

Spaces of Insurgent Citizenship

James Holston

Cities are plugged into the globe of history like capacitors: they condense and conduct the currents of social time. Their layered surfaces, their coats of painted stucco, their wraps of concrete register the force of these currents both as wear and as narrative. That is, city surfaces tell time and stories. Cities are full of stories in time, some sedimented and catalogued; others spoorlike, vestigial, and dispersed. Their narratives are epic and everyday; they tell of migration and production, law and laughter, revolution and art. Yet, although obvious, their registry is never wholly legible because each foray into the palimpsest of city surfaces reveals only traces of these relations. Once lived as irreducible to one another, they are registered as part of the multiplicity and simultaneity of processes that turn the city into an infinite geometry of superimpositions. Their identities, modes, forms, categories, and types recombine in the gray matter of streets. City narratives are, as a result, both evident and enigmatic. Knowing them is always experimental.

It must have been with extreme exasperation, therefore, that the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck asserted in the mid-1960s that “we know nothing of vast multiplicity—we cannot come to grips with it—not as architects, planners or anybody else. . . . [But] if society has no form—how can architects build its counterform?” (quoted in Frampton 1980: 276–277). This confession of illiteracy is especially striking not only because it abandons the narrative of cities but also because it does so by declaring the dissolution of the social within the disciplines of modern architecture and planning. This declaration is particularly bitter because it signals the end of a century in which modernist doctrine posed the urban questions of our time precisely by advancing planning and architecture as solutions to the *social* crises of industrial capitalism. At least in its European and Latin American versions, modernism forged what we could call this imaginary

of planning by developing its revolutionary building types and planning conventions as instruments of social change and by conceiving of change in terms of the imagined future embodied in the narratives of its master plans.¹

But is van Eyck's inability to find form in society—that is, to read its multiplicity—a problem of society as he implies or a consequence of a theoretical position that rejects the redemptive claims and social engagements of modernism? Given the human capacity for narrative, and its ineluctable registry in artifact, I conclude the latter. Moreover, I would argue that van Eyck's consternation is representative of the estrangement of the social in modern architecture and its related modes of planning generally. I suggest that this estrangement is a consequence of a number of theoretical conditions that structure the current production of concepts in these fields about the urban landscape: (1) the rejection of the redemptive power of modernism deriving not only from the perceived failures of its utopian mode but also from the more general dissolution of the idea of the social itself in planning, architecture, government, and social science; (2) the inability of the professions of planning and architecture to move beyond that rejection to develop a new activist social imagination; and (3) the preoccupation in postmodern theory with aesthetic formalism, technologies of communication, and concepts of virtual reality which tends to disembody the social and rematerialize it as commodity images.² If my conclu-

1. Van Eyck's conjunction of "architect or planner" suggests a potentially confusing use of terms. I am grateful to John Friedmann for having urged, in a conversation about this essay, that I clarify my own sense of this problem. If we look at the use of the terms *planner* and *planning* in the various professions and disciplines that claim them, we see two distinct but, I argue, related meanings. On the one hand, planning is very generally used to refer to urban design, derived in large measure from architectural theory and practice. In this form, the dominant mode of planning in modern times is that developed by CIAM. As I discuss, this model is predicated on an idealist project of alternative futures. On the other hand, since the consolidation of the modern state, planning is also widely used to refer to the application of social science to the management of society. Indeed, some applied social scientists, like Friedmann, who call themselves planners, are deeply critical of modernist urban design and its modes of planning. Very often, however, these two senses of planning share a notion of alternative futures and a reliance on the state that relate them both historically and theoretically. It is this relation that interests me and that permits a broader argument about modernity and planning in its various forms. Thus, I use the CIAM model of urban design as paradigmatic of modernist planning. However, I also consider applied social science as a related version when it is based on a similar ideal of the future.

2. These concerns receive such extensive discussion in the literature on postmodernism that I cannot comment on them here without being superficial. In addition to the well-known studies of the glorification of consumption in postmodernist theory and description of contemporary society by Jean Baudrillard or Paul Virilio, for example, see the recent (and fun, if not always accurate) work by Celeste Olalquiaga (1992). For a recent attempt to dematerialize the city itself, see Sorkin 1992.

sion is correct, then the problem van Eyck poses is more anthropological than morphological. That is, it is a question of learning to interpret anew what appears to him now thoroughly defamiliarized; in a word, society itself, or, better, aspects of the social that indicate its dynamism.

As I do not believe that "society has no form" or that "we know nothing of vast multiplicity," I want to argue that one of the most urgent problems in planning and architectural theory today is the need to develop a different social imagination—one that is not modernist but that nevertheless reinvents modernism's activist commitments to the invention of society and to the construction of the state. I suggest that the sources of this new imaginary lie not in any specifically architectural or planning production of the city but rather in the development of theory in both fields as an investigation into what I call the spaces of insurgent citizenship—or insurgent spaces of citizenship, which amounts to the same thing. By insurgent, I mean to emphasize the opposition of these spaces of citizenship to the modernist spaces that physically dominate so many cities today. I also use it to emphasize an opposition to the modernist political project that absorbs citizenship into a plan of state building and that, in the process, generates a certain concept and practice of planning itself. At the heart of this modernist political project is the doctrine—also clearly expressed in the tradition of civil or positivist law—that the state is the only legitimate source of citizenship rights, meanings, and practices. I use the notion of insurgent to refer to new and other sources and to their assertion of legitimacy.³

THE ALTERNATIVE FUTURES OF MODERNISM

The spaces of an insurgent citizenship constitute new metropolitan forms of the social not yet liquidated by or absorbed into the old. As such, they embody possible alternative futures. It is important to distinguish this concept of the possible from the fundamentally different idea of alternative futures inherent in modernist planning and architectural doctrine. Both express the basic paradigm of modernity that emphasizes that alternative futures are indeed possible. But the insurgent and the modernist are competing expressions, which I will distinguish as ethnographic and utopian,

3. See Holston 1989 and 1995 for further discussion of, respectively, this modernist political and planning project and the notion of an insurgent urbanism. See also the collection of essays I edited (1996) for studies of contention to the state's monopoly of law and citizenship in various urban, national, and global contexts. I would like to thank the organizers of two conferences for inviting me to present early versions of this essay, "New Metropolitan Forms" at Duke University and "Art, Architecture, and Urbanism" in Brasília. I am grateful to Teresa Caldeira for her suggestions on the final version and to Leonie Sandercock for encouraging its publication.

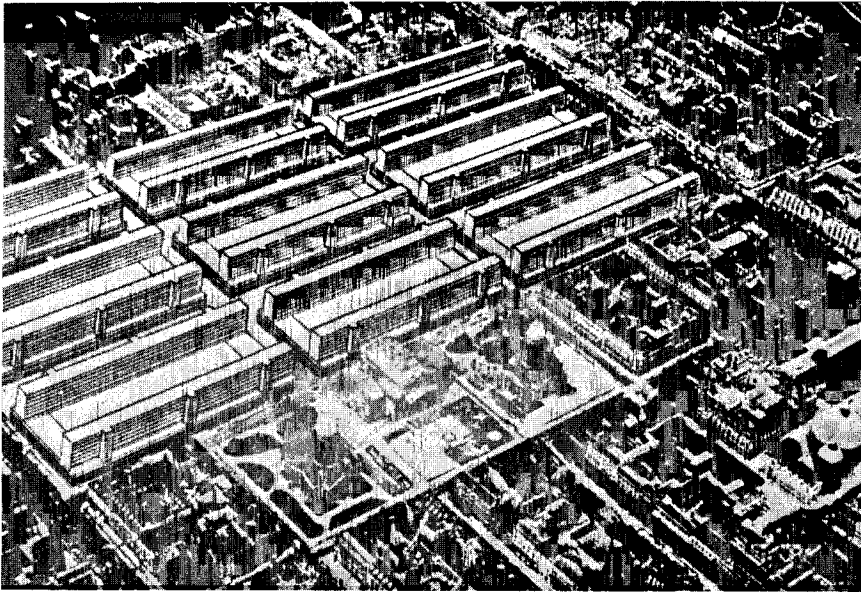


Figure 1.1. Berlin: Project for center city by Ludwig Hilberseimer, 1927.

respectively. In modern architecture and urban design, the latter derives specifically from the model city of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). Since the 1920s, its manifestos have called for the state to assert the priority of collective interests over private interests by imposing on the chaos of existing cities the construction of a new type of city based on its master plans (fig. 1.1). But that model derives in turn from the pervasive ideal of modernity that the state, usually in the form of a national government, can change society and manage the social by imposing an alternative future embodied in plans. In this Faustian sense, the project of modernist planning is to transform an unwanted present by means of an imagined future. Whether in the form of urban design or applied social science, this idea of planning is central to the identity of the modern state: it motivates political authorities to attempt to create and legitimate new kinds of public spheres, with new subjects and subjectivities for them. The instruments of these initiatives define not only the development agenda of the state but also its accredited liberal professions and social sciences—architecture, urban design, demography, bureaucratic administration, sociology, criminology, epidemiology, and so forth—by means of which governments try to forge new forms of collective association and personal habit as the basis of propelling their societies into a proclaimed future.

This ideology of planning is utopian not because it is critical of the present or because it has as its objective the disruption of taken-for-granted norms. It shares these characteristics with the ethnographic mode I propose. Rather, it is utopian because its notion of alternative futures is based on absent causes and its methods on a theory of total decontextualization. The CIAM version of modernist planning is an instructive example. The key features of its theory of alternative futures are four. First, it is based on a tension between existing social conditions and their imagined opposite. Second, this opposite is conceived in terms of absent causes, present nowhere in the world but existing only in plans and their technologies that are supposed to colonize the old and create the new in relation to which they then appear as natural offspring. Lúcio Costa, planner of Brasília, clearly expressed this concept of generative absent causes when he wrote the following in “Razões da nova arquitetura” (Reasons for the New Architecture) in 1930: “There exists, already perfectly developed in its fundamental elements . . . an entire new constructive know-how, paradoxically still waiting for the society to which, logically, it should belong” (1980: 15). Costa conceived of this technology as embodying the imagined principles of a society that did not yet exist but that it would help bring into being precisely by giving embodiment to those principles in built form.

The third and fourth aspects of the model constitute a theory of colonization to implement the new architecture-planning-technology. Its aim is to achieve both an objective and a subjective transformation of existing conditions. In terms of the former, colonization depends on the force of the state to create objective conditions for the imposition of a new order of urban life. The CIAM model appeals directly to state authority to institute the total planning of the built environment that, according to the theory, constitutes these conditions and permits the implementation of its blueprints of the future. This appeal privileges the development of the apparatus of the modern state itself as the supreme planning power. Precisely because of that emphasis, state-building elites of every kind of political persuasion have embraced the CIAM model of urban development, as the history of city planning around the world attests.

The model also relies on a subjective transformation of existing conditions. In this case, borrowing from other avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century, it uses techniques of shock to force a subjective appropriation of the new social order inherent in its plans. These techniques emphasize decontextualization, defamiliarization, and dehistoricization. Their central premise of transformation is that the new architecture/urban design would create set pieces within existing cities that would subvert and then regenerate the surrounding fabric of denatured social life. El Lissitzky explained this premise concisely in 1929: “The introduction of new building types into the old fabric of the city affects the whole

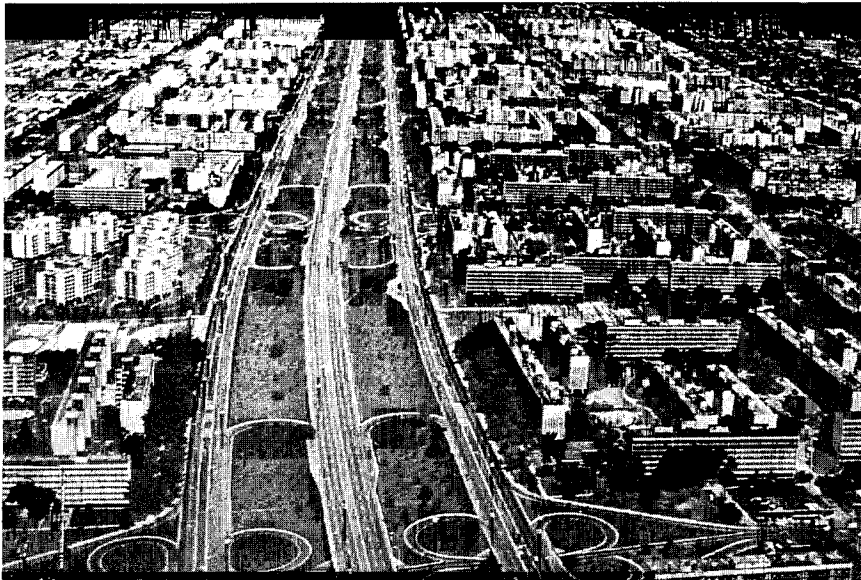


Figure 1.2. Brasília: South wing of the Plano Piloto, 1981. (Photograph: James Holston)

by transforming it" (1970: 52). It is a viral notion of revolution, a theory of decontextualization in which the radical qualities of something totally out of context infect and colonize that which surrounds it. This something may be a single building conceived as an instance of the total plan, that is, as a fragment of its radical aesthetics and social practices. Or it may be an entire city designed as an exemplar, as in the case of Brasília (fig. 1.2). Either way, the radical fragment is supposed to create new forms of social experience, collective association, perception, and personal habit. At the same time, it is supposed to preclude those forms deemed undesirable by negating previous social and architectural expectations about urban life.

This use of decontextualization ultimately springs from the conviction that it is possible to extract antithetically from existing conditions an absent ideal as a new positive entity—that is to say, to extract an imagined social and aesthetic order "from [the] estranged and splintered reality by means of the will and power of the individual," as Theodor Adorno once described this process in a discussion of Schönberg's music (quotes in Buck-Morss 1977: 57). This extraction is achieved, in other words, through subjective synthesis. Such synthesis is reached through the shock of defamiliarization during which the subject identifies with the ideal in the dialectic

as the means necessary to bridge the now evident gap between his or her local and splintered situation and the proposed future plenitude.

CIAM doctrine maintained that these proposals of transformation would create a city embodying revolutionary premises of work, housing, transportation, and recreation. It argued that this embodiment would redefine the social basis of urban organization. These propositions were not, I would hold, wrong. Indeed, over the course of this century, CIAM's new building types, urban structures, and planning conventions triumphed to such an extent that they became standard practice in the professions of architecture and planning around the world. Moreover, I would argue that they remain so today, even where their derivation from the CIAM model is unrecognized and their use has nothing to do with its social agenda, as is often the case, for example, in the United States.⁴

However, if few promises for change have captured the world's imagination to a greater degree than this idealist project of alternative futures, few have yielded greater perversity. A fundamental dilemma inevitably dominates this project if it is to have any substance beyond the imaginary world of plans. It is one inherent in all forms of planning—both as urban design and as applied social science—that propose an alternative future based on absent totalities: the necessity of having to use what exists to achieve what is imagined destroys the utopian difference between the two that is the project's premise. Worse, examples such as Brasília show that attempts to maintain the plan in spite of the corrosive effects of this utopian paradox

4. I cannot discuss more fully the CIAM model city here, but I refer readers to my 1989 study of Brasília for a historical and critical analysis (especially pp. 31–58). Nor can I discuss its relation to postmodernism, which I would have to do to substantiate my claim of its continued dominance. The outline of my argument would be to distinguish the planned and embodied spatial logic of the built environment of the contemporary city—its patterns of urbanization—from the architecture of its individual buildings. I would also distinguish the city's spatial logic from its modes of social change and capital accumulation, though the two are related. Many authors have described both recent architecture and modes of social change and capital accumulation in terms of new patterns of representing and consuming "space, time, and identity" which they call postmodern. Be that as it may, I would call the *urban* landscape postmodern only where I could identify new modes and processes of developing the city that generate both spatial and social counterformations to the modernist urbanism that already dominates most cities. From that perspective, I detect little in the spatial production of Los Angeles, for example, that could constitute a postmodern urbanism beyond limited exercises in historical preservation or citation (often related to shopping or elite residence). As I suggest later, there are some examples of what I call insurgent urbanism (i.e., the spaces of insurgent citizenship) that might qualify in this sense. But, overwhelmingly, I see the built Los Angeles metropolitan region as a consequence, more or less explicit, of modernist doctrines. Moreover, I would argue that recent patterns of urbanization—e.g., the downtown "renaissance" developments and the urbanization of suburbia into "edge cities"—are further consecrations of these doctrines.

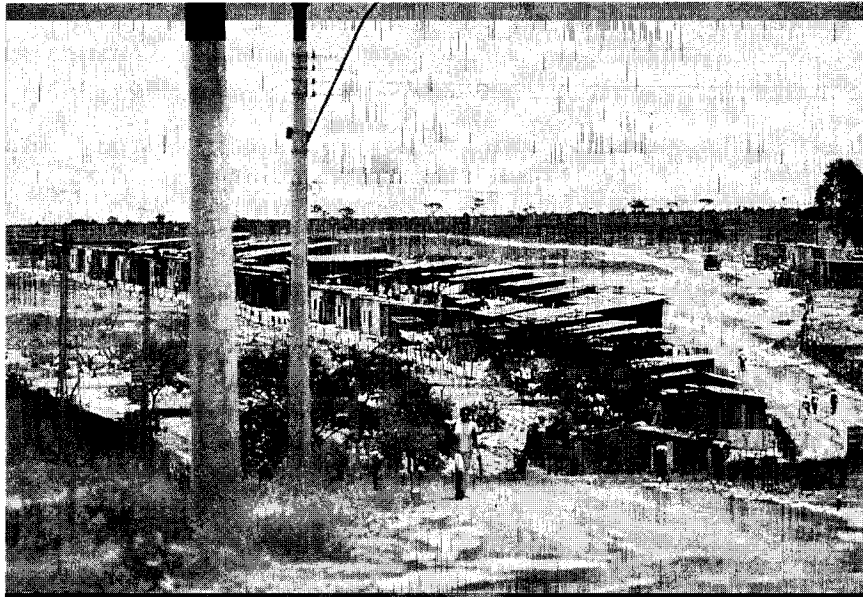


Figure 1.3. Vila Chaparral, Brasília: Insurgent squatter settlement on the periphery of the Plano Piloto—near the legal housing track QSC of the satellite city Taguatinga, 1981. (Photograph: James Holston)

exacerbate the very conditions that generate the desire for change. Perversely, they tend to turn the project into an exaggerated version of what its planners wanted to preclude in the first place (figs. 1.3, 1.4).⁵

Consider, for example, the modernist system of traffic circulation. When we analyze it in terms of what it systematically set out to abolish—the traditional street system of public spaces, which was considered too congested and unhealthy for the modern machine age—its social consequence becomes clear. By eliminating this kind of street, it also eliminates the urban crowds and the outdoor political domain of social life that the street traditionally supports. Alienated from and fearful of the no-man's land of out-

5. In Brasília, for example, such attempts led urban designers and other kinds of planners to respond to the inevitable deformations of their plans (such as illegal squatter settlements, chaotic growth, and organized political opposition) with dystopic measures that characterized the rest of Brazil they wanted to exclude. These measures reproduced that Brazil at the foundations of Brasília. They included the denial of political rights, the repression of voluntary associations, and the restricted distribution of public goods, especially housing, on the basis of status discriminations (see Holston 1989: chaps. 6–8).



Figure 1.4. Vila Chaparral, Brasília: Internal street, 1981. (Photograph: James Holston)

door public space that results, people stay inside. But the consequent displacement of social life from the outdoor public “rooms” of streets and squares to the indoor rooms of malls, clubs, homes, and cars does not merely reproduce the outdoor city public and its citizenry in a new interior setting. Rather, this interiorization encourages a privatizing of social relations. Privatization allows greater control over access to space, and that control almost invariably stratifies the public that uses it. The empty no-man's spaces and privatized interiors that result contradict modernism's declared intentions to revitalize the urban public and render it more egalitarian. This interiorization is not an extraneous consequence or a by-product of some other process. Rather, it is a direct entailment of the solid/void-figure/ground conventions of modernism's spatial logic, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (1989: 101–144). Significantly, it is this logic that motivates today's developers to use the vocabulary of modernist

architecture and urban design to create the new fortified spaces of contemporary urbanism (see fig. 1.5 below).⁶

The imagined future of modernism raises a further dilemma. On the one hand, it always runs the risk of the utopian paradox I just described: either it remains without substance and thus disconnected from the conditions that generate a desire for it; or, in gaining history, it exacerbates the very issues it intends to negate. On the other hand, a second conclusion is also apparent: without a utopian factor, plans remain locked in the prison house of unacceptable existing conditions. Is not the elimination of the desire for a different future as oppressive as the modernist perversion of it? To exclude the imaginary and its inherently critical perspective in that way is to condemn planning to accommodations of the status quo, and I reject such paralysis. Hence, a difficult question remains: if the notion of alternative futures is both indispensable and yet, in its utopian form, perverse, what kind of intervention in the city could construct a sense of emergence without imposing a teleology that disembodies the present in favor of a utopian difference?

INSURGENT CITIZENSHIP

My criticism of modernist planning is not that it presupposes a nonexistent egalitarian society or that it dreams of one. To deny that dream is also to conceal or encourage a more totalitarian control of the present. It is rather that modernist planning does not admit or develop productively the paradoxes of its imagined future. Instead, it attempts to be a plan without contradiction, without conflict. It assumes a rational domination of the future in which its total and totalizing plan dissolves any conflict between the imagined and the existing society in the imposed coherence of its order. This assumption is both arrogant and false. It fails to include as *constituent* elements of planning the conflict, ambiguity, and indeterminacy characteristic of actual social life. Moreover, it fails to consider the unintended and the unexpected as part of the model. Such assumptions are common to master plan solutions generally and not only to those in urban planning. Their basic feature is that they attempt to fix the future—or the past, as in historical preservation—by appealing to precedents that negate the value of present circumstance. The crucial question for us to consider, therefore, is how to include the ethnographic present in planning, that is, the possibilities for change encountered in existing social conditions.

Not all master plans negate the present as a means to get to the imag-

6. See Caldeira 1992 and 1996 for a discussion of the reuse of modernist design in generating contemporary forms of segregation in Los Angeles and São Paulo.

ined future (or past) of planning. A powerful counterexample is the U.S. Constitution. It is certainly a master plan and certainly modern in proposing a system of national government “in order to form a more perfect union” (Preamble). Yet its great strength is precisely that its provisions are imprecise and incomplete. Moreover, it is distrustful of the very institutions of government it creates. As a blueprint, it does not try to legislate the future. Rather, its seven original articles and twenty-six amendments embody a few guiding principles—for example, federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances—that not only channel conflict into mediating institutions but also protect against possible abuses of the governmental powers they create. Above all, they establish a trust that future generations of citizens have the ability and the right to make their own histories by interpreting what the master plan means in light of their own experience.⁷

The U.S. Constitution has, therefore, two kinds of planning projects: state building and citizenship building. The key point for our discussion is that the latter is conditioned by the former but not reducible to it because the Constitution secures for citizens a real measure of insurgence against the state. On the one hand, it designs a state with the *minimum* conditions necessary to institutionalize both order and conflict. On the other hand, it guarantees the necessary conditions for social mobilization as a means to include the unintended and the unforeseeable as possible sources of new constitutional interpretation.

This frame of complementary perspectives offers an important suggestion for thinking about a new production of the city. If modernist planning relies on and builds up the state, then its necessary counteragent is a mode of planning that addresses the formations of insurgent citizenship. Planning theory needs to be grounded in these antagonistic complements, both based on ethnographic and not utopian possibility: on one side, the project of state-directed futures which can be transformative but which is always a product of specific politics; and, on the other, the project of engaging planners with the insurgent forms of the social which often derive from and transform the first project but which are in important ways heterogeneous and outside the state. These insurgent forms are found both in organized grassroots mobilizations and in everyday practices that, in different ways, empower, parody, derail, or subvert state agendas. They are found, in other words, in struggles over what it means to be a member of the modern state—which is why I refer to them with the term *citizenship*. Membership in the state has never been a static identity, given the dynamics of

7. Thus, for example, the Supreme Court has at different times both upheld and prohibited race discrimination.

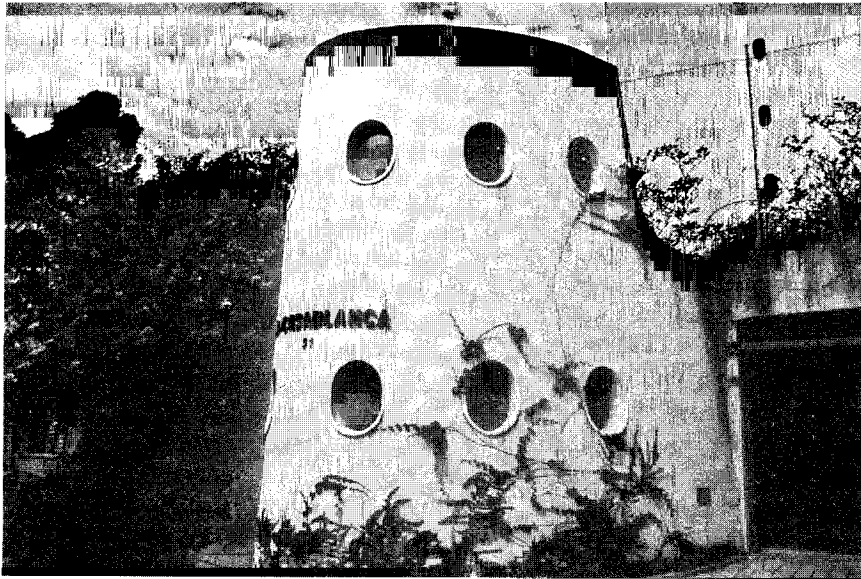


Figure 1.5. Morumbi, São Paulo: Guardhouse of residential building in a neighborhood where all street activity is suspect, 1994. (Photograph: Teresa Caldeira)

global migrations and national ambitions. Citizenship changes as new members emerge to advance their claims, expanding its realm, and as new forms of segregation and violence counter these advances, eroding it. The sites of insurgent citizenship are found at the intersection of these processes of expansion and erosion.

These sites vary with time and place. Today, in many cities, they include the realm of the homeless, networks of migration, neighborhoods of Queer Nation, constructed peripheries in which the poor build their own homes in precarious material and legal conditions, ganglands, fortified condominiums, employee-owned factories, squatter settlements, suburban migrant labor camps, sweatshops, and the zones of the so-called new racism. They are sites of insurgency because they introduce into the city new identities and practices that disturb established histories (figs. 1.5–1.7).⁸

8. Examples of such sites of insurgent citizenship may be found in the essays in Holston 1996. It is important to stress that both the elite and the subaltern mark urban space with new and insurgent forms of the social—that these forms are not, in other words, limited to the latter. For a view of this conjunction in one city, São Paulo, compare figures 1.5, 1.6, and 1.7; for further discussion, see Caldeira 1996 on closed condominiums and Holston 1991 on autoconstructed peripheries.

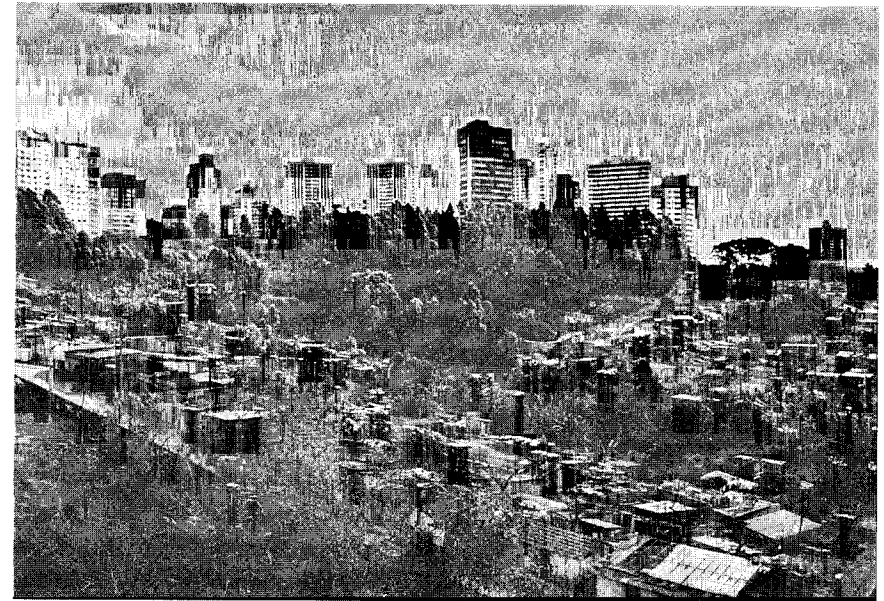


Figure 1.6. Morumbi, São Paulo: Elite urban periphery—a new urbanism of closed condominiums for the rich mixed with squatter settlements for the poor, 1994. (Photograph: Teresa Caldeira)

These new identities and the disturbances they provoke may be of any social group, elite or subaltern. Their study views the city as not merely the container of this process but as its subject as well—a space of emergent identities and their social organization. It concentrates on practices that engage the problematic nature of belonging to society. It privileges such disturbances, emergences, and engagements because it is at the fault lines of these processes that we perceive the dynamism of society—that is, the “multiplicity” that van Eyck could not discern. This perception is quite different, however, from a sociological accretion of data, and its register includes the litter and not only the monuments of urban experience.

This dynamism and its perception are the theoretical objectives of a planning linked to insurgent forms of the social. It differs from the modernist objectives of planning because it aims to understand society as a continual reinvention of the social, the present, and the modern and their modes of narrative and communication. What planners need to look for are the emergent sources of citizenship—and their repression—that indicate this invention. They are not hard to find in the wake of this century’s important processes of change: massive migration to the world’s major cities, industrialization and deindustrialization, the sexual revolution,



Figure 1.7. Jardim das Camélias, São Paulo: Working-class urban periphery—auto-constructed houses with high security gates and yet lots of street life, 1994. (Photograph: Teresa Caldeira/James Holston)

democratization, and so forth. The new spaces of citizenship that result are especially the product of the compaction and reterritorialization in cities of so many new residents with histories, cultures, and demands that disrupt the normative and assumed categories of social life. This disruption is the source of insurgent citizenship and the object of a planning theory that includes the ethnographic present in its constitution.

The distinction between formal and substantive citizenship is useful in identifying this object because it suggests how the forms of insurgent citizenship appear as social practice and therefore how they may be studied. Formal citizenship refers to membership in a political community—in modern history, preeminently, the nation-state. Substantive citizenship concerns the array of civil, political, and social rights available to people. In a much-quoted essay, T. H. Marshall links these two aspects: “Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed” (1977: 92). As new kinds of residents occupy cities—southern blacks in Chicago, Turks in Frankfurt, Nordestinos in São Paulo, Candangos in Brasília—these formal and substantive conditions

shape their urban experience. In turn, this experience becomes a principal focus of their struggle to redefine those conditions of belonging to society.

Notions of formal citizenship have become problematic especially in the context of the massive urban migrations of recent decades. As new and more complex kinds of ethnic diversity dominate cities, the very notion of shared community becomes increasingly exhausted. What now constitutes that “direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilization which is a common possession” that Marshall (1977: 101) considered essential to citizenship—essential because only direct participation secures the rights, responsibilities, and liberties of self-rule? In the past, this sense has been a supralocal, indeed, national consciousness. But both national participation and community have become difficult notions for citizenship in the context of the new urban and, often at the same time, global politics of difference, multiculturalism, and racism. One indication of this problem is that in many cases formal citizenship is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for substantive citizenship. In other words, although in theory full access to rights depends on membership, in practice that which constitutes citizenship substantively (rights and duties) is often independent of its formal status. Indeed, it is often inaccessible to those who are formal citizens (e.g., the native poor), yet available to those who are not (e.g., legally resident “aliens”). These kinds of problems challenge the dominant notion of citizenship as national identity and the historic role of the nation-state as the preeminent form of modern political community.

But in so doing, they indicate a new possibility that could become an important focus for urban planning: they suggest the possibility of multiple citizenships based on the local, regional, and transnational affiliations that aggregate in contemporary urban experience. Although this possibility represents a significant change in the recent history of citizenship, it is not a new arrangement. Multiple and overlapping jurisdictions predominated in Europe until the triumph of national citizenship obliterated other forms, among them the urban citizenships that organized so many regions of the ancient and the premodern world. The modern state explicitly competed with the city for the primary affiliation of its citizens. Moreover, it usurped their differences, replacing the local management of history with the national. That is, the state reorganized local diversity under the banner of national heritage. One of the most widely shared projects of modern states, this nationalization of diversity legitimates a *singular* state citizenship as the best condition for securing a society of plural cultural identities. But the recent worldwide multiplication of “rights to difference” movements profoundly challenges this claim. Their new ethnocultural politics and violence are in large part a response to the perceived failures of a *singular* national citizenship. In this reevaluation, the local and the urban

reappear as the crucial sites for articulating not only new fanaticisms and hooliganisms but also new transnational and diasporic identities. If planning theory, as I suggest, can conceptualize this collision between state citizenship and these insurgent alternatives, planning practice can respond to this articulation first by expressing its heterogeneity—the social condition we actually live—and then by developing some of the ethnographic possibilities that are, by definition, embedded in heterogeneous conditions.

In terms of substantive issues, the resurgence of new citizenship is no less dramatic. Over the last few decades, many societies have experienced great expansions and erosions of rights. The expansions are particularly evident in the new social movements of the urban poor for “rights to the city” and of women, gays, and ethnic and racial minorities for “rights to difference.” These movements are new not only because they force the state to respond to new social conditions of the working poor—in which sense they are, indeed, one of the important consequences of massive urban poverty on citizenship. They are also unprecedented in many cases because they create new kinds of rights, based on the exigencies of lived experience, outside of the normative and institutional definitions of the state and its legal codes.

These rights generally address the social dramas of the new collective and personal spaces of the city, especially its impoverished residential neighborhoods. They focus on housing, property, sanitation, health, education, and so forth, raising basic questions about the scope of entitlements. Is adequate housing a right? Is employment? Moreover, they concern people largely excluded from the resources of the state and are based on social demands that may not be constitutionally defined but that people perceive as entitlements of general citizenship. The organization of these demands into social movements frequently results in new legislation, producing an unprecedented participation of new kinds of citizens in making law and even in administering urban reform and local government. Thus, as the social movements of the urban poor expand citizenship to new social bases, they also create new sources of citizenship rights and new forms of self-rule.

Yet if the city is in this sense an arena for a Rousseauian self-creation of new citizens, it is also a war zone for this very reason: the dominant classes meet the advances of these new citizens with new strategies of segregation, privatization, and fortification. Although the city has always been a place of such contestations, they have taken on new and especially intense forms in recent decades. Where the repressive structures of the state are especially effective, as in the United States, or especially murderous, as in Brazil, the resulting erosions of citizenship are particularly evident in the city’s disintegrating public spaces and abandoned public spheres. This contem-

porary war zone includes not only the terror of death squads and gangs but also the terror of corporate fortresses and suburban enclaves (figs. 1.5 and 1.6). The latter too are insurgent forms of the social, subverting the proclaimed equalities and universals of national citizenship. Thus, the city-as-war-zone threatens the articulation of formal state membership as the principal universalizing norm for managing the simultaneity of modern social identities. As the war escalates, this threat ignites ever-deeper anxieties about what form such coordination might take if national citizenship no longer has that primary role. As much as optimism may radiate from the city’s social movements, this anxiety hovers over its war zone, structuring its possible futures.

PLANNING THE ETHNOGRAPHICALLY POSSIBLE

In this essay, I have raised the problem of developing a new social imagination in planning and architecture. I have suggested that when citizenship expansions and erosions focus on urban experience, they constitute an insurgent urbanism that informs this development in several ways. First, they present the city as both the text and the context of new debates about fundamental social relations. In their localism and strategic particularism, these debates valorize the constitutive role of conflict and ambiguity in shaping the multiplicity of contemporary urban life. In a second sense, this heterogeneity works against the modernist absorption of citizenship into a project of state building, providing alternative, possible sources for the development of new kinds of practices and narratives about belonging to and participating in society. This “working against” defines what I called an insurgent citizenship; and its spatial mode, an insurgent urbanism (fig. 1.7). This resurgence is important to the project of rethinking the social in planning because it reveals a realm of the possible that is rooted in the heterogeneity of lived experience, which is to say, in the ethnographic present and not in utopian futures.

But in advocating a move to the ethnography of the present, I do not suggest that planning abandon the project of state building that modernist doctrine defined and that is basic to the notion of modernity itself. Excessive attention to the local has its own dangers. Although I argue, for example, that ethnographic investigation is the best way to establish the terms by which residents participate in the planning of their communities, such participation can be paradoxical: residents across the economic spectrum will often decide, by the most democratic of processes, to segregate their communities “from the evil outside,” closing, fortifying, and privatizing their spaces in relation to those deemed outsiders. Hence, throughout the United States, it is common to find home-owner associations trying to use the powers and privileges of democratic organization to exclude and

discriminate. Local enactments of democracy may thereby produce anti-democratic results.⁹

The lesson of this paradox is that planning needs to engage not only the development of insurgent forms of the social but also the resources of the state to define, and occasionally impose, a more encompassing conception of right than is sometimes possible to find at the local level. An example of this transformative power of the state comes from the conflict over legal segregation in the southern United States during the 1960s when the federal government eventually intervened in local affairs and acted against local authorities. Above all, planning needs to encourage a complementary antagonism between these two engagements. It needs to operate simultaneously in two theaters, so to speak, maintaining a productive tension between the apparatus of state-directed futures and the investigation of insurgent forms of the social embedded in the present.

In developing the latter as the counter of the former, planners and architects engage a new realm of the possible with their professional practice. But this realm requires a different kind of practice, different in both objective and method, and this difference amounts to a reconceptualization of the fields. In terms of methods, I mean to emphasize those of an urban ethnographer—or of a detective, which are similar: methods of tracing, observing, decoding, and tagging, at one moment of the investigation, and those of reconstructing, identifying, presenting, and rearticulating, at another. Both the trace and the reconstruction compose this engagement with the ethnographic present. In this proposal, I am not suggesting that planners and architects become anthropologists, for anthropology is not reducible to ethnography. Rather, I suggest that they learn the methods of ethnographic detection and also learn to work with anthropologists.

As for its objective, it is the very heterogeneity of society, that which baffles the architect van Eyck. To understand this multiplicity is to learn to read the social against the grain of its typical formations. The typical are the obvious, assumed, normative, and routine, and these are—as Poe illustrates so well in *The Purloined Letter*—hardest to detect. Rather, it is often by their deformations and counters that we learn about them. But countersites are more than just indicators of the norm. They are themselves possible alternatives to it. They contain the germ of a related but different development. Embedded in each of the facets of the multiple relations we live, such possibility accounts for the feeling we have that social life and its spaces are heterogeneous. This possibility is like a bog just beneath the surface of experience, at every step threatening to give way to something different if we let it. But generally we do not, because the technology of

the normative keeps us from doubting the taken-for-granted on which we depend. Reading the social against the grain of its typical formations means showing that this surface is indeed doubly encoded with such possibility, and it means identifying the sites at which it seeps through.

To understand society's multiplicity is to learn to recognize "its counterform" at these sites—to return to van Eyck's critical mission—and "to form a more perfect union" without sacrificing this double encoding that is the vitality of present circumstance. As I have suggested here, one path to this understanding is to hunt for situations that engage, in practice, the problematic nature of belonging to society and that embody such problems as narratives about the city. But this kind of investigation amounts to a redefinition of the practice of planning and architecture as long as these fields remain obsessed with the design of objects and with the execution of plans and policies. Even though very few architects or planners conduct their professional practice in ways that correspond to this obsession, it remains a powerfully seductive mirage. To reengage the social after the debacle of modernism's utopian attempts, however, requires expanding the idea of planning and architecture beyond this preoccupation with execution and design. It requires looking into, caring for, and teaching about lived experience as lived. To plan the possible is, in this sense, to begin from an ethnographic conception of the social and its spaces of insurgence.

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9. For examples from Los Angeles, see Davis 1990.

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