



## Understanding Social Change

### *Planning and cities*

#### **David Goldblatt**

I want to pick up on a point you made earlier about the revitalisation of inner cities and the emergence of expensive and luxury housing, how did that happen, what changed in the 1980's and 1990's in terms of urban planning and development?

#### **Ken Walpole**

Well I think all governments, not just in Britain, but in Europe in the last twenty years have been pursuing active policies of kind of deregulation and encouraging people to buy their services in the marketplace and traditional services such as health, education, transport, leisure which would normally have been provided as public services, people have been pushed to buy them in the private sector, which has over the long term meant that you get these very big islands of affluence in the inner cities, the Soho's, the lifestyles, but then you also at the other end go and degrade a public realm, so that public provision becomes provision of a last resort, and there are lots of parts of cities all over Britain where the parks are run down, the schools are not looking very good, the roads are broken, you know they're served by inadequate public transport that in itself is very old, and so this notion of a kind of public realm becomes a very much a notion of a degraded realm in which there are some islands of affluence, but in general it's actually not looking very good at all.

#### **Doreen Massey**

I'd add to that another thing which has been going on at a national level throughout the period and that is an increase in inequality within the country as a whole, so those people that are living in the affluent areas and the kind of glitzy café latte society in the middle of cities are representative of those who have benefited from neo-liberal economic policies basically, that have been enforced since the beginning of the 1980's, so what we see in cities is a reflection, this part of it is a reflection of national economic strategy, both of degradation of the public sector, and an economic policy which results in greater inequality are both reflected in the shape of the city, so if we're going to think about what we should be doing about cities now one of the main things we must do is think about policies which aren't particularly even directed at cities. National economic policy, policy towards the public sector, policy towards the welfare state, those things which aren't even particularly about cities would make a huge difference, though of course there are things that we should be doing within cities themselves.

#### **David Goldblatt**

And what would those be Ken?

#### **Ken Walpole**

Well I think that someone once said poverty is not an egalitarian thing but smog is, smog is democratic, it affects everybody, and the fact is we're now beginning to bump into all kinds of environmental problems that have been caused by individual choice but actually affect everybody so I think in policy terms, certainly in the political realm, there's now serious reconsideration of how we preserve and defend the collective goods of good air quality, clean rivers, adequate housing for all, and so on, so I think what's interesting in almost the last decade is the way environmentalists and notions of citizenship have been brought together because citizenship does imply the sense that we all actually swim or sink together.

#### **David Goldblatt**

One last question – what will the role of planning be in that if we're not to make the kinds of mistakes that you outlined of the era after the war when planning was too topped down, too un-reflexive?

**Ken Walpole**

It has to be linked to new forms of governments, whether they're citizens, jurors, whether new kinds of participatory democracy, but we cannot plan a future on how we want to live without the connection being made between democracy and decision-making.

**Doreen Massey**

I think one of the things we have to remember in all that is that cities will never be planned like the ideal city, will never reach a kind of final state of harmony, precisely because they are such varied places, precisely because they are just endlessly dynamic, there will always be conflict issues in cities, there'll always be things people are arguing about, genuine conflicts of interest, and that with the huge variety of people living in them means to me that cities are probably the greatest challenges to democracy that we could possibly face.

**David Goldblatt**

I think we're going to have to leave it there. Doreen Massey, Ken Walpole, thank you very much.