

Planning tensions towards a new urban paradigm: social justice and the regeneration of Portuguese cities

Ricardo Cardoso, Isabel Breda-Vázquez

CITTA – Research Centre for Territory, Transports and Environment. Faculty of Engineering, University of Porto
ricardoc@fe.up.pt, ivazquez@fe.up.pt

Phone/fax numbers: 00 351 225081451 - 00 351 225081486

As an activity concerned with transformative action, planning gains depth and texture in the tensions developed both with and within its sphere of intervention. Ranging from the deep social to the purely rhetorical, such tensions are dynamically as well as degenerately reproduced through planning theory and practice. One of the most productive tensions in theoretical debates concerning social justice and the city has been laid out by the parallel conceptual paths taken by political economists and postmodernists, and critically reconfigured in recent times as an argumentative tension between the vision of the just city and the road towards cosmopolis. This paper aims to depict the lineaments of this tension so as to help rescuing its progressive potential in the context of spatial planning and urban policy making in Portugal. By way of illustrating its pertinence, it provides an evaluation of urban regeneration initiatives against a formulation of the just city which envisions an urban society allowing for human flourishing through the specification of a material right to the city. Straining critically the main features of such initiatives along this new urban paradigm, our transcending objective is to help breeding fruitful socio-political tensions as a means to achieve social justice in Portuguese cities.

Keywords: planning theory; social justice; just city; cosmopolis; regeneration.