

## Reading Tips and Study Questions: Session Seven

### Required reading:

**Robert Fishman**, "Urban Utopias: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier" (excerpt from *Urban Utopias of the Twentieth Century*), reprinted in Scott Campbell and Susan Fainstein, eds., *Readings in Planning Theory* (Blackwell: 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2003).

**Jane Jacobs**, introductory chapter from *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*—reprinted in Campbell and Fainstein (2003).

**James Scott**, *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven: Yale, 1988), pp.87-90, 309-319.

**Xavier de Souza Briggs**, "Planning together: How (and how not) to engage stakeholders in charting a course," Strategy tool #1, The Community Problem-Solving Project @ MIT (2003). Online at [www.community-problem-solving.net](http://www.community-problem-solving.net), click Strategy tools>Planning

**Archon Fung**, *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp.1-8, 18-23, 70-83, 224-225.

### Tips and questions

In this session, we'll revisit the field, making reference to the public housing case but consciously asking broader questions about the dilemmas in planning, both past and present.

An important part of revisiting the field is tackling questions on the two levels we discussed in weeks one and two: (a) the ends of planning; and (b) the means, including decision-making processes that guide planning. The first two readings are primarily concerned with ends, the latter two with means.

1. **Fishman**. The utopian proposals of Howard, Wright, and Le Corbusier— together with the sweeping critique of utopian modernism offered by Jane Jacobs—bracket key dilemmas in 20<sup>th</sup> century thought about planning. Two of these classic dilemmas concern: the roles of professional vs. indigenous knowledge; and the power and limits of physical design solutions vs. social policy. In retrospect, given the array of socio-economic challenges facing families in public housing, does it make sense that the vast majority of redevelopment funding went toward intervention

in the realm of design? More broadly, how might the field of planning find productive ways to embrace *both* its roots in physical design and its somewhat more recent emphasis on social policies and programs? Are these always likely to be in tension?

2. How does **Scott's** concept of "high modernism" relate to Friedmann's account—weeks back in our course—of the origins of planning and its goals? What is the value of practical knowledge (*mētis*), according to Scott, and what are its sources?
3. Where efforts to blend forms of knowledge are concerned, what critical mistakes does **Briggs** claim are common to "participatory" planning efforts? What range of objectives do these efforts reflect? Which objectives and challenges were evident in the BHA effort to "engage" residents in redevelopment?
4. **Fung** makes specific arguments about the value of deliberative problem-solving that engages citizens with their government. How is such problem-solving, in the form of "accountable autonomy," different from citizen-led efforts to create, say, alternative community plans (or "plural plans," per Davidoff)? Which common challenges does Fung identify for deliberative efforts, and how does he suggest Chicago initiatives responded to those challenges?

### Further reading and coursework

Many courses at MIT and other schools address the role of physical design and social policy—and some look carefully at both. On the process side, there is a large and growing body of research, commentary, and practice notes on "deliberative" and "participatory" and "community-driven" planning, which has deep roots in planning practice worldwide. What's more, a variety of courses at MIT, Harvard and other areas schools address these issues and needed skills.

See the Planning section of the [www.community-problem-solving.net](http://www.community-problem-solving.net) website (scroll down below the tool for global links and other resources), and see these items in a recent journal special issue that's available online:

In the *National Civic Review*, Winter 2004 issue:

John Gaventa, "Strengthening participatory approaches to local governance: Learning the lessons from abroad."

David Booher, "Collaborative governance practices and democracy."

Archon Fung, "Deliberation's darker side: Six questions"