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Competing ideas of social justice and space: locating critiques of housing renewal in theory and in practice

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Abstract

This article considers the experience of the English government's policy of Housing Market Renewal from the perspective of spatial justice. The paper first proposes an analytical framework that situates competing notions of territorial social justice within a space of complex sociospatial relations. The dialectic of two formulations of social justice is first set up, comparing 'procedural' or deontological forms of justice and the distributive justice of outcomes. Soja's formulation of spatial justice is advanced as an appropriate balance between spatial and socio-historic contexts for the justice question. Drawing on the literature on sociospatial relations, concrete critiques and justifications of HMR are then positioned in terms of the intersection of structuring principles and policy fields. The role of demolition in urban restructuring programmes is used to explore the differential spatialities involved in different justicial perspectives. It is concluded that 'gentrification' critiques of HMR are only partial in their evaluation of justice and lack normative power. Some practical implications for the design of urban restructuring policies are offered.

Key words

Housing Market Renewal; social justice; spatial justice; sociospatial relations.

Competing ideas of social justice and space: locating critiques of housing renewal in theory and in practice

'Justice and injustice are infused into the multiscalar geographies in which we live, from the intimacies of the households to the uneven development of the global economy.'

Edward W. Soja (2010) *Seeking Spatial Justice* (p. 20)

1. Introduction

Housing Market Renewal (HMR) has proved to be one of the most controversial regeneration programmes in the recent history of English urban policy. A flagship intervention of the 1997-2010 Labour government's 'Sustainable Communities' plan (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003), it was one of its most lavishly funded, involving a central government investment of around £2.2 billion over eight years (Audit Commission, 2011). It also had a number of unique features such as comparatively wide programmatic freedoms and, within the parameters of working in areas of 'market failure', an astonishingly broad spatial focus responding to subregional diagnostics of low demand for housing (see, *inter alia*, Bramley & Pawson, 2002; Lee & Nevin, 2003; Ferrari & Lee, 2010). Although unique in the sense that it was conceived of 'unlikely alliances' between academics, politicians and local housing organisations (see Cole in this volume), it has drawn sustained criticism from all of these groups as well as local residents, architects and media commentators for its focus on demolition (Allen, 2008; Bond, 2011), devalorisation of built heritage (Wilkinson, 2006), marketisation of housing and neighbourhood (Allen & Crookes, 2009), and purported use of partial knowledge claims in the name of 'evidence' based policy (Webb, 2010). In short, much of the critical literature questions the justness of HMR.

This paper reflects on the HMR Pathfinder experiment using an analytical framework that situates competing notions of territorial social justice within a space of complex sociospatial relations. The critical literature levels two fundamental charges of injustice at the HMR programme: first, that it was a deliberate attempt to gentrify neighbourhoods and expropriate value from neighbourhoods and their residents (the *gentrification* critique); and, second, that it was supported by the partial and selective use of knowledge created and marshalled by certain self-interested groups (the *epistemology* critique). It is to the first of these that the rest of the paper speaks. A fuller exploration of the latter is beyond the scope of the present paper, although some concluding reflections are offered.

Drawing briefly on moral philosophy, the paper proceeds by outlining the two 'classic' formulations of social justice as they relate to local territories. The first, drawing on

deontology, emphasises the role of fair processes and procedures in ensuring social justice within urban policy and regeneration. The second postulate is more consequentialist in nature: it suggests that social justice is dependent on the equity of outcomes that a policy or programme contributes to, or the inequalities it helps to ameliorate. This is sometimes conceived of as 'distributional' justice. Invoking Soja (2010) I argue that, in any evaluation of housing renewal policies, a more assertively spatial definition of social justice – spatial justice – is warranted, in which processes and outcomes are dialectically dependent on, and reproductive of, space: a 'socio-spatial dialectic' (Soja, 1983) that moves analysis and possibilities for action free of the bounds of socio-historic centrality.

The paper then goes on to develop the implications of this idea for HMR. I argue that both of the 'classic' forms of social justice can, when space is as equally privileged as society and history, be operationalised according to *multiscalar geographies* and that, in addition to the deontological-consequentialist dualism, the question of justice has a crucial relationship with the spaces in and over which policies are enacted and their outcomes conceptualised. I invoke more recent work on the socio-spatial dialectic by Jessop *et al.* (2008) to deconstruct the tension between justice and scale within regeneration activity by proposing that the nature of justice is dependent on the 'structuring principles' for policy, and that different formulations of scale are analogous to those policies' various 'fields of operation'.

In the third section of the paper I seek to locate the gentrification critique of HMR more concretely within the analytical framework developed in section two. The purpose for doing so is to begin to expose how a discussion of the programme's long term impacts can be viewed in a number of different lights and that a more implicit acceptance of the multiscalar geographies of (in)justice is required in scholarly critique and policy evaluation.

The fourth section of the paper adopts a more normative tone by working through some of the justice implications of the compulsory acquisition and demolition of housing as part of market renewal strategies. This then leads me to make a number of assertions, by way of conclusion, about the way that the outcomes of urban projects should be framed. These are closely aligned to Fainstein's (2010) conceptualisation of the 'just city.' The paper argues that the justice of HMR remain complex and contestable and that critiques of the programme that are insufficiently 'polymorphic' in their treatment of space will remain misdirected, partial and lacking normative power.

2. Conceptualising socio-spatial justice

The practical challenges of policy design have for a long time involved grappling with precisely the same issues that have taxed justice thinkers, although with arguably a different lexicon and, certainly, a quite different conceptualisation of socio-spatial

relations. Analysts of regeneration policy frequently use the distinction between 'place-based' and 'people-based' policies as a means of attempting to clarify the aims and intended beneficiaries of state intervention (Dabinett et al., 2001; Griggs et al., 2008). Arguments in favour of place-based policies have generally relied on the notion that there is a patent unfairness when people are 'worse-off simply because of where they live' (Turok, 2004, p. 406). A related contention is that spatial concentrations can induce social dynamics that themselves compound disadvantage (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2002). Proponents of people-based policy, on the other hand, argue that spatial concentrations in themselves are merely outcomes of more fundamental problems which need to be understood and tackled. The distinction is important because, as Powell et al. (2001) find, the geographies of place- and people-based conceptualisations of poverty differ markedly.

In this context, it is not clear how Harvey's (1973) liberal formulation of what he termed *territorial social justice* – the 'just distribution justly arrived at' (p93) – can be achieved. The dualism of space and process is related to fundamental tensions within policies of sociospatial mix, a metanarrative that has underscored successive rafts of regeneration programmes: in aiming to achieve a more balanced sociospatial mix, the rights of individuals may be subjugated. Lupton & Tunstall (2008) refer to this as the 'social justice dilemma' inherent in regeneration. Policies have sought to address observable inequalities that have an explicitly spatial manifestation, often using blunt instruments. Indeed, some studies of regeneration policy have used the concept of social justice as a general catch-all for inequalities, material, spatial, and symbolic (e.g. Arthurson, 2001) and it is this *distributional* perspective that can be detected, even when not explicitly spatialised, in many sociological studies of attitudes towards social justice, such as those that find strong income, race and occupational status determinants of the perceptions of the justness of inequalities within society (Robinson & Bell, 1978; Kunovich & Slomczynski, 2007). Soja (2010, p73) mounts a strong argument for location and scale as the causes *sine quibus non* of inequality. But despite the undoubted injustices observable (or inherent) in spatial and distributional outcomes, analysts drawing on Marx and Harvey have tended to point to other forms of social justice that emphasise *historical context* and *process* as key factors in the justice question (see Soja, 1983, 2010; Dikeç, 2001). This has served to downplay the potentials of spatial planning and intervention.

For the planner interested in remedying injustices, one of the problems of a spatial conceptualisation is that it (re)introduces the question of the nature and relative importance of the concept of the 'public interest.' Related to this, as Campbell & Fainstein (forthcoming) put it, are 'the hoary questions of who gets what and who *should* get what' (p25, emphasis added). In calling for a reinvigoration of 'public interest' justifications for planning, Campbell & Marshall (2002) reflected upon the implications of the tension between different forms of social justice for practical policy intervention. Using the distinction between deontological approaches (analogous to procedural conceptualisations of justice), and a 'consequentialist' focus on outcomes

and (spatial) distributions, they argued that neither approach is in itself a sufficient mechanism for the evaluation of what might lie in the 'public interest.' That said, they recognised that, ultimately, planners and policymakers do need to make choices and their values may often compel them to action. They recognised first and foremost that, in anything but the most neoliberal formulations, there is a need for state intervention of one form or another and that, consequentially, planners have to be guided by,

“[the] recognition that there are important goods which are manifestly in everyone’s interest to have but in no one’s interest to provide.” (Campbell & Marshall, 2002, p182)

To summarise we can recognise two dualisms at play. The first is the contrast between outcomes and procedures in determining the justness of a policy or course of action. For our purposes, these can usefully be regarded as the principles that structure the broad discourses guiding policy formulation and evaluation, guiding the articulation of the outcomes those policies seek to achieve. One should not necessarily be privileged over the other, but must be read together. The second, related, dualism concerns the subjects of policy. In the field of housing and regeneration, as we have seen, this is most often expressed with reference to 'people-' and 'place-based' policies, although we might also usefully draw a distinction between spatial scales (local versus regional policies, for instance).¹

The problems attendant to aspatial evaluations of policy and social justice can be demonstrated with reference to reforms to social policy currently being proposed in the UK. There is a reasonably extensive literature, especially in the US, of the spatial impact of welfare reforms, much of it linked to the spatial mismatch hypothesis (for a partial review see Ihlanfeldt & Sjoquist, 1998), and yet matters of space rarely seem to enter the UK political discourse (Mohan, 2003). Instead, the debate’s principles seem structured by a strict, universalising deontological framework that emphasises rights, responsibilities and rules. The subjects of policy are, in effect, individuals denuded of all spatial context. To borrow Soja’s (2010) language again, such policies adopt a sort of justicial myopia in that they ‘avoid the particularities of place [and define] the provision of justice at a strictly “universalised” national scale, available in theory to all individuals equally’ (p32). Here, then, the privilege of social-historical context triumphs over the spatial despite the deep geographical cleaves that structure and result from social policy.

It is perhaps helpful to situate this and other policies and programmes within a 'structure-field' framework that interposes dimensions of justice and space (Table 1). So constituted, we can see that policies and programmes may either be more redistributive in their intentions (for example people-based regeneration); or more

¹ This is why recent proposals by the UK government to devolve planning to the microspatial level involve inherent questions of justice.

macroscopic in their fields of operation (e.g., neoliberal international trade policies); or both (such as in the case of 'spatial Keynesianism').

Although Table 1 represents only a crude interpretation of Jessop's 'strategic-relational' approach (see, e.g., Jessop 2001), the key point here is that the structuring principles of policy can adopt various forms on a continuum that promotes (or pathologises) either the individual (generally in an aspatial way), or the place. The translation between this continuum and the contrasts between procedural and distributional forms of justice seems logically apposite. At the same time, and reflexively to such structures, policies can construct particular fields within which activities and resources are deployed. These fields of operation may be variously microscopic or macroscopic in their nature and hence possess varied relations with the structuring principles of policy. Hence at a global level one might see territorial policies that, while macroscopic in effect, in essence privilege the autonomous agents of trade. More microscopic versions of such policies might be seen in welfare systems that treat individuals largely independently of their sociospatial context but as agents within a rule-based system. Regeneration, on the other hand, generally concerns itself with spatially contextualised resource (re)distribution but can differ in terms of how it conceptualises the beneficiaries or subjects of policy action.

[Table 1 here]

Of course most policy discourses are far from being this straightforward in practice. There are two limitations. First, both the procedural and distributional forms of justice can be (ought to be?) desired simultaneously, even though they may be seemingly incompatible in practical terms. Second, the subjects of justice can be troublesome to locate in practice. Indeed, the main flaw in the framework in Table 1 arises when the concept of scale is subject to rigorous scrutiny and application. The simple scalar dichotomy of space (micro-macro) is overly simplistic and, even for the most straightforward policies, tends to dissolve into a complex set of multi-scalar interrelations in real life. This thorny geographical property can be seen to be the motivation behind both the form of spatial justice developed by the likes of Soja (2010) and Dikeç (2001) and the theorisation of sociospatial relations advanced by Jessop et al. (2008). The latter argue that a significant hurdle in policy analysis occurs because,

“some scholars ontologically privilege a single dimension [of social space], presenting it as *the* essential feature of a (current or historical) sociospatial landscape.” (Jessop et al., 2008, p. 391, emphasis original)

It is necessary instead, they argue, to accept that sociospatial relations are polymorphic and mutually constitutive, and that moving beyond one-dimensionality is required in order to resolve the “contradictions, dilemmas, and conflicts that characterize capitalist social formations” (Jessop et al., 2008, p. 395). Their polymorphic construction of these relations involves simultaneous analysis of the

'structuring principles' and 'fields of operation' of strategies, according to *all* of the formulations of space associated with recent spatial turns: territories, places, scales and networks (TPSN). More simply put, they are concerned with the reflexivity that exists between the structures and subjects of policy exemplified in Table 1. Table 2 depicts a tentative application of HMR to the TPSN analytical framework.

[Table 2 here]

3. Locating critiques of HMR

The purpose of Table 2 is to see how the various claims that have been made of HMR might be configured within the 'structure-field' space. To further develop the idea of the 'complex, multiscalar geographies' of spatial justice it may be helpful to examine a number of the key strategies, objectives and critiques associated with HMR in more detail.

To do this I return to the first of the two fundamental critiques of HMR, namely the *gentrification* critique, and seek to locate it within the TPSN framework developed in the previous section. This is a necessary first step to any discussion about the social justice issues bound up in that class of contemporary market restructuring policies within which HMR might be located. Beforehand, however, it is helpful to survey briefly the scope of the critical field.

HMR has attracted critical attention from a range of constituencies, not only urban scholars and policymakers. Plural reflections on HMR have helped to foster a deeper understanding of some of the critical interconnections and fault lines present in advanced capitalist urban economies. HMR has attracted criticism (and support) variously from both the political left and right (e.g. Hutton, 2007; Hansard, 2011); has been variously supported and criticised within multiple branches of the media and at a variety of scales (Ferrari & Lee, 2010); has incited comment from urban aesthetes (Wilkinson, 2006) and has split urban researchers, not only in terms of their identification with and support of the programme's underpinning conceptual logics but also in terms of the fundamental epistemologies within contemporary urban scholarship and the disciplinary identities of their protagonists (Slater, 2009; Allen, 2008, 2009, 2010; Allen & Imrie, 2010; Woods & Gardner, 2011; Allen & Crookes, 2009).

As discussed earlier, the first broad challenge to HMR is essentially a gentrification² critique that sees the programme as having foisted a neo-liberal modernisation

² I knowingly use the term 'gentrification' in a broad sense to encompass the full gamut of approaches, technologies and justifications that are used in relation to the social and spatial reconfiguration of parts of cities to the detriment of the poor, whether as a consequence of or explicitly sought by (state) strategies, and whether or not involving the displacement of existing populations.

strategy upon neighbourhoods and their residents in order to serve regional economic regeneration imperatives (Cameron, 2006); exploit 'rent gaps' (following Smith, 1996); force or create competition for a 'space of positions' within a housing market that previously did not exist (Allen, 2008; see also Slater, 2009), or, at best, as a misguided attempt to realise putative benefits of regeneration (Cameron, 2003; Lees, 2008). This gentrification critique can be seen in justice terms as being concerned with the spatial, but more usually class, reconfiguration of cities against residents' wills and of the imbalances of power implicit in the design and execution of specific interventions, notably demolition.

HMR as gentrification

At its most abstract, HMR aimed to rebalance housing markets across a broad set of subregional territories. Although it was often classed as an area based initiative (ABI) it differed from most other ABIs in that, with populations of up to 300,000, its territories were far larger than those of any other current or past intervention within UK urban policy. This rebalancing objective can be seen as being both structured by, and operating at, the level of subregions as territories (i.e., the *Territory*→*Territory* intersection in structure-field space). Notably, the territorial purview of HMR was not coterminous with any predefined administrative geography.³ The objectives of HMR were articulated in terms of reducing the gaps between different parts of the housing market as a new functional and governance territory. These objectives were measured using global indicators of success that were set out in the English government's *Homes for All* strategy document (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005). These objectives were overwhelmingly framed within a notion of achieving distributional equity at the territorial level. This was to be achieved both through the promulgation of new subregional planning policies such as type and tenure specific housing targets and spatially specific development moratoria (i.e., at the *Territory*→*Territory* intersection), and the application of more place-specific interventions such as refurbishment projects and environmental works (i.e., at the *Territory*→*Place* intersection). As so framed, the programmes objectives encouraged, alongside the steering of (sub)regional policy, the formulation of a menu of local interventions aimed at achieving 'rebalance' and 'reconnection' across broad economic territories.

Demolition of housing

Of such interventions, the demolition of housing was the most controversial. It is possible to identify at least three separate logics that were used to justify demolition (see also Cole & Nevin, 2004).

The first of these can be seen in those arguments that are essentially rooted in the market restructuring/rebalancing analytic just described. This argument was, broadly,

³ The sole exception was the *Gateway Pathfinder* in Kingston-upon-Hull.

that the selective demolition of dwellings of particular types and tenures was necessary to remove localised surpluses and to bring supply more closely into balance with demand. This might be seen as a form of redistributive territorial justice because, otherwise, market imbalances can serve to exclude certain demand groups by failing to provide the right type of housing in the right areas to meet needs and demands within the housing market area. Although it involved the demolition of homes, the subject of the intervention was essentially (parts of) a territorial housing market (*Territory*→*Territory*). It has been widely argued (see for example Cameron, 2003) that this logic was too narrowly focused on market outcomes at a relatively abstract level and was inducing injustice at more localised scales, for example by cutting across individual property rights and the needs of local communities. These arguments have been typically demonstrated with reference to the use of compulsory purchase powers to acquire and demolish properties that were in ‘low demand’ in market terms but otherwise in serviceable condition (see for example Bond, 2011).

The second logic is found in the desire by Pathfinders to demolish housing on the grounds that was in poor condition, injurious to health, structurally unsafe, uninsurable, or irrevocably mismanaged or neglected. The stated justification for such arguments was less about markets, at least at the territorial level, and more about the management of environmental health with action focused generally on, and structured by, the needs of particular places (i.e., *Place*→*Place*).⁴ On that level such interventions, driven as they are by more local needs, are relatively uncontroversial, especially where residents have strong rights to replacement housing.⁵ However, some critics see this logic as a mask for what is essentially restructuring/rebalancing, and it was doubtless the case in some Pathfinders’ strategies that there was a close relationship between environmental/condition rationales and the desire to improve market ‘competitiveness’ (for a synthesis of Pathfinders’ thinking, see Pathfinder Chairs, 2006).

The third logic that can be identified in the HMR discourse can be termed the ‘obsolescence’ argument. In this case, specific housing forms were problematised as unpopular to prospective purchasers or renters and intrinsically unsustainable in the long term in the face of changing needs, ‘aspirations’ and social norms. In such cases, localised over-concentrations of certain housing archetypes (notably smaller back-of-pavement Victorian terraces and 20th Century system-built maisonettes) were identified as being attractive to an insufficient range of demand groups or to

⁴ There is also a related but separate issue about neighbourhood social conditions and the use of demolition to address problems of crime, antisocial behaviour, cohesion, service provision, and so on.

⁵ Of course, in some instances these rights were not strong and residents contested official determinations on their properties’ conditions.

specific types of demanders, such as working families. There was a strong cultural/modernisation analytic drawing on evidence of changing social trends, such as the growth of (multiple) private car ownership and demands for privacy and defensible space. A lack of diversity in local housing stock was held to be responsible for households whose circumstances changed (such as those growing in size or increasing their income) being forced to search for suitable housing outside their neighbourhood. The obsolescence logic was most notably critiqued by those who argue that 'place competitiveness' (the market corollary of obsolescence/unpopularity at the intersection of *Territory*→*Place*) requires the imposition of a market for a space of positions among those classes for whom such markets are unwanted or an irrelevance (Allen, 2008). On the other hand, Lee & Murie's (2004) articulation of the obsolescence argument pointed to the inability of large parts of the housing stock, especially where it is seen to be 'monolithic', to keep sufficient pace with the flexibilities demanded within a post-Fordist economic paradigm. It was, consequentially, unfair to communities trapped by the inflexibilities of their planned housing estates not to restructure them to be more conducive to the realities of this new economy. Their argument, which was widely rehearsed in Pathfinders' strategies (see for example, Transform South Yorkshire, 2004; Renew North Staffordshire, 2004), essentially broadened the obsolescence logic beyond the *Territory*→*Place* intersect into the realm of the *Scale*→*Place* intersect by considering the so-called 'key driver' of a changing jobs-housing balance associated with post-industrial urban structure at ever-broader spatial scales. In this analysis, any lack of diversity in a locality's housing stock has the capacity not only to repel potential incomers to an area but also to expel indigenous residents whose needs or wants change. This suggests at the very least that the 'space of positions' argument is overly simplistic in that it assumes that gentrification forces always originate from outside, and not from within, an area. Furthermore, it fails to account for other types of sociospatial relation that affect 'place' such as the rescaling of neighbourhood functions and changing sociospatial networks (i.e., *Network*→*Place*).

It is helpful to develop the competitiveness idea a little further since it is so central to an array of multiscale strategies in the new urban economy. Despite a desperate need to importune a realistic spatiality for debates on the role of community and being within new economies, the main critiques remain surprisingly socio-historicist. Allen (2008; 2010) has most clearly typified this in his vehement assertion that the market for a space of positions ignores a class analysis that contends that 'working class' households do not think of their homes as tradable commodities, or their neighbourhoods as markets. He draws on empirical data from Liverpool to show that,

'... working class people frequently talk about "plonking" their own house *somewhere else*. This is because working class people are relatively satisfied with their housing, and dwelling.' (Allen, 2010, p. 142, emphasis added)

This suggests that even when 'being towards dwelling' exists outside the market there can nevertheless exist a space of *neighbourhood* positions; an implicit if not

actualised market of multiscalar spatiality long recognised within the surprisingly heterodox neighbourhood change literature (see, for example, Grigsby, 1963; Grigsby et al., 1983; Temkin & Rohe, 1996; Dutton, 2003). Indeed, as Flint (2011) notes, 'the space of positions need not be limited to market processes or middle-class access to housing' (p. 85).

4. Towards evaluation

The question of whether market restructuring policies such as those embodied in HMR are socially just demands an approach that integrates both procedural and distributive perspectives. This approach, in turn, requires a sophisticated spatial analytic that is able to reconcile the complex sociospatial relations that lie at the intersections of the structures and subjects of policy. Critics of HMR have allied themselves largely to debates about gentrification and epistemologies that have been insufficiently plural in their treatment of social justice and of space. The same weaknesses can also be observed in the programme's design and formal evaluations (e.g. Audit Commission, 2011; Leather et al., 2007).

This section turns briefly to the question of how complex policies like HMR might be evaluated in a way that reflects the key tenets of spatial justice. The limitations of space in this article preclude a systematic development of these ideas, and so what follows can only be a brief excursion into one facet of the programme to illustrate how the multiscalar geographies of sociospatial relations can cast new light on the question of justice.

Justicial tensions in demolition

As described in section 2 of this paper, the compulsory acquisition and demolition of housing was a defining element of the HMR strategy.⁶ It is also the intervention that has drawn the most urgent and sustained criticism.

There are at least three very significant harms that are visited on the residents of condemned housing. The first is the emotional and psychological distress of seeing one's home, and with it memories, symbols and invested energies—what Bachelard (1964) saw in the 'architecture of the imagination'—destroyed. The presupposition that home bestows 'ontological security' (Saunders, 1990) would suggest that owners may even disproportionately feel this harm over renters, although this is clearly a gross oversimplification and other factors, including lifecycle and personal characteristics will also apply. This psychological harm can be seen to be a

⁶ It is worth noting that the eventual demolition of around 31,000 dwellings (Audit Commission, 2011) fell some way short of original plans. Ferrari and Lee (2010, p98) for example found that by the end of 2007/08 less than nine per cent of original demolition plans in the northwest of England had been realised.

transgression of natural law; a social/historical injustice given the rights to amenity and property ownership that have become deeply inscribed in Western notions of citizenship.

The second harm is financial and arises because the market exchange value of nearly all housing in regeneration areas is below its use value. Reparations made to affected households are normally inadequate. Clearly, the question of 'value' lies at the heart of the social justice dilemma, but the answer cannot be an either/or one. For Marx, as interpreted by Harvey (1973), housing symbolises the 'dialectical relationship' between use value and exchange value. The market for exchange only exists because of the use values held by others; conversely, housing's use value is partly a result of its exchange potential and the product of labour and the application of other commodities. To accept a polymorphic conceptualisation of space is to accept the impossibility of fully separating 'housing as being' from housing as a position in a space of positions. That said, Harvey does recognise that the use value of housing, more so than other commodities, is differential across space and time and is dependent partly on the occupiers' (human) characteristics:

"Use values reflect a mix of social needs and requirements [and] ... are basically formed with respect to what might be called the 'life support system' of the individual." (Harvey, 1973, p. 160)

The calculus required in regeneration obviously requires a far more sophisticated weighing of use value (and its compensations) than has thus far been demonstrated in urban policy and property law. But unless the wholesale abandonment of the concept of the public interest is to be countenanced, there remains a deep intellectual challenge for scholarship and practice alike in seeking to understand where a socially just balance between use and exchange values might lie.

The third type of harm lies in the potential for demolition to break up communities. Here again it is a transgression of procedural justice that can be observed in the failure to adequately account for the milieu of real, lived connections and programmatically accommodate them. But, otherwise, this form of harm is not unique to 'forced' relocations. Other mechanisms, both in the market and out, can serve the same effect, whether they are price formations, processes of social and cultural exclusion, or natural catastrophes.

Each of the above types of harm (there are of course others, including in some Pathfinders the lack of opportunity for residents to influence decisions) foregrounds a conceptualisation of justice that is rooted in deontology and that possesses only a very simple, local, spatiality. Adopting the perspective of distributional outcomes, both in structural and spatial terms, causes us to consider the (in)justices bound up in the decision to compulsorily demolish in a different way. The reflexivity between structures and space (see Table 1) means that distributional harms cannot be seen simply as polar opposites to the local, personal harms just described. Indeed, they

may compound those harms , which is why the ‘regeneration tension’ cannot be solved solely through ‘either-or’ or uniscalar responses.

In the periodic crises and reinventions that cities endure, the question of demolition demands a discussion of the economic, environmental and social benefits and harms that might be implicated for a broader, more spatially disparate and socially diverse citizenry (see Purcell, 2006). It is not possible to fix populations in time. Indeed, to the current population within areas can also be added a future citizenry, not only a set of putative incomers but also future generations of existing residents. Nevin (2010) also draws attention to the complex spatialisations inherent in the path-dependency of local politics. So circumscribed, the evaluation of the (in)justices involved in demolition become far less clearly defined.

Other complications arise when attempting to meet the needs of those without the privilege of current residence. This is the justice argument as applied to, for example, ‘concealed’ homeless households or those who have recently had to move out of an area because of lack of appropriate housing. A fuller conceptualisation of justice involved in demolition must try to hear these groups too.

A third space for the reconceptualisation of justice opens up when we consider the right not just to residence but to mobility. In the new economy, where vertical and horizontal mobility is prized, actions or inactions that serve to suppress the movement of households can be argued to be grossly unfair.⁷ By reinforcing low property values, residents that do want or need to move can become imprisoned in equity traps.

It is not the goal of this article to suggest that these last three points should lead to a conceptualisation of justice that is tilted toward the needs of the reproduction of space. But it is clear that the justice question cannot be separated from its intrinsic spatiality, which demands equal consideration alongside the social and historical contexts. Once it is accepted that communities can never occupy some isolated position outside the milieu of sociospatial relations, even if they want to, and that the big projects of class and economic struggle will not lead to short term practical changes, then it follows that justice can not flow *solely* from deontology and the rights of the individual.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have sketched a framework that may be used to situate various objectives and critiques of housing market renewal policies at the intersections of a deontological-consequential dialectic and a polymorphic understanding of space. I

⁷ Ian Cole makes precisely this point in a letter to *The Guardian* (Society supplement, 20 March 2007)

have shown that at least three distinct logics can be ascribed to the demolition of housing within restructuring programmes, each with a distinct sociospatiality. In more concrete terms, the justicial tensions apparent in the decision to demolish have a complex spatiality which explains competing perspectives. The question of right or wrong cannot rest solely on whether the 'rules' were followed or not.

At this point, a few observations on the epistemology critique might serve as a useful way in to the normative implications of the spatial justice argument. While genuine concerns about processual justice clearly underlie the class analyses of Allen (2008), Webb (2010) and others, their analyses are only progressive in the sense that they are framed by a class-based struggle between capitalism and an alternative (more just) economic system at the level of the nation state. This means, however, that planners and activists alike are left with 'very little...to do short of the total transformation of capital' (Soja, 2010, p. 92). As a result, the increasingly-'mainstream' 'critical' view propounds a narrative that is only partially normative, treating space as mere epiphenomenon, and, by seeking solutions at potentially inappropriate spatial scales, offers little to constructively guide planners in the immediate urban travails of the here and now. This limited or partial normativity is also a necessary consequence of the 'local traps' (Purcell, 2006) of a neo-Marxist attachment to the right to the city. But we know that the search for spatial justice demands that such struggles, while important, need to be set alongside a realistic assessment of the capacities for change at the local *and* territorial levels, constrained (at the here and now) by the imperviousness of global and nation-state levels to radical economic change. In other words, 'doing nothing' in the headwinds of the new urban economy is an equally untenable position from a justice perspective.

And what of housing and the individuals and households that occupy it in this compromised economic space? Despite criticism from universalists, Fainstein's (2010) conceptualisation of the just city provides a useful way forward.⁸ Like the advocates of the right to the city, she has some specific things to say about housing and regeneration, including the need to balance goals in the furtherance of equity, diversity and democracy.

Implications for policy

It seems apposite, then, to conclude with some thoughts as to what the spatial justice argument might mean for the design of market renewal policies. Although not

⁸ While tempting to label it a 'compromise', that would be the wrong word because it suggests that there is a purer, workable alternative. For reasons argued throughout this paper, the only viable responses must be framed within complex amalgams of the social and spatial, and of scale, in other words, involving *situated judgement* (see Campbell, 2006).

exhaustive, the following is a list of objectives that would move us towards a more balanced (and sensitive) urban policy.

First, programmes must recognise and seek balance between the needs of those wishing to remain in an area and those who are more ambivalent towards it. Neighbourhoods cannot be seen simply as fixed containers. Second, the revalorisation of space should not be muted but should be captured productively and reinvested to the benefit of residents. For example, planning gain mechanisms should not focus solely on infrastructure but should also be used to provide affordable housing and to help those who wish to stay in an area. Third, compensatory and procedural mechanisms should be supererogatory. They should go well beyond the financial minimum so as to recompense psychological and community harm alongside financial harm. Fourth, planners should not shy away from 'public interest' arguments, but they must make them clearly, honestly and early. Fifth, projects must be phased sensitively to allow reconfiguration in a way that allows those wishing to stay in an area to move into replacement housing. Sixth, when a plan is decided and agreed, speed and certainty of execution of its component phases are of the essence. Breaking promises and wasting energies by cancelling plans halfway through is arguably the greatest injustice in both procedural and distributional terms.

Some of these suggestions are reworkings of Fainstein's (2010) notion of the just city. What marks Fainstein's approach out is the considered practicality of her suggestions (Fainstein, 2010, pp 172-173); a recognition that development and redevelopment can have important redistributive benefits at a range of scales *and* can be arrived at justly. For the academy, the lessons are equally salient. As Campbell (2006) argues, 'critique must mean more than purely analysis ... It must also include ... a concern with analysis and evaluation which is constructive in intent, ... avoids [normative] 'idealization', ... and is concerned with spatial processes and the nature of place.' (p104). HMR may have been a flawed policy and programme in many ways but it is difficult to prove that it was inherently unjust.

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Table 1. Possible forms and subjects of justice in public policy.

Subject of justice (<i>field of operation</i>)	Form of justice (<i>structuring principle</i>)	
	Aspatial: individual as context (analogous to procedural justice)	Spatial: place as context (analogous to distributional justice)
Micro (e.g. neighbourhood, individuals, households)	Welfare policy (e.g., housing benefit reforms)	People-based regeneration policy (e.g. NDC)
Macro (e.g., city-region, sub-region, territory)	Neoliberal macroeconomic policies (e.g. liberalisation of trade)	Redistributive macroeconomic policies (e.g., regional policy, 'spatial Keynesianism') Place-based/territorial regeneration policy (e.g. HMR)

Table 2. Application of HMR to the structure-field framework of sociospatial relations.

Structuring principles	Fields of operation			
	Territory	Place	Scale	Network
Territory	Housing market restructuring, 'balanced markets' argument; demolition of 'low demand' housing	Place competitiveness, gentrification and 'space of positions' arguments; demolition of 'obsolescent' housing	Multilevel planning frameworks, e.g., RSS, subregional housing strategies, SHMAs	Strategic multi-area partnerships, HMR Pathfinder boards
Place	Housing and neighbourhood design codes, 'place making' arguments	Refurbishment, 'housing as being' arguments, demolition of housing in poor condition, heritage arguments from within	Representations of place and identity; histories of scale, 'heritage' arguments from afar	Neighbourhood/ multi-agency partnerships; 'place marketing' or 'branding' arguments; Neighbourhood Renewal
Scale	City-regional economic development strategies, economic 'rescaling' arguments, 'New Urban Politics'	Changing urban structure (changing jobs-homes balance); 'rescaling' of neighbourhood functions and social networks		
Network	Regional labour market connectivity, polycentric regional economies, transport networks, 'connectivity' arguments	Neighbourhood connectivity: 'urban renaissance trickle-down' arguments		

Source: author using framework adapted from Jessop et al. (2008).

Note: 'one-dimensionality' is characterised by the cells on the shaded diagonal when taken without reference to other cells. I found no readily apparent features of HMR at the intersections of *scale* and *network* although readers may disagree.