behaviour and the symbolic and physical value of **space** implies that thinking about social justice as redistribution on space corresponds to considering space and society in a **complementary** manner. The distribution of resources, or, using Harvey's term, of 'income' cannot be regarded merely as a technical issue involving physical aspects of social life (infrastructure, housing, public services, ...); the relationship between individuals, households and communities on one side and space on the other is not restricted to that. Such distribution necessarily involves also a more critical **political dimension** of conflict among competing claims regarding the allocation of scarce resources, which cannot be dealt with through technical arrangements. Looking at social justice in its territorial dimension implies looking at **power relations**, at how and among which social groups power relations are established, and with what effects on the organisation and the quality of space. Social justice and the 'political' are in fact tightly intertwined through the medium of space. Furthermore, social justice is necessarily a space-based issue, because command over space is a fundamental source of social power (Harvey, 1989), because power relations often depend on linkages and networks which have strong territorial connotations (Merrifield and Swyngedouw, 1996), and because many of the mechanisms for redistribution and for need-fulfilment come into fruition in the act of spatial location (Harvey, 1988), regardless of the principles followed. One of the reasons why so many interventions for urban development and regeneration continue to fail lies in their focus on the physical dimension. Any overall strategy for dealing with the development of urban systems should reconcile policies concerned with social processes which take place in the city with policies designed to change its spatial form. It is this kind of view, looking in the direction of both space and society, which has so far lacked in conceptualisations of urban development. I will attempt to analyse an example at this regard by looking at the notion of urban management as a set of 'normative tools' for urban development.

## 2 - URBAN MANAGEMENT

### 2.1 Global Change and the City

In order to understand the city and appreciate its role today, it is necessary to analyse how **global changes** have affected the urban context and its **institutional landscape**. The main forces that brought about these far-reaching changes have been largely economic, with the gradual world-wide expansion of capitalist markets and adoption of neo-liberal policies; an examination of the internal dynamics of these two trends can help in highlighting the quality of urban transformation.

Although the theme of globalisation is today being examined by an increasing number of disciplines, a common trait in most efforts to define it is the internationalisation of economy, and more specifically of the capitalist system of production and exchange. A central feature in this expansion is the 'placelessness' of capital (Albrechts, 1991), i.e. the spatial instability of investment strategies of large companies; the technological advancements and the deregulation of international transactions have enabled capital to move freely from place to place according to the availability of profit opportunities. However, in its movements capital seeks a particular set of conditions upon

which the prospects for profit ultimately depend: these conditions are those which might help enhance productivity and reduce costs and are typically related to the quality of infrastructure and services available (for transport, communication, availability of necessary production inputs such as electricity and water, and so forth) as well as to the quality of life which big multinationals might offer to their personnel. Such 'placeless' capital is therefore very much dependent on the quality of geographical 'places' and in turn a fierce competition is generated among such places in order to attract investment and hence, hopefully, generate development. As cities are the places where in most cases such conditions are concentrated, the implications are evident. These trends have thus reinforced the position of urban centres as significant points of exchange and interaction; this can furthermore be put in relation with another aspect of the transformation of economic processes. The organisation of production has shifted away from the Fordist principles that shaped the industrial revolution in the Western world, to become now more flexible, technologically driven and decentralised. The outcome of the innovations introduced have entailed a higher degree of flexibility in labour processes, labour market, production and consumption patterns as well as a deregulation of market (Werna, 1995). Globally, cities are becoming more interlinked and have to be competitive to attract capital.

The rather paradoxical, as well as dramatic, situation of many cities of the Third World is that at the very moment when their role as economic engines for local and national development is enhanced by global economic changes and circumstance, they are experiencing severe **crisis**, caused by factors of a very diverse nature, economic, political, demographic, social and institutional. A unanimously recognised major force in shaping the capacity of cities and towns in facing these challenges is that of economic adjustment which most countries have undergone during the last twenty-five years. Shifts in policy priorities from the social to the economic sector, mainly caused by foreign pressures for debt repayment, have had not only an adverse impact on welfare, but also, and here lies the paradox, on productivity. Severe cuts to public spending have caused not only most social services to arrive close to collapse, but also a drastic reduction in the amount of resources available for public works, which in turn has compromised the quality of urban physical infrastructure and hence the capacity to compete globally and locally to attract new investments.

The emphasis of neoliberal policies on a market-oriented approach has caused a retreat of the State from most of its previous spheres of competence, in order to leave more room of action to what is perceived as the more efficient private sector. This, along with the dynamics of democratisation (Mabogunje, 1995), has given more prominence to issues of decentralisation and to the role of local authorities (Wekwete, 1997), seen as more flexible and adaptable than the central state and therefore more responsive to local needs. The concurrence of economic hardship and cuts to public spending are felt more heavily at local level; political circumstances, the opposition of central government officials and decision-makers to a genuine devolution of authority and resources to the local level, have resulted in urban governments being overloaded with new responsibilities but without the power and resources to face the new reality. The lack of power and authority entails a loss of legitimacy which in turn contributes to further reduce the already little capacity to generate local revenues; cities' governments are normally responsible for the collection of highly inelastic taxes which, along with the poor means of collection, results in a proportion of local revenues of only about 40% of the total expenditure (Stren and White, 1989). What follows from this is dependence on erratic transfers from central authorities and from donors, indication of the fact that during adjustment the capacity to manage cities has been largely ignored.

Despite the crisis, in Africa and parts of Asia cities continue to exert a strong attraction for migration: as cities' growth rates do not appear to decrease, the demand on local authorities is also growing as a result of the continuing influx of immigrants, fleeing from rural areas towards what is perceived as the only concentration of economic and survival options.

However, a feature of contemporary cities, not only in the South of the world, is that, as the gap between social demand and public offer widens, their spaces are increasingly becoming fragmented (Harvey, 1989). While the few new investments are concentrated, for reasons of visibility and political convenience, in the centres of urban areas, other portions of their territory become increasingly marginalised, because of the lack of services and infrastructure and of the pressure of the demand coming from the newly urbanised and from those social groups who cannot afford to live on the more expensive land of better-serviced areas. The result is physical duality and exclusion: on one side concentrations of wealth in voluntarily self-secluded residential areas, and on the other concentrations of misery, characterised by absence or poor maintenance of basic public utilities and infrastructure (water and sewage systems, waste disposal, roads, public transport, electricity, ...), poor living conditions and largely unplanned land

use patterns.

Fragmentation is not only physical: the emphasis on decentralisation and the concurrent lack of devolution of authority towards the local level, has in many cases caused a multiplication of levels of authority (Stren and White, 1989; Mabogunje, 1989; Mattingly, 1995), with an unclear distributions of administrative and political functions between central and local authorities as well as within urban government bodies and consequent issues of duplication. The incapacity of local authorities to govern and manage cities has also stimulated a vast range of spontaneous responses from civil society groups, on the basis of territorially-based networks of kinship, friendship and association. In addition to this, with the retreat of the state, the prominence of enabling strategies and the 'offloading' - through partnerships and subcontracting - to companies of tasks previously undertaken by the state (Healey et Al., 1995), the private sector holds increasingly higher stakes in the city. Hence, when local government is weak in providing services and regulating the urban context, considerable fragmentation results in how different and diverse institutions support, and sometimes even provide urban services across the city and in how unregulated land uses become entrenched in the urban form (McCarney, 1996). The physical fragmentation that occurs in the context of an active civil society vis à vis a weak state at the local level can also lead to crises of governability: the democratic capacity of local governments might in fact be undermined by the lack of a local tax base necessary for the delivery of urban services and by the consequent impact on legitimacy of city authorities.

Most contemporary efforts for urban development are increasingly facing this kind of context with its challenges of welfare, economic competitiveness and governability. The extent of the current urban crisis is well documented in a growing number of studies. As a reflection of what we might call a 'broader international ideological context' - already in part described in the paragraphs above - new strategies have been proposed to face such crisis; probably the most important force in the redefinition of the normative tools for urban development has been the ascendancy of urban management theories.

## 2.2 the emergence of urban management in the urban development agenda

### *2.2.1 Past And Contemporary Approaches To Urban Crisis*

In the last thirty years international theories, policies and programmes for urban development have gone through a number of changes. Until the late 1970<sup>s</sup> the planning and management model inherited by many developing countries - especially in post-colonial Africa - was characterised by a supply-driven approach; the central state had primary responsibility for the management of urban areas (Wekwete, 1997) in the form of large scale programmes of physical transformation and modernist master planning. To this traditional approach, predominantly based on physical transformation, corresponded the focus of international assistance on project-based interventions, with smaller-pilot projects which could be replicated elsewhere.

During the 1980<sup>s</sup> non-traditional self-help approaches (sites and services and upgrading programmes) tried to involve communities in the provision of basic shelter, thus attempting to avoid public intervention, which was increasingly becoming financially unsustainable as well as technically unfeasible.

Economic decline, political instability and environmental difficulties such as draught and consequent famine, have later contributed to the large-scale crisis which has characterised most developing countries in the last two decades. Urban areas have continued to expand while local governments had neither the resources nor the autonomy to face such expansion, with the result of a failure to provide services, of a widespread maintenance crisis and of the decay in living conditions. The effects of these factors and the concurrent impact of global changes already described have had an impact on urban management models and on theories for assistance, which have started to focus on issues of institutional development.

### *2.2.2 The Contents of 'Urban Management'*

From the mid-1980<sup>s</sup> there has been more concern with long-term, city-wide processes rather than pilot/specific projects. Increased emphasis has been placed on local capacity building and institutional strengthening for the management of the urban development process. The new emphasis on institutional development is the result of a move from a more centralised towards a more local type of management, to serve as a 'business-like' tool to enable

local authorities to guide urban development. The recognition of the adverse impact of SAP's on welfare and productivity, together with a realisation that cities without adequate infrastructure and services do not provide an efficient location for economic activity, has thus given rise to a new aid agenda which aims to strengthen the capacity of public and private sector institutions to manage urban growth. A major role in defining the contents of urban management has been played by the agenda of big lending agencies, notably the World Bank (Mattingly, 1994) and its Urban Management Programme (UMP), run jointly with UNCHS and UNDP. The concern of Structural Adjustment Programmes for liberalisation and market signals, in turn related to the theme of debt repayment, has brought about a reduction in the role of the state to the advantage of the private sector. By the same token, the concern for issues of efficiency is directly related to the impact the deterioration of services and physical infrastructure has on the productive process.

The **main themes** on which urban management programmes focus can be thus summarised (McCarney et Al., 1995; Mattingly, 1995; Stren, 1993):

- reform of public administration, in order to make state bureaucracy more transparent, accountable and more efficient in its operations;
- related to the previous theme is that of the enablement of private sector actors, i.e. the creation of an environment - especially with reference to the regulatory framework - in which they can be 'enabled' to play a bigger role in the management of urban settlements. Parallel to this, is a process of capacity building involving the training of personnel as well as the inclusion of economic criteria to direct and assess the performance of the public administration;
- infrastructure management and service delivery: based on the recognition of the inability of local governments to face the tasks of assisting productive processes in the city, the emphasis is on including public sector actors in the management of urban utilities through partnerships and subcontracting, so as to make the city more functionally as well as economically viable. The main focus, however, is on economy-related physical infrastructures rather than on social;
- a related issue is that of an improved management of land and local finance, with particular reference to revenue generation through tax and fees collection. The present inefficiency in mechanisms of land management and property-tax collection is seen as a the key point in the vicious cycle between service quality, willingness to pay, loss of legitimacy and lack of local revenues. It is thus assumed that once the issue of tax collection is sorted out, then also the theme of local government's political legitimacy, as it refers to the relationship between state and society, will be automatically be dealt with.

As to the **objectives** of urban management, they are inevitably in relation to the efficiency-led nature of the approach and to the adoption of a 'corporate approach' in public administration (Werna, 1995). Because of the pressure of economic restructuring and mass unemployment and because of shrinking subsidies from central government, there is an increasing interventionism of local policies in support of economic development and a concomitant subordination of social policies, the result being less emphasis on welfare services and collective consumption goods and an increased importance of non-state actors in the provision of public services (Mayer, 1995). As the notion of 'management' conceptually implies a sense of looking after or taking care of and responsibility for something, and as the term 'urban' provides a linkage not only with the object of such care, but also to the increasingly fragmented nature of institutional relations within the city, the aim of urban management is that of coordinating such fragments in order to achieve the objective of urban development. Major international agencies have articulated in diverse ways such objective: the World Bank and UMP stress the importance of enhancing the productivity of urban areas (World Bank, 1991; Davey, 1994), also as an instrument in the reduction of poverty, whilst UNDP and UNCHS (UNCHS, 1996a) tend to favour a more welfare-oriented approach, concerned with the improvement of the living conditions of the poor, with participation, assistance to small-scale enterprises and with issues of sustainability. Many authors have underlined how the weakness in the definition of urban management's objectives is actually a reflection of more general lack of definition for the concept itself (Stren, 1993; Mattingly, 1994); as the object of the present analysis is not that of trying to summarise previous attempts to define urban management nor to provide yet another definition for it, but rather to understand its relation with the theme of social justice, it seems more appropriate to evaluate what objectives are potentially inherent to the philosophical and conceptual premises of these programmes. Only such premises, in fact, can

provide an opportunity to understand how these urban management practices look at urban reality and consequently what course of action they might envisage.

### 2.3 The Normative Tools of Urban Management

In the last two decades radical changes in international political economy have taken place which have had a strong impact on development theory, as well as in the way cities are regarded. In the field of North-South relationships the expansion of a more transnational form of capitalism has been supported by the firm policies of IMF and World Bank, which has ultimately contributed in making neo-liberal theories the dominant development paradigm since the 1980<sup>s</sup> (Hettne, 1995).

Neo-liberalism, as a national political force, is basically a reaction to the welfare state, particularly the power structures constituted by labour unions and bureaucracies, accused of having destroyed the market system. On this premise is based the explanation neo-liberalism has given to the crisis discussed so far and the necessity of dismantling the welfare state and moving towards the global market (Hettne, 1995). With this reorientation away from a Keynesian perspective, the notion of planning became increasingly synonymous with inefficiency, regulation, control and excessive costs (Albrechts, 1991); under such a view planning has been considered a hindrance to individual freedom and to the functioning of the free market economy. In this context, therefore, "the importance of management increases exponentially in order to coordinate a large number of agents, without planning, in a society which is increasingly complex" and fragmented (Werna, 1995, p. 355). At the same time, deregulation and enabling strategies, which are integral part of the neo-liberal package, have further stimulated the inclusion of new actors - mainly from the private 'for-profit' sector - in the management of urban areas, thus making increasingly fragmented the distribution of responsibilities among agencies within the urban area.

What are then the criteria adopted for distribution and for the broader organisation of society? As this whole approach is focused on the central role of market institutions, inevitably the normative rules espoused are those of the market, i.e. those based on efficiency and the search for profit; as a consequence the main criterion for the distribution of resources becomes the rate of return, rather than that of need. The first obvious implication is that state institutions, previously seen as a hindrance to the market, should also adapt to such norms, by undergoing changes which are mainly technical and procedural. Commercial criteria and 'corporate modes of management' are thus introduced in the behaviour of the public administration (Werna, 1995), thus distorting the role which the State has always been to expected to perform, at the service of the entire society and not only of those sectors within it whose norms of conduct are grounded in the same type of commercial objectives. Market conditions are emphasised in the provision of services and infrastructure over the territory as well as in land allocation policies, and plans are often prepared in consultation with relevant development interests (Healey, 1995a), as many public-private partnership experiences have demonstrated throughout Western countries. In the new jargon of urban management, typical criteria to 'evaluate its performance' are: efficiency in the use of resources, technical competence, financial viability and the like (Davey, 1994).

In relation to the issue of efficiency and to the need to remove the inhibiting effects of infrastructure deficiencies on the private sector, a major focus of urban management strategies is on the physical fabric; more importantly the kind of intervention on the built environment is typically focused on those infrastructures which can function as a support to the productive system, rather than on social ones. This represent a return to the aforementioned classical locational theories, centred around the idea of efficiency in the relationship between space/time/costs.

A peculiar characteristic of contemporary public policy, is the increasing penetration of the vocabulary of economic evaluation into public policy formulation and implementation. It has become the technical methodology of neo-liberal political ideology. It draws upon models of regulation through standards, targets and pricing strategies. It aims to constructs regulatory regimes which operate through "market signals". The assumed advantages are, again, efficiency and responsiveness to 'customer' preferences. From the field of economics it assumes *instrumental rationality* as typical form of behaviour and avoids considerations of the systems within which such behaviour takes place. This approach is classically technicist, in that it relies on the technical tools of experts to resolve problems of political value. It has an inherent tendency to convert all issues about environmental and social change into the language of economic calculation and it rejects communicative processes in policy formulation in favour of calculative ones (Healey, 1995a).

As a final comment, it seems that the neo-liberal approach on which urban management is based does not even envisage the possibility for a class of 'normative principles'. It seems so because of its marked emphasis on the theme of rationality as a guide to action, with particular reference to economic determinism and technocratic thinking; these forms of rationality are largely a reflection of a modern dominant western way of thinking, which is much more inclined to positive analysis and 'self-reflection', rather than to 'excursions in the perilous ground of the normative'. Under such circumstances, one of the greatest advantages offered to analysis by post-modern thinking is a possibility of re-discussing this category by means of processes of 'positive deconstruction' (Habermas, 1990) through which the relationship between the observer and the object is reconstructed under philosophical premises which reject the methodology and ideology of modern rationality.

The extent to which neo-liberal philosophical stance might prove limited and unsatisfactory will be examined in the next section with reference to the necessity for strategies of social and institutional aggregation vis à vis fragmentation.

## 2.4 Urban Management and Social Justice

Social justice has previously been discussed in relation to two main dimensions: *a*) political dimension, as it involves power relations amid society; *b*) spatial dimension of distribution, with a relevant perspective on how society and space interact. Before going into a further assessment of these aspects, it appears appropriate to give a general account of the impact of market ideology on the position of social justice in the development policy discourse.

### 2.4.1 Justice, State And The Market

As discussed above, the advent of the neo-liberal paradigm has brought the market to the fore in the determination of mechanisms of distribution, the criterion of efficiency being the leading principle for the allocation of resources. Social justice has been defined (see section 1.2.2) as a set of *just* principles for resolving competing claims and conflicts within society. The notion of what is to be considered 'just' has in turn been linked to criteria of equity and equality in the distribution of a set of material and immaterial aspects of social life. On these premises, the social justice implications of the introduction of the criterion of efficiency in the allocation of resources become apparent in the absence of any consideration for its distributive impact and for the disregard for the criterion of need satisfaction. Patsy Healey (1995*a*) argues for two other kinds of implications of deregulation and privatisations: *a*) private companies are no longer required to achieve objectives of universal levels of service provision, and *b*) urban governments no longer have the capacity to direct what is being provided and how much is produced.

The transfer of managerial concepts from the private to the public sector may be useful and this approach should not be criticised *tout court*. However, as Werna points out (1995), the latter sector is intrinsically different from the former, and its political facet cannot be ignored. The business-like style of operation might leave urban managers with more responsibilities in their expanded range of relationships with actors from the private sector and in the management of urban services, but without the adequate power base to support institutionally and legally their new position; hence the need for administrative and political reforms to come hand in hand.

Coupled with that, has come the introduction of commercial criteria in the administration and policy structures of the state: from the point of view of state-society relations, this means a narrowing of the spaces to discuss more substantive issues such as those related to social justice, that is poverty, equity, access to goods, services and the political system, and the very theme of distribution. As in the neo-liberal approach the 'invisible hand' of the market is expected to ultimately take care of distribution, it follows that issues related to distribution, such as equity and access, become delinked from those of profit and efficiency in production, and therefore overlooked.

The erosion of the realm of State action has entailed also a reduction in the role played by **planning**, as well as the introduction of managerial criteria in its normative framework. This means, on one side less room for state intervention on the quality of distribution on the territory, and on the other a contraction in those very instruments which are supposed to assist in coordinating the fragmentation that urban management wants to target. The interrogative which arises might be put in different terms: if the idea of planning as tool for coordination of and mediation of interests in the distribution on the territory is eroded, then what become the main principles for such distribution? From the previous discussion it is evident how distribution under market mechanisms is likely to

favour the forces of capital, especially in its bigger concentrations; in the absence of the 'moral role' which the state might play, it is very likely that, against any sense of distributive justice, this might contribute to further social polarisation as well as to spatial and economic exclusion. With reference to the lack of clear objectives in the urban management conceptual framework, Lovering (1995a, p. 123) aptly suggests that the whole restructuring process appears to be an adaptation process with no specific goals, especially of a social nature; "[in the enabling metaphor] the concern with the process of *adjustment to* market forces is matched by an almost complete lack of interest in the *structuring of* market forces".

#### ***2.4.2 The Political Nature Of Social Justice***

One of the most evident shortcomings of the urban management approach is that it **depoliticises social processes**; its focus on technical and procedural measures (interventions on staffing, training, finance, coordination,...), in fact, assumes that the outcomes of such processes are technical issues and therefore can be dealt with accordingly. The notion of administration should be considered not only as interface between society and bureaucratic machinery, but, from a more substantive point of view, between society and State, especially at the local level, as locus where social demands converge and are discussed. Consequently, the focus is not on procedural arrangements and tasks, but its position within a complex system of interactions for the articulation and the implementation of social demand. From this separation of social facts from values which contribute in determining them follows a tendency of dealing with issues of institutional fragmentation merely through technical means and the use of quantifiable indexes and criteria; this appears even more inappropriate in consideration of the nature of social justice.

Social justice is to be seen as a set principles for resolving competing claims in the allocation of the product of social cooperation. The social milieu where this allocation takes place is characterised not only by competing claims, but also by unequal power relations among the competing groups; as a consequence **power** is the critical variable in the process of control, allocation and distribution of societal resources and in the organisation and structuring of production and social relations. In his definition of urban management Mattingly (1994; 1995) aptly underlines the importance of the issue of responsibility inherent to the concept of managing itself; especially in an institutionally fragmented scenario such as that of many Third World cities, responsibilities are not easily defined and, of course, one can not expect such definition to take place on a voluntary basis! In a different scenario, which we might call 'of integration' or 'of coordination', responsibilities are established not through authoritative means nor through the mere administrative allocation of tasks, but rather through debate, discussion and negotiation among all the concerned actors. When the variable 'power' comes into play, the asymmetry in social relations then becomes apparent, i.e. the fact that not all groups enjoy equal access to such negotiation and that they do not have equal voice in the debate. It is therefore essential to take into proper consideration these asymmetries, their causes and their outcomes in terms of the urban management quality a local government can provide. This can take place through a framework which involves aspects necessarily broader than those of administrative procedures and regulations to facilitate the involvement of private sector actors. The technocratic style of urban management analysed here overlooks the political dimension of social justice, the fact that distribution is ultimately dependent on a struggle for the control over the means whereby power is used to affect any organisational context (Aina, 1997) and the fact that such power struggle ultimately determines how responsibilities are established and it in turns depends on webs of negotiations and political dialogue.

The argument of social justice as a political question is further reinforced by three final considerations: *a*) the competition is over resources which are scarce and therefore limited, and therefore power relations are bound to be essential in determining the outcome of distribution; *b*) urban management addresses key public goods (services, laws, property rights, planning permits) that are prerequisites for the market to function so that market and politics are interrelated (Wekwete, 1997); *c*) the object of distribution involves also immaterial aspects such as power itself and the consequent access to social, economic and political opportunities.

Currently the focus of urban management is more on **delivery** than on the issues of demand and access, which ultimately does not provide an appropriate strategic conceptual basis for taking into consideration the theme of social justice as a matter of power relations. Rather than focusing on technical aspects, urban management interventions should be accompanied by a theory of justice which at the moment appears to be lacking. While much of the research undertaken by donor agencies gives priority to efficiency and effectiveness, a number of experiences throughout developing countries are trying to put more emphasis on issues of decentralisation and

participation as a way of improving - through more democratic representative structures - the quality of the relationship between State and citizens. If procedural arrangements are accompanied by a more inclusive bottom-up approach to local government and policy-making, then the discussion on urban management can be broadened so as to take into account issues of democracy and access in the strategic options for action (Lee-Smith and Stren, 1991). It should however be underlined how the adoption of a participatory approach to development intervention does not in itself guarantee a higher degree of representation of interests or better access to decision-making, but might be simply employed as a 'means' to 'ends' which do not actually correspond with those of equity and democracy (Moser, 1989), such as those of cost recovery or even of political acceptability and legitimation for programmes which otherwise would not have been implemented.

### **2.4.3 Urban Management, Space and Society**

Concerns for the spatial dimension of social justice are absent from the framework examined so far. Because of the presence of efficiency-led criteria, a large portion of new investments is typically devoted to physical infrastructure, which plays a central role in the competitiveness of the city as well as within different parts of its territory. However, it has been argued that, by reinforcing the concentration of opportunity and power in the hands of the most dynamic sectors of society (Healey, 1995a), this might contribute to spatial fragmentation and to the marginalisation of some neighbourhoods. Therefore the lack of concern for the issue of equity is also apparent in spatial form, with which social justice is closely related.

The themes of space, justice and politics are, again, intertwined: by not considering that spatial transformations can entail a number of aspects closely related to social justice, urban management fails to take into consideration the distributive implications of the allocation of resources on the territory and the political and moral questions that come with it (Harvey, 1988). Planning, along with policy dynamics, should represent the tool and the arena where these questions are appropriately articulated; but as the former has entered a phase of crisis with the demise of the state, the responses that management models offer are, as already noted, of a merely technical nature.

This can be in turn considered a reflection of a failure to appreciate the relationship that exists between society and space and how this is mediated by power. Space can be object of social conflict because of objective material attributes or because of a specific symbolic meaning; in any case, command over space and the ability to influence the process of its production can be a key source of power, thus making it central to social action (Harvey, 1989). Liberalism has matured without a specific conscience of history and place (Merrifield and Swyngedouw, 1996) thus stripping actors of the context and particularities; not taking into consideration the spatial dimension of social phenomena would correspond to place social action in a "geographical vacuum" and therefore fail to understand how spatial inequality, the most evident dimension of social injustice in urban areas, is determined by unequal power relations.

As to the question of morality, as a common notion of it is arrived through social life and communication (Smith, 1994), the 'ethical' stance of urban management can be the object of criticism also from a perspective of lack of cultural sensibility, in that it applies the same kind of moral norms - those of the market - regardless of the specificities of the context.

From the standpoint of neo-liberal doctrine, the behaviour of individuals is seen as determined by an egoistic and economic type of rationality (*Homo Economicus*) on which depend the decisions individuals take. From this follows a rather abstract view of equality in the name of individual liberty. This view seem to amply overlook the social nature of human beings, the possibility of unequal power and hence unequal possibility of exerting such liberty, and also the issue of difference as source of inequality. Individuality is not established on an atomistic base but rather relationally, through links with other social agents; the opportunities and chances within which individuals operate do not depend on relations chosen in complete freedom, but by the structure of power relations deriving from economic, political and social modes of organisation of the world in which people live.

## **3 - From urban management to Governance**

### **3.1 The Urban governance view of institutional change**

In a global context of profound change and extensive State reforms (see section 2.1) analysts' attention is increasingly focusing on the theme of urban governance, as a concept which attempts to reflect the nature of institutional transformation at the local level and possibly foresee its broader implications. It has been argued, and I want to support such view, that the notion of governance offers an opportunity to reconsider the processes through which cities are governed and in particular the urban management paradigm as discussed in the previous section.

In its early definitions the term governance has been often equated with 'government' or with 'State', as a consequence of the emphasis that at the beginning of the 1980<sup>s</sup> lending agencies, the World Bank in particular, were putting on the necessity for 'less and better government'. The notion of government itself, though, has been broadened to include new actors that provide an increasingly important contribution to the management of urban areas; as a consequence, also the contents of 'urban governance' had to be adapted to the new circumstances: therefore, the notion is today being referred to as "the *relationship* between civil society and the state, between rulers and the ruled, the government and the governed" (McCarney et Al., 1995, p. 94; McCarney, 1996, p. 4).

By shifting away from the previous state-centred perspective, urban governance has its focus on the nature of the relationship between actors in the urban arena and on how this relationship has changed since the early 1980<sup>s</sup>. This approach starts from a recognition of the current situation and thus includes in the relationships of local government all those actors which daily contribute to managing cities through housing activities, transportation, infrastructure services, land development, employment creation and the like. It then leads to the need to reconsider the present urban institutional set-up and, as a consequence, the way in which State-society relationships are managed. These are identified as essential prerequisites to face the challenges of fragmentation and of governability.

Mabogunje (1995) has articulated the need for institutional development. Institutions should not be considered merely in administrative terms as bodies part of a broader machinery, but rather in their broader meaning related to social relations: rules, enforcement characteristics and norms of behaviour that structure repeated human interaction. He argues that institutions are part of the development process, especially in the transition between pre-capitalist to capitalist mode of production, the traditional ones being based on kinship relations and the capitalist ones on property rights and contractual relations. The present situation is one of duality, where on one side there are official-formal institutions (administrative, political, economic) often inherited from previous colonial regimes, and on the other a parallel system of informal traditional institutions. These are characterised by the fact of being largely accepted by communities and of being operationally very active and effective in managing their neighbourhood or in acting in their particular sector; in any event they constitute the typical response of the worse-off to the impossibility of having access to the formal system based on property rights and on the monetisation of a vast number of relations and at the same they are a symbol of the fact that the demands related to coexistence are no longer managed only within the government but also elsewhere. The central issue, therefore, becomes that of the inclusion of these efforts into the formal institutional system. The main instrument to achieve this is that of 'legal validation' (Mabogunje, 1995). This is essential with respect to two considerations: firstly, if traditional structures to which the majority of the population relates are not recognised and are not given appropriate legal status, that is likely to weaken, or at least limit, their participation in management tasks; secondly, as an indirect consequence, by not granting official status to informal institutions, formal institutions deny themselves the legitimacy to raise the revenue required for effective services in the city, thus compromising the overall quality of urban management. This might in turn serve the purpose of some vested interests in the public administration which prefer a situation of lack of accountability and transparency.

This duality between formal and informal institutions appears to be the present situation for many local governments in the Third World; on one side a growing number of functions and responsibilities is decentralised to local formal-official bodies in an effort to achieve better performance, efficiency and responsiveness; on the other they continue being characterised by a 'Weberian' notion of municipal management, concerned with public administration as control, regulation and maintenance of public order (Devas and Rakodi, 1993), thus therefore reducing the capacity of local authorities of creating a broader view of urban management which might encompass also the efforts of informal institutions.

As the nature of the relationship between actors has changed and as the limitations of previous approaches have been demonstrated, the necessity emerges to reconsider the very nature of local government and to review the mechanisms of bargaining and articulation of social demand. While the relationship between State and society is

deteriorating, urban protest mounts: the struggle of urban movements and coalitions is no longer focusing only on specific local issues, but more and more also on larger substantive themes related to people's rights and to justice. The character of this transition presupposes a wide-scale, socially-based process of renegotiations rather than technical solutions such as those proposed under the neo-liberal version of the urban management paradigm. It is a political process involving the arrangements by which common concerns are organised and conflicts over distribution are mediated.

Two of the central themes in the relationship between state and society are those of democratisation and equity. A recognition of the challenge of governability is the starting point for a reconceptualisation of urban management as a potential tool in the transition towards an improved quality of local governance which might ultimately incorporate those dynamics that have been identified as essential in tackling equity issues related to social justice.

### 3.2 Governance as "interface"

On the basis of the nature of the explanation of institutional change provided through the adoption of an urban governance perspective it is possible to employ this conceptual framework as an "interface" between urban management processes and the potential introduction of ideas of social justice within the policy discourse.

#### 3.2.1 *Urban Management Perspectives*

Urban management programmes appear to be inadequate in the new context because, in spite of the fact that management decisions are increasingly taking place outside the traditional local government structures, they still provide a state-centred perspective (Lee-Smith and Stren, 1991); this appears to be related to the persistent dependency of local authorities from central government and to the absence of formal structures to involve CBO's and NGO's in the decision-making process. In this approach urban management interventions are still too top-down and need to incorporate the non-formalised but extensive urban management techniques and strategies of popular urban groups; furthermore, with reference to State-society relations the neo-liberal interpretation of urban management misunderstands or neglects the informal sector, the question of gender and community participation (Rakodi, 1997). The discourse for a new relationship between the State and society is dominated by the 'rhetoric of enablement' (McCarney et Al., 1996) which serves more the purpose of mobilising resources than that of community participation and empowerment in order to 'enable' the formation of new channels of communication in a fragmented scenario. Healey (1995a, p. 258) further underlines this argument by stating that "the 'economisation' of public policy represents an attempt to establish a dominant hegemony which crowds out the voices of other systems of meaning, while privileging capital and particularly big capital".

In turn these shortcomings underline the necessity for urban management to move beyond its administrative and technocratic stance: although such issues are important aspects of the decentralisation process, even when they are in place, local governments are not necessarily more effective nor more representative. In order to become more representative and responsive to social needs, city governments will require firstly a shift in central-local relations which have been typically dominated by patterns of dependency and opposition, and secondly new arenas for participation and debate. A bottom-up approach to development and management is typically advocated on the basis of three considerations: *a)* local governments have considerable potential for participatory activities and local solutions can represent the most viable solution in the context of Third World cities; *b)* the importance of the knowledge of local resources and potentials as well as of the needs and priorities of local citizens and businesses in determining future courses of action; *c)* the inappropriateness of past efforts which have given attention only to the operation of local government and the present felt need for more research on how city governments can rather support and encourage all groups to take an active role. This last concern is related to a further point: the survival strategies of the poor also include efforts to get access to services (water, land, food, health, education) through a range of formal and informal institutions, while partnerships between formal private and public institutions, though efficient, generally do not help improving poor's access to such services. The spontaneous responses to urban crisis provided by CBO's represent attempts to fill the growing gap between supply and demand and the viability of these strategies is proven by their capacity of survival without or with very little organised support from formal public institutions and often also without the support of NGO's. Therefore a view of equitable development should not regard participation merely as a threat, in that it might allow more social demand to flow into the political system, but rather as a channel to have access to the vast pool of existing organisational resources present outside the formal institutional channels. At the same time, however, participation - unlike efficiency-led objectives -

continues to be seen as a political threat to many vested interests who might not 'benefit' from a revision of power relations within society.

A new meaning of or perhaps objective for urban management should then be focused on an understanding of how people (households, firms, agencies) with differences but also with shared interests in the environmental qualities of urban areas come together to identify common concerns and develop strategic ideas; from such an understanding could come a redefinition of the aims in the use of its instruments. In principle governance does in fact avoid the limitations of urban management but it does not ignore the main issues it raises: institutional development - although not confined to public administration - linkages among actors, procedural and performance design and resource allocation.

Due to its focus on administrative reform and efficiency, since the early 1980<sup>s</sup> urban management has been highly task-oriented (McCarney et Al., 1995), being essentially concerned with the delivery of services. The notion of urban governance too has been and still is object of debate. In its early conceptions (early 1980<sup>s</sup>) the main focus was on the realm of State action (improvements in the performance of public bodies and services, reduction of bureaucratic procedures, transparency and so forth). Because of this lack of concern for what happened outside the sphere of public action, the quality of the relationship between state and society and between the different social groups was largely overlooked. Only more recently, in particular under the influence of post-modernism and gender studies, urban governance has assumed a more systemic view. It increasingly focuses on a set of political issues which are strictly related to the nature of social justice: access by the poor to services and to the political system, a concern for power relations, spatial segregation, the recognition of difference and the necessity for a policy discourse capable of encompassing different interests and systems of meanings; in short, a focus not on the method but rather on the process - the nature of the relationship - and on the values which direct it.

In part the neglect international aid agencies have shown towards issues of governance and the preference for more 'neutral' technical aspects of urban development is justified on the basis of the fact that by statute these organisations are excluded from political considerations. It is however known that constituencies can exert pressure on the aid agencies their states are part of and that in turn these agencies can be a strong vehicle for political and economic pressure for democratisation in receiving countries. Without focusing our attention on a discussion of what is to be considered 'neutral' and what 'political' in development assistance affairs, it is apparent that bilateral agencies in particular might be in the position to play a major role for more democratic models of development.

Economic determinism can be considered as one of the main obstacles to the conceptualisation of social justice issues within the policy discourse. However, a governance outlook has the advantage of moving away from the opinion that economic forces determine political responses, to suggest that in their decisions urban policy-makers and managers must consider not only the economy but also the dynamics of the socio-cultural and hence political context (Healey et Al., 1995). Looking at social relations and at their complexity also challenges the neo-liberal view which focuses on individual preferences; attention should therefore be paid to individuals as relational beings, whose needs and opportunities arise out of these relations with others and need to be negotiated with other actors. From here comes the importance of building up networks and alliances, terms which are increasingly becoming part also of the economic jargon. To the need of building such coalitions is related also the ultimate task of urban governance: from being concerned with being the central state's arm in the provision of welfare and of support services to economic activities, city governments should move to the need to create new forms of institutional coherence among the fragments of their institutional landscape. Healey (1995a) and McCarney (1996) suggest that the new urban management should be about reconstructing the bases of power rather than implementing top-down command and social control (Lovering, 1995). This could take place through a cooperative style of policy making where instead of giving orders, local authorities would moderate and initiate cooperation. The bases for it would be the empowerment of those actors so far excluded from the decision-making system - the 'legal validation' referred to by Mabogunje (see above) - and the creation of institutional channels for communication. Indeed the technical and hence supposedly neutral tools of urban management could play an important role in the creation, for instance, of a more empowering regulatory framework and of opportunities for collective argumentation; the ultimate goal of this socio-political - as well as moral - process would be the development of new ideas for the strategic management of common concerns within a context of shared spaces but competing interests.

### ***3.2.2 Planning And Urban Management***

One potential inherent to the notion of urban governance is that of encompassing, by virtue of the need for a new political relationship between urban actors, both the medium-long term goals of planning and the immediate concerns of urban management. Under such perspective planning and management are considered as increasingly concerned with the larger policy-making process. Although their central concern remains that of land, they share with policy-making the common essential task of mobilising and utilising a wide range of resources (human, financial, physical, institutional, ...) to achieve the objective of improved urban living conditions (Devas and Rakodi, 1993).

At the same time the new context requires a revision also in the notion of planning, away from the modernist tradition based on a technicist approach, towards a communicative-interpretative stance. The necessity for a revision in the philosophy of planning and, as a reflection we might add, also of management, had been underlined, among the others, by John Friedman (in Sandercock, 1998). In diagnosing a dual crisis of values and of knowledge in post-industrial society, he addressed the latter in terms of a growing polarity between experts (planners) and actors (people). On one side experts have great confidence in their science-based professional knowledge and in their universal capacity of solving problems; on the other communities have a great deal of knowledge and experience which, however, in most cases is not acknowledged by experts as having any validity in the planning process. The conflict between local knowledge and the perceived universality of instrumental rationality generates a gap which cannot be described only in terms of language, but, more substantially, of communication, in that, in not recognising legitimacy to alternative ways of knowing, scientific rationalism prevents the possibility of new forms of dialogue to arrive at a better appreciation of local problems. In this sense the practices suggested through instrumental rationality - of which neo-classical economics and neo-liberal thinking are reflections - perpetuate a situation of stalemate. Forester (1989) suggested that the best information we can get as to the nature of the world and of the local environment is that originated at the local level and that therefore, in order to bridge the aforementioned gap, the necessity arises for a process of adaptation; this would not be a matter of discarding scientific and technical ways of knowing (the quantitative methods of the Enlightenment epistemology), but of giving recognition to equally important alternatives. The creation of arenas for dialogue (Friedman's 'transactive style of planning') has thus been advanced as a qualitative and interpretative mode of enquiry to allow a mutual exchange of 'information' with these alternative ways of knowing and hence to better understand specific contexts, as opposed to the provision of universal rules of practice which are not a suitable tool to appreciate the structural-political-institutional causes of inequality. In addition to this, from the moral perspective of social justice, the adoption of dialogue as instrument for planning and management can be considered as based on the acceptance of human equal worth and reciprocity (see section 1.2.2).

The concurrent growing awareness of diversity implies that the notion of 'shared interest', on which modernist planning was based, becomes increasingly questioned and exhausted, and so is the capacity of the state to respond to the demands coming from a more and more complex and diverse society.

The joint effect of these forces is that notions of neutrality and universality of what I have described as a technicist approach become increasingly inadequate. Planning as an essential process within urban management is no longer about the provision of technical advice, but more and more about mediation and active negotiation (Forester, 1989); in a longer-term perspective its role becomes that of promoting inclusion and acting in favour of those groups who have been systematically disempowered by structural inequalities related to difference (poor, women, minorities, ...) (Sandercock, 1998).

The centrality of planning and management in urban development is implied by their concern with space: the struggle against injustice, as an expression of diversity, is essentially a struggle for membership - as a broader notion of citizenship - (Smith, 1994), i.e. for the 'right to the city', as opposed to situations of spatial fragmentation and segregation which restrain the opportunities enjoyed by excluded groups. A central concern at this regard is necessarily that for more democracy at the local level, which in turn leads to the theme of decentralisation. As illustrated through to examination of social justice (section 1.2.3), also in dealing with decentralisation, territorial aspects (e.g. the presence and distribution of constituencies and the design of electoral districts so as to allow diverse groups to be represented in and have access to the political system) are strictly intertwined with political issues (e.g. the power relations between central and local government as well as like local government and urban communities). Therefore, if empowerment is to be considered a way towards a more just model of urban development, space, society and power relations should be analysed as complementary aspects of the broader urban transformation. In facing this challenge, the view of urban governance illustrated in this section suggests a revision

in normative thinking for urban development and an adaptation of management and planning as tools for analysis and action in order to have a better appreciation of the interaction between political struggle and space.

## CONCLUSION

The character of the urban crisis has been identified as mainly political, in that it concerns power relations among groups as well as the quality of their relation with public institutions, in a context - globally and locally - of increasing diversity and growing inequalities which take the form of economic, social and spatial marginalisation. Power relations in turn determine the organisation and distribution of scarce resources and of opportunities. If development theories are to be considered as a philosophical framework for acting on such distribution, the neo-liberal paradigm does not appear to provide viable normative tools to arrive at social justice defined as equity. Urban management, as a reflection of such paradigm, envisages a course of action mainly through technical measures related to administrative reform and to the performance of local authorities. In doing so, however, it overlooks *a*) the broader institutional landscape which increasingly includes the contribution of non-public actors in management tasks, and *b*) the issue of power relations.

The need for emancipation and inclusion is today expressed by an increasing number of social movements. The participation of non-public actors in managing cities should not be seen only as a contribution to the scarce resources of local governments and as a means to make interventions financially feasible. Their inclusion in planning and management rather has the political function of acting against situations of marginalisation by giving these groups access to policy-making, by empowering them, and making interventions more appropriate to local needs, resources and structure of opportunities.

The urban governance perspective adopted in this analysis offers a critical recognition of the complexity of society and envisages an organic link between the state and other actors operating outside the sphere of public action. It provides a qualitative explanation of the new urban reality by focusing on institutional development not at the conditions identified by urban management (business-like approaches, efficiency, enablement, delivery) but on the basis of the necessity to re-aggregate the fragmented institutional landscape around a policy and management discourse of argumentation. This sensitivity to the political dimension of social relations entails a shift from the technical role of planners and managers towards a more active involvement in the system of power relations through a communicative and interpretative process of mediation and negotiation. Taking people's views and needs into account in turn implies that, in order to keep faith to the moral nature of development, urban development should be based on a recognition that equity and social justice issues do not depend on technical and procedural arrangements, but on the way the entire social pact operates.

At the same time, however, the recognition of the political nature of social relations also entails that the actual implementation of principles of equity is likely to face fierce opposition from those sectors within society interested in the conservation of the status quo. Conditions of economic hardship might also constitute a major obstacle to change. Still, this does not affect the necessity for urban development approaches to move beyond technical matters by generating strategic ideas based on inclusion and by taking into consideration also the issue of power relations and their impact on physical transformation.

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