Understanding Cities

Order and Disorder

Gerry

Maybe if we could just pick up on that in relation to the issue again of order and disorder. I mean one of the key things that comes out of the example of Harlem but also Rio is that many of the shanty towns and ghettos are continually depicted as locales of dangerousness, as locales of disorder, there are locales you would go to find other potentially unruly things that people would associate with cities, and I think we have to ask ourselves what's informed us, well who's doing the construction of such areas and such locales, but also to look at the street level examples, the order that comes from below and actually clashes with the dormant visions of order that exists within these particular cities. Now for example, if you take Rio, one of the things that people associate with Rio is the carnivals and the festivals and the, you know, the intensity and the excitement of that, you know, particular city. Of course much of that is a product of developments and activities which have taken place on a daily basis within the shanty towns on the outskirts of Rio, but when it comes to selling Rio to people who are in the world what you're not selling, for those who are in control of marketing Rio, what they're not selling is 'come and visit the shanties that's there, come and experience the excitement of Rio as a city'. Of course what they're doing is taking something that's taking some of the connections of the shanty for Rio itself, but disconnecting it from the vision of Rio in other particular ways.

Eugene

That's a particularly nice example of a partial connection because it's of course it's the fadeless that organise to produce the different floats and they're actually competing amongst themselves so it's really taking a particular kind of connection and valuing that while trying to leave the other connections. By taking a particular kind of connection and valuing that, but also disconnecting the fadeless in other kinds of ways, I think.

Jenny

Thinking then about the production of segregated and separated differentiated spaces in the city, either through planning, Utopias which might transform into dystopias through the production of spaces that are disconnected from economic and other networks in the city, or perhaps through people being excluded from access to land in terms of the production of shanty towns and so on, and what this raises for me is a question of how do we decide when this is good enough or a bad thing to have in a city, so we talked a lot in terms of the differentiation of urban space being a key characteristic of the spatiality of the with Inness of cities, that cities are differentiated in all sorts of different ways for a whole range of different reasons some of which we've raised here, and one of the things that comes up in a sense that we might be able to assess whether these differentiations or segregations are good or bad, depending perhaps on the power relations which produce them, or on the power relations which are affected by this specialisation of social relations in this way.

Steve

I guess other people have their own answers but I guess the first point to say is that it is a difficult question and of course, I guess, the answer is yes and no, which sounds like the standard academic response to anything really, you know, what's the answer? Well, it's a bit of this and it's a bit of that. But I think it's important to recognise that Harlem is both things and that it's not that we can't make up our mind about whether it's a good place or a bad place, but that it's all these things together. I think while we're trying to push this in our understanding, it's actually by tracing different connections, and by saying well, OK, if you follow these connections, then you will find certain positive stories here, but actually these are the ones that one would want to value and to progress or to foster in some ways. But if we

follow other kinds of connections we might find other stories in the city that are less positive, so actually some connections are good, and some connections are bad, and some disconnections can be good, and some can be bad, and the assessment of those will really be around the kind of social relations bound up in producing the connections and disconnections, around the kind of power relations that are implicit in those, and again that's to remember that power takes different kinds of forms too, some will be about influence, some about domination, and some are simply about how people network amongst themselves or between, certain people between some parts of the city and others.

Jenny
So no easy answers then to the questions ….. Cities and there we need to leave it and I shall thank you for joining me today.