

# Just Sustainabilities in policy, planning and practice

Professor Julian Agyeman

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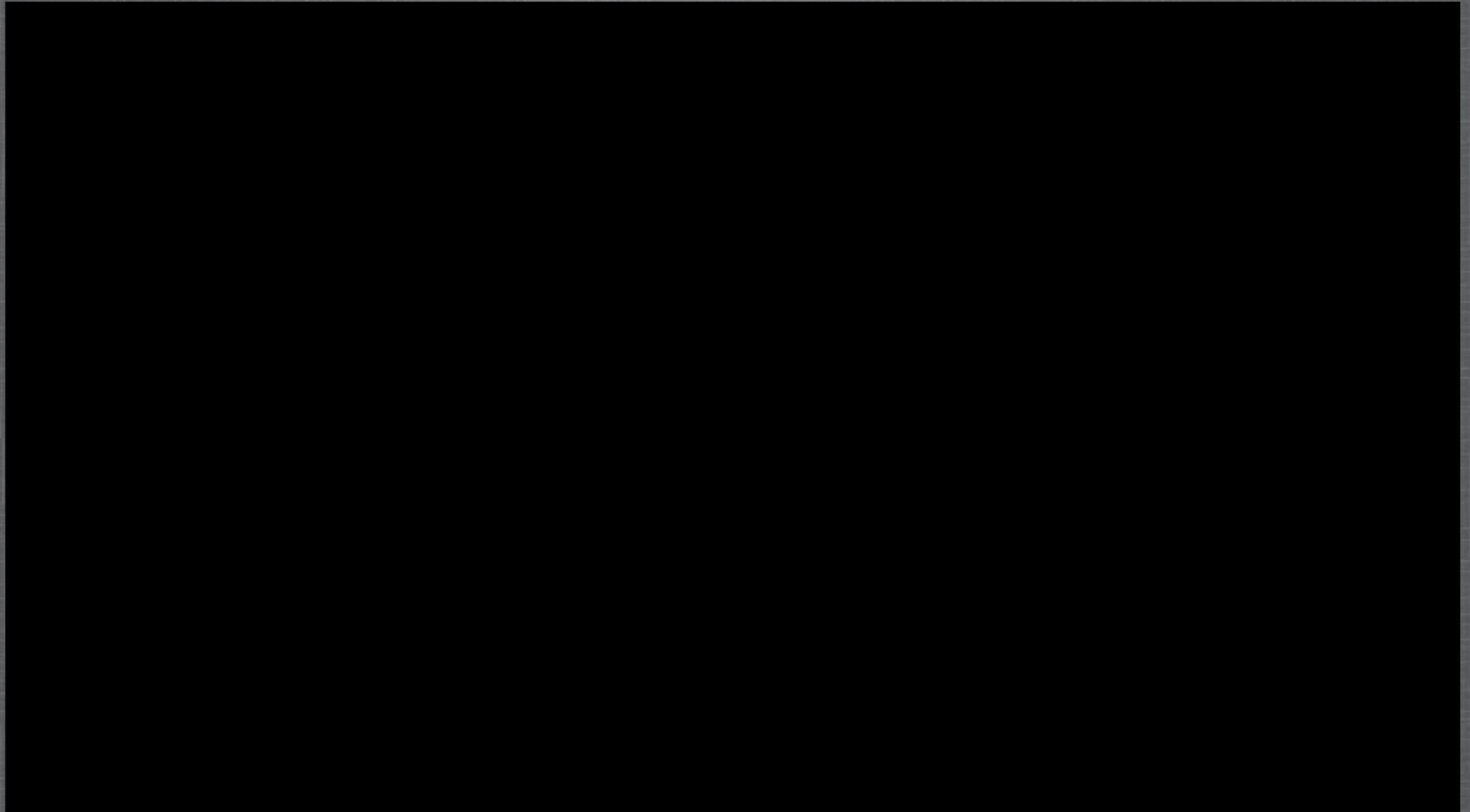
#justsustainabilities

**uep** Urban + Environmental Policy + Planning

**Tufts**  
UNIVERSITY

# Land recognition

This meeting is being held on the territory of the the Tuscarora and Cataswba people. We pay our respects to their Elders, their past, present and future, and commit to a principle of respect and care for country as part of this meeting.



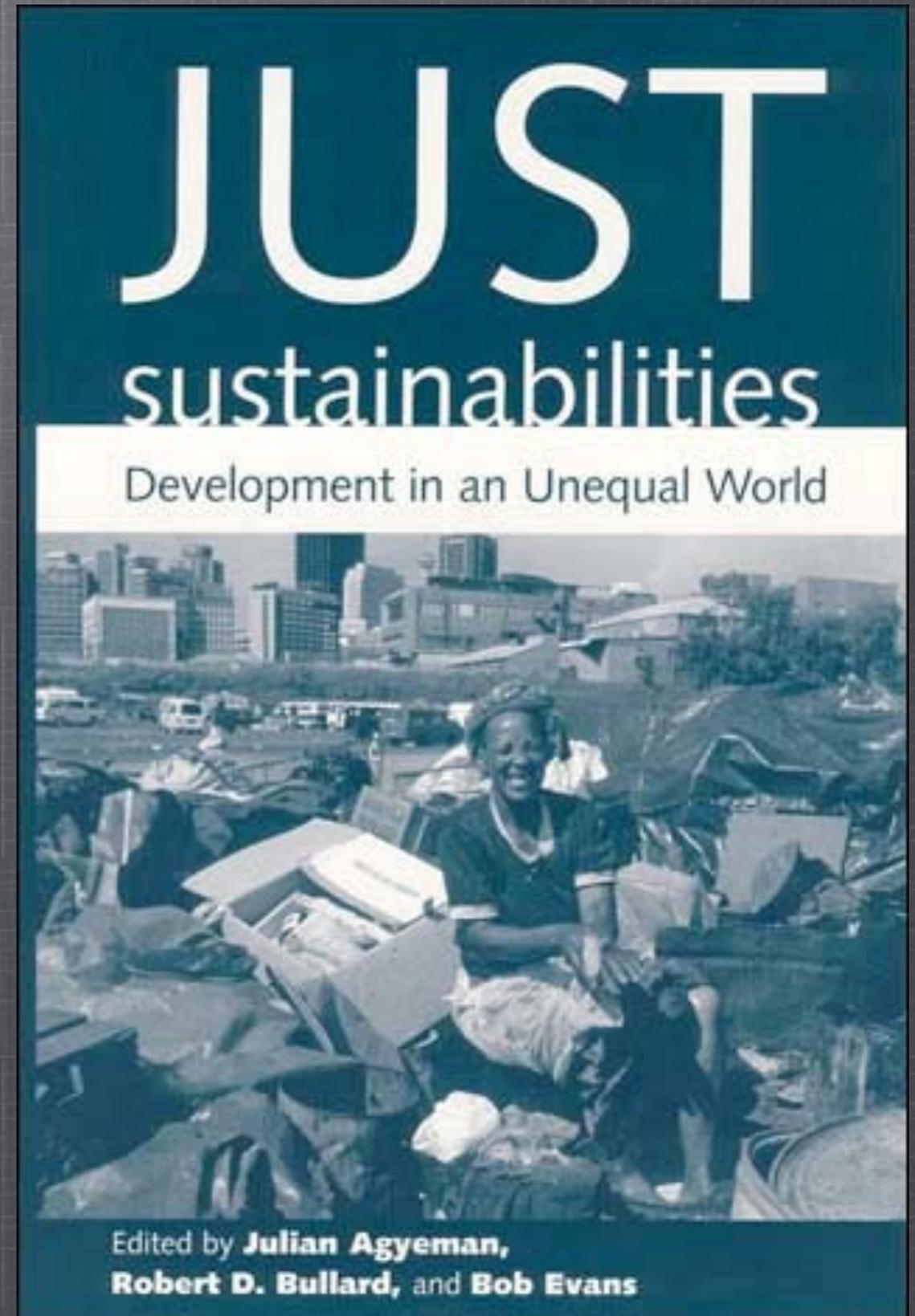
# Just Sustainabilities: The history

It is now fifteen years since the publication of this book, edited by myself, Bob Bullard and Bob Evans. In that book we broke new ground by embarking on a sustainability and sustainable development-based discourse, but one that focused explicitly on *equity* and *justice* – on the links between *environmental quality* and *human equality*.

We argued that:

*“Sustainability cannot be simply a ‘green’, or ‘environmental’ concern, important though ‘environmental’ aspects of sustainability are. A truly sustainable society is one where wider questions of social needs and welfare, and economic opportunity are integrally related to environmental limits imposed by supporting ecosystems.”*

(Agyeman et al. 2002, 78)



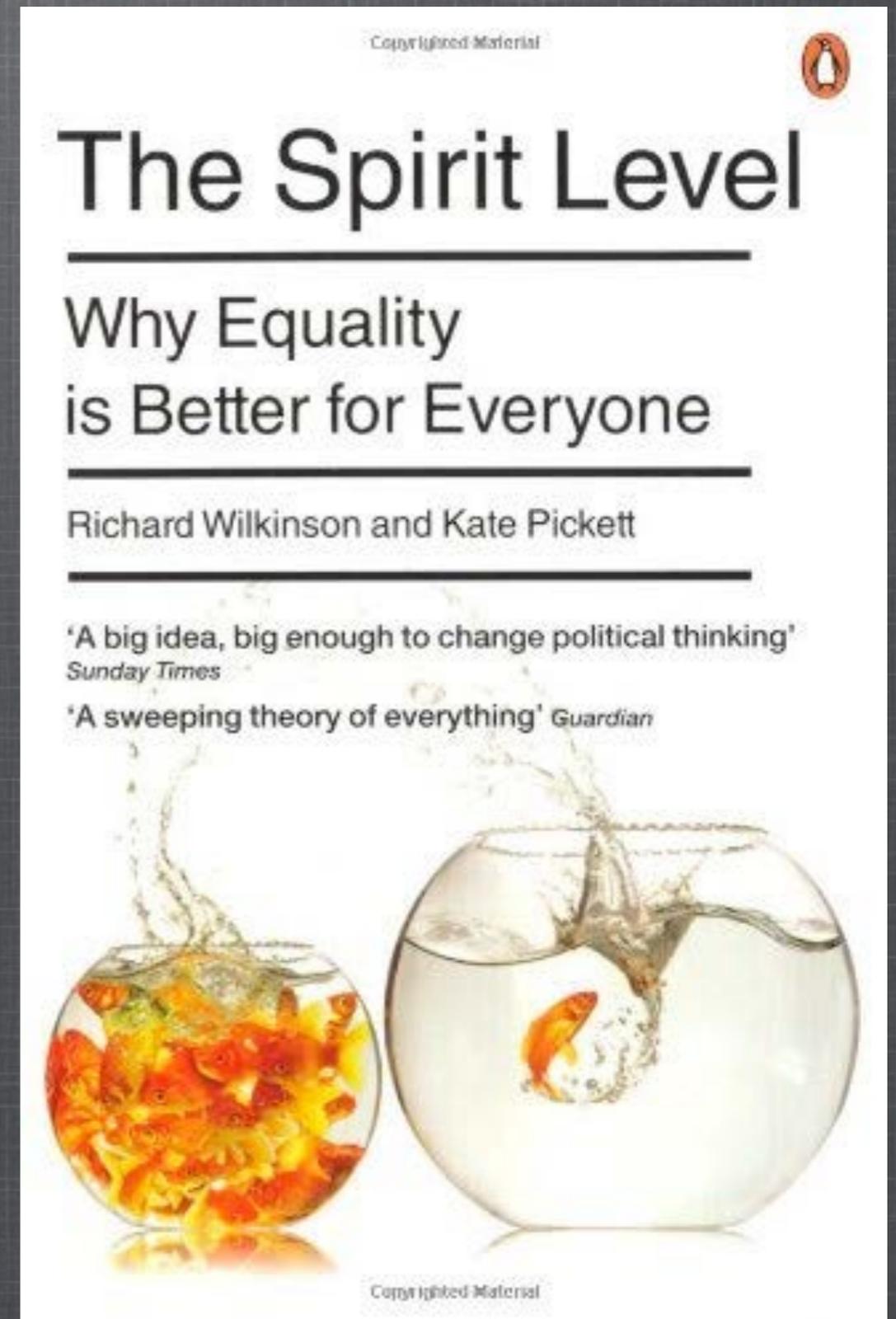
# New evidence today: human equality and environmental quality are related

The most compelling evidence to date.....

“Inequality...heightens competitive consumption”

(Wilkinson and Pickett 2009)

If we REALLY want to understand sustainability our focus should be on both *human equality* and *environmental quality* TOGETHER.



# Defining Just Sustainabilities

*“The need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems.”*

There are four ‘conditions’:

- 1) improving our quality of life and wellbeing;*
- 2) meeting the needs of both present and future generations (intra-generational and intergenerational equity);*
- 3) justice and equity in terms of recognition, process, procedure, and outcome;*
- 4) living within ecosystem limits (‘one planet living’)*

# Two overarching thoughts on urban planning:

*“managing our co-existence in shared space” (Healey, 1997).*

“[This] speaks with equal clarity about environmental, transport, housing and other conflicts, reminding us that, whether we like it or not, we do share space on the planet with others who in many ways are not like us, and we need to find ways of co-existing in these spaces, from the next-door neighbor to the street, neighborhood, city and region”  
(Sandercock 2000).

*What is the relationship between belonging and becoming?*

Are we urban planners as good at fostering *belonging* (recognition, reconciliation, difference, diversity, inclusion) as we are at developing prescriptions for what our cities can *become* (smart, sharing, resilient, sustainable etc)?

Just sustainabilities, *‘humane-scaled’* as opposed to solely *‘human scaled’* planning, helps us think through BOTH, together.

# Just Sustainabilities in policy, planning and practice.

Three examples:

*Spatial justice:* how do we allocate rights in urban spaces and places?

*Food justice:* what is 'local' food in intercultural societies?

*Sharing cities:* how do we see the whole city as shared space, and reinvent the urban commons?

# Spatial Justice



*“Just as social justice requires that life chances are not distributed along class lines, spatial justice requires that they are not distributed geographically” (David Lammy, British Member of Parliament 2004)*



# *Spatial justice: Rethinking urban streets*

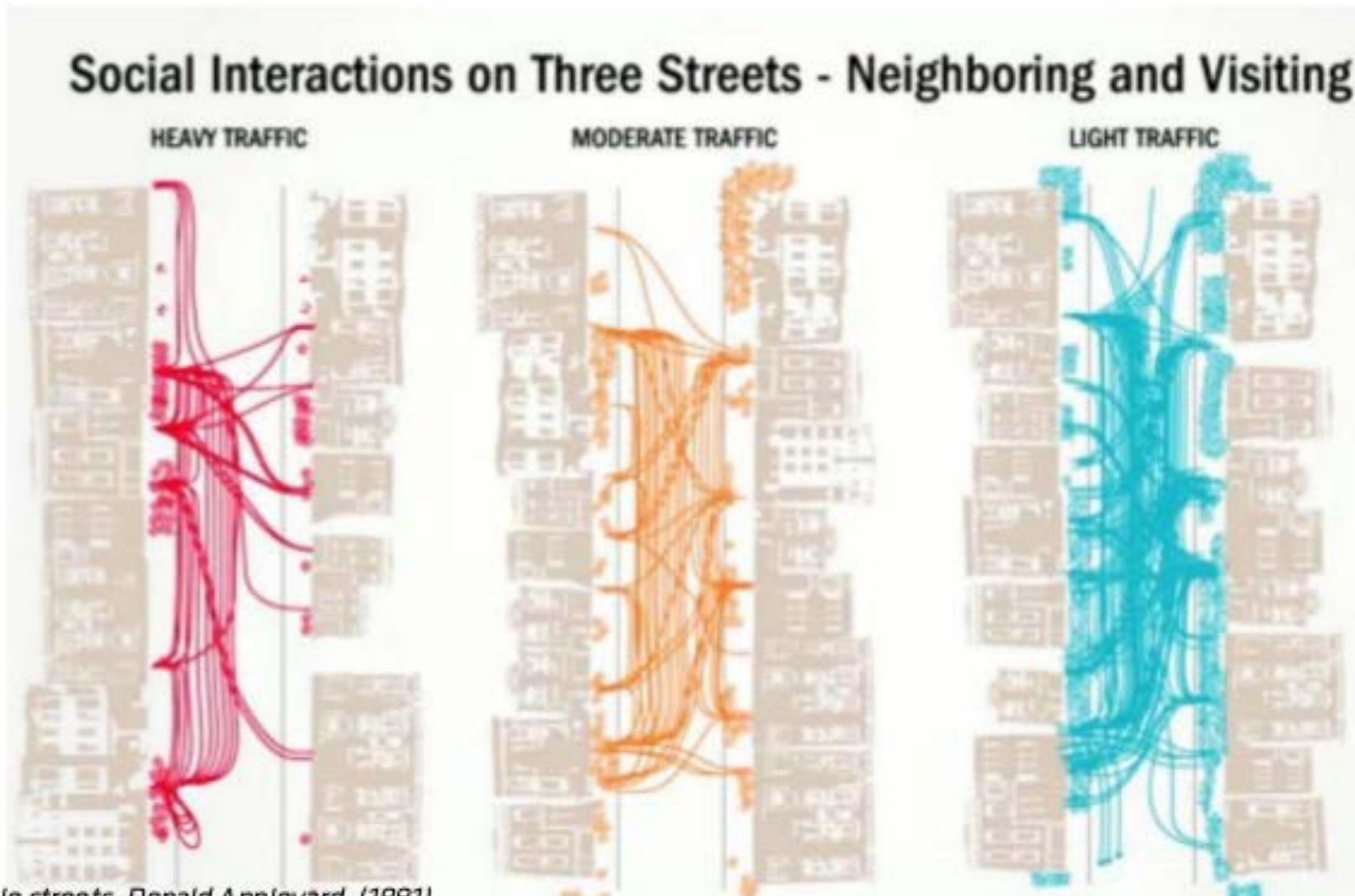
Södra Vägen, Gothenburg, Sweden

Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA



The street is our most commonly used public space. It has been democratized on Södra Vägen but not on Massachusetts Avenue. What does this say to adults, children who use these streets daily and become acculturated to spatial justice on Södra Vägen or spatial injustice on Massachusetts Avenue?

## Problem 2: Car traffic decreases social interaction



*Livable streets, Donald Appleyard (1981)*



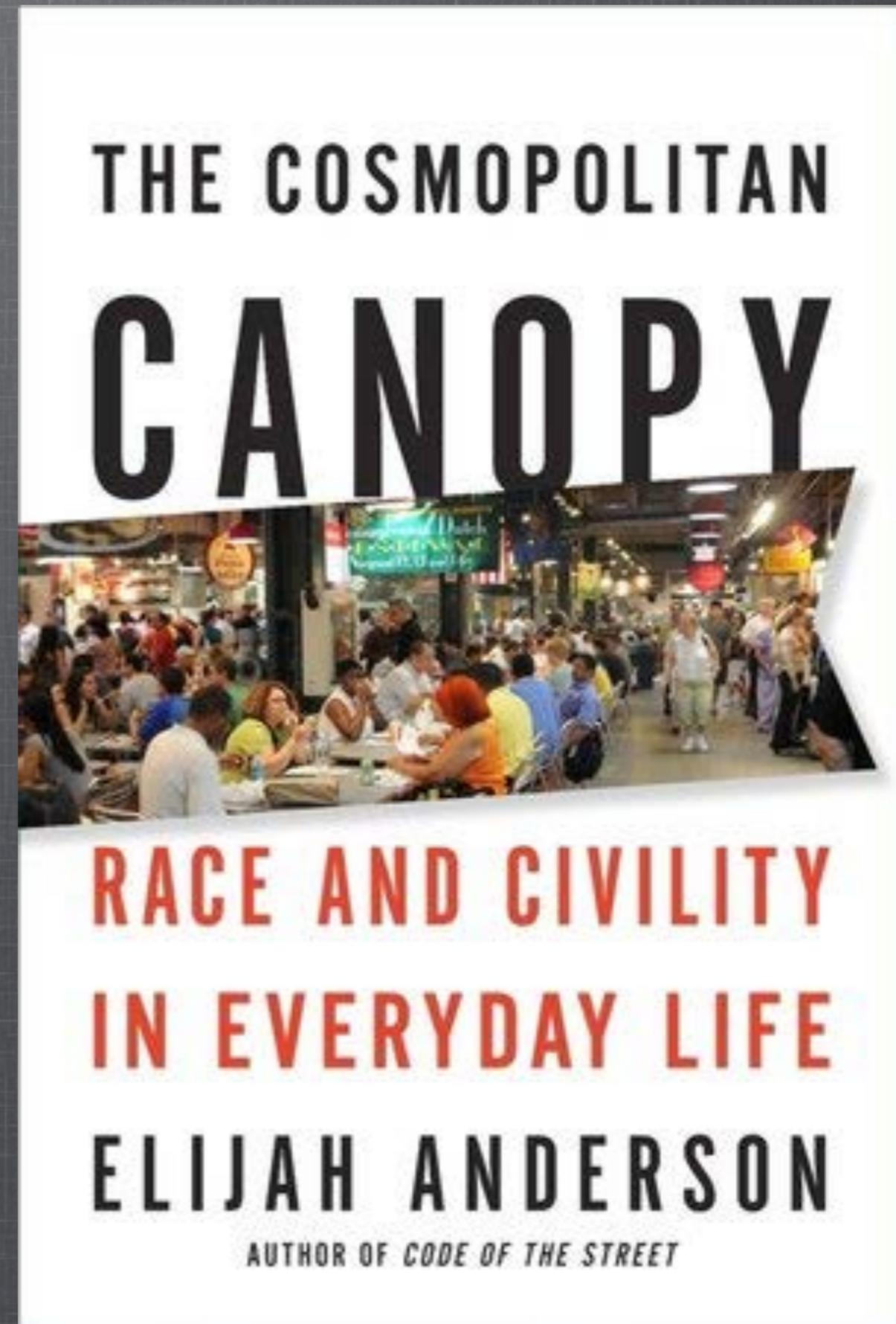
# *Spatial (in)justice: hostile and defensive architecture*

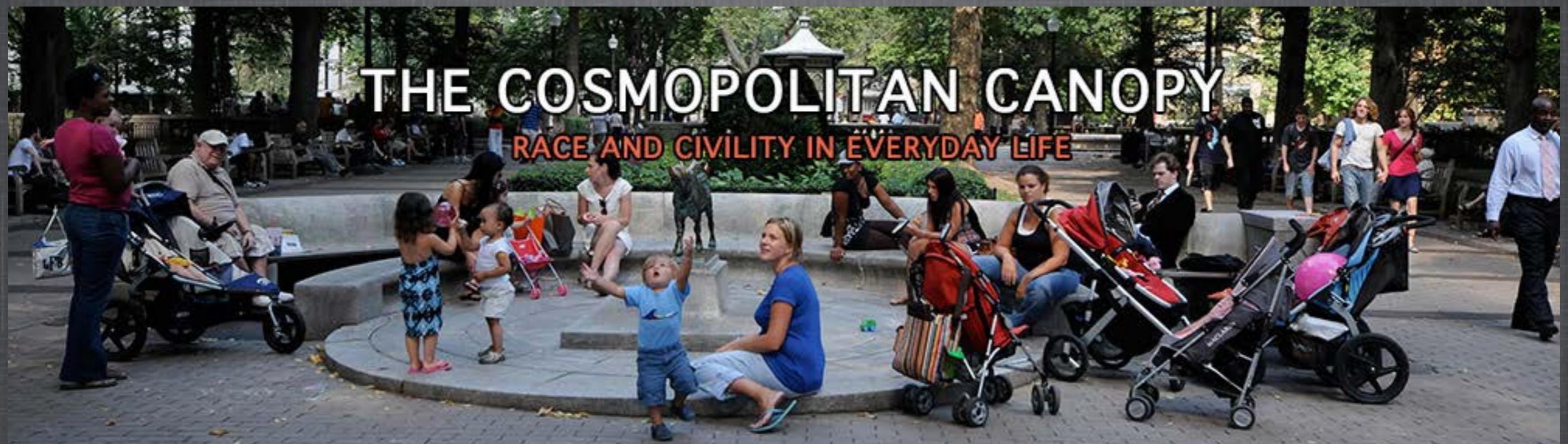
“those seemingly decorative “anti-homeless” spikes installed on the exterior ledges of buildings, benches with metal armrests set close together to prevent anyone from lying down, even classical music piped through outdoor speakers to deter teenagers from congregating in front of convenience stores” Arieff 2017



# *Spatial justice:* The Cosmopolitan Canopy

“numerous heterogeneous and densely populated bounded public spaces within cities.... offer a respite from this wariness, settings where a diversity of people can feel comfortable enough to relax their guard and go about their business more casually. A prime such location is Philadelphia's Reading Terminal Market. In this relatively busy, quasi-public setting, under a virtual *cosmopolitan canopy*, people are encouraged to treat others with a certain level of civility or at least simply to behave themselves.”  
(Anderson 2004)





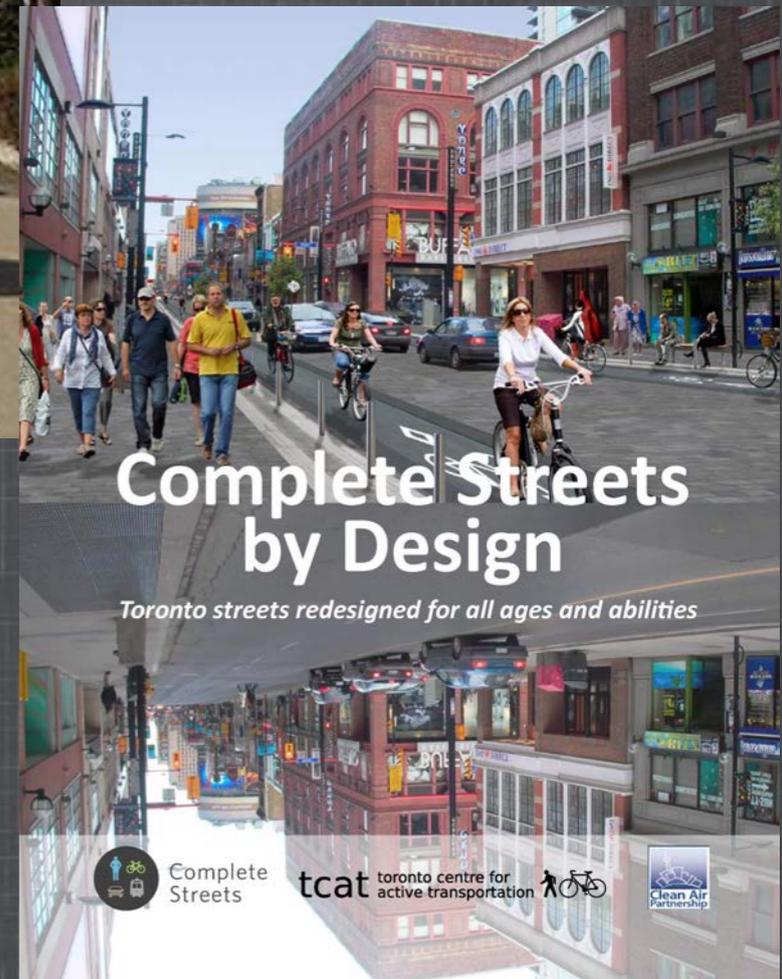
# THE COSMOPOLITAN CANOPY

RACE AND CIVILITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Is there a role for planning/planners and urban designers in creating Cosmopolitan Canopies?

# Solution to spatial injustice? 'Complete Streets'?

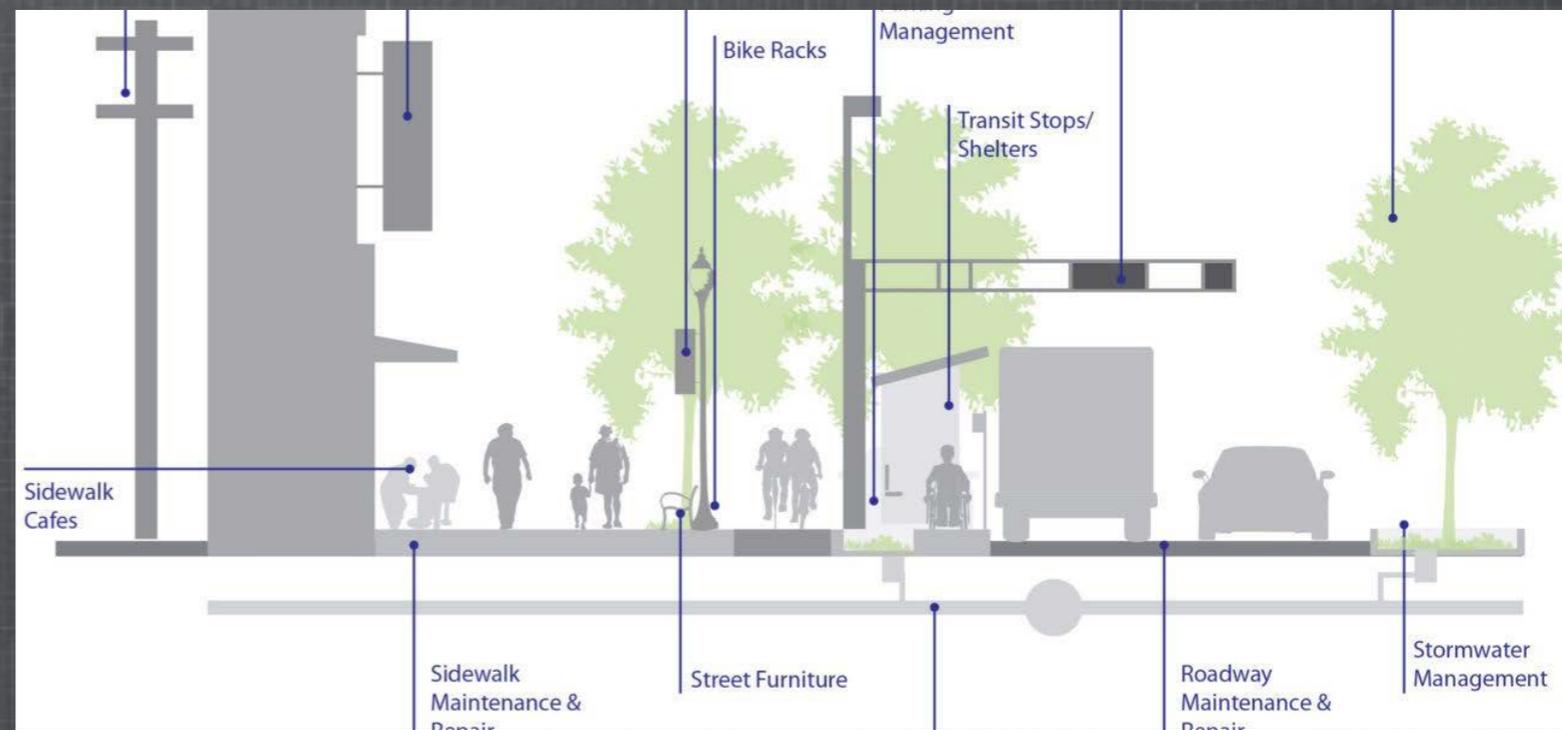
Can the current 'Complete Streets' discourse, design manuals, policies and other regulatory structures reverse the inequalities that car-centric planning exacerbated or created anew, or will it result in enhanced livability only for the most privileged residents of cities?



# What is a 'Complete Street'?

## Street as social construct and physical space

Massey (1995) sees places (*and streets are places*) as having no fixed meaning; rather, they are “*constantly shifting articulations of social relations through time.*” Yet much of the current physically-focused Complete Streets rhetoric *disconnects streets from their significant social, structural, symbolic, discursive, and historical realities.*



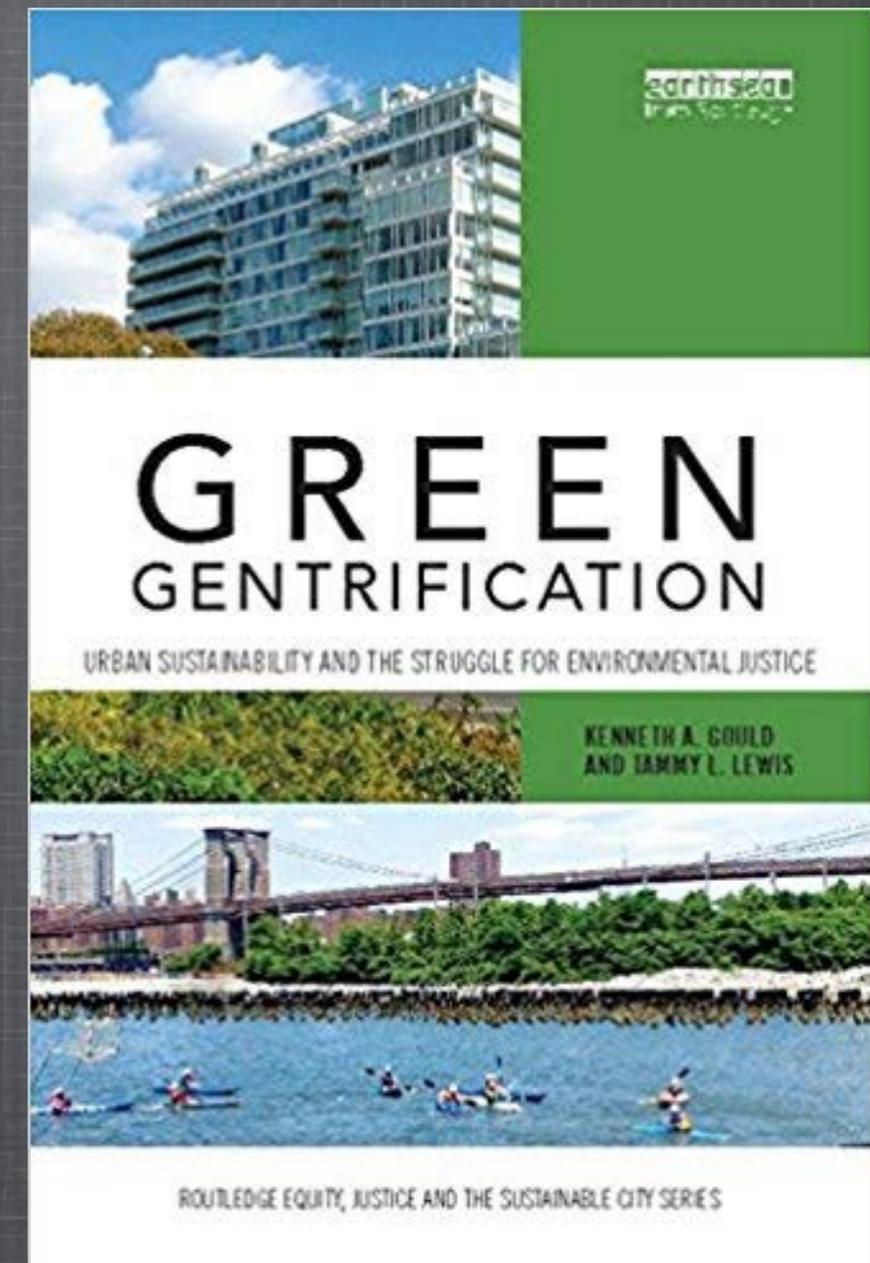
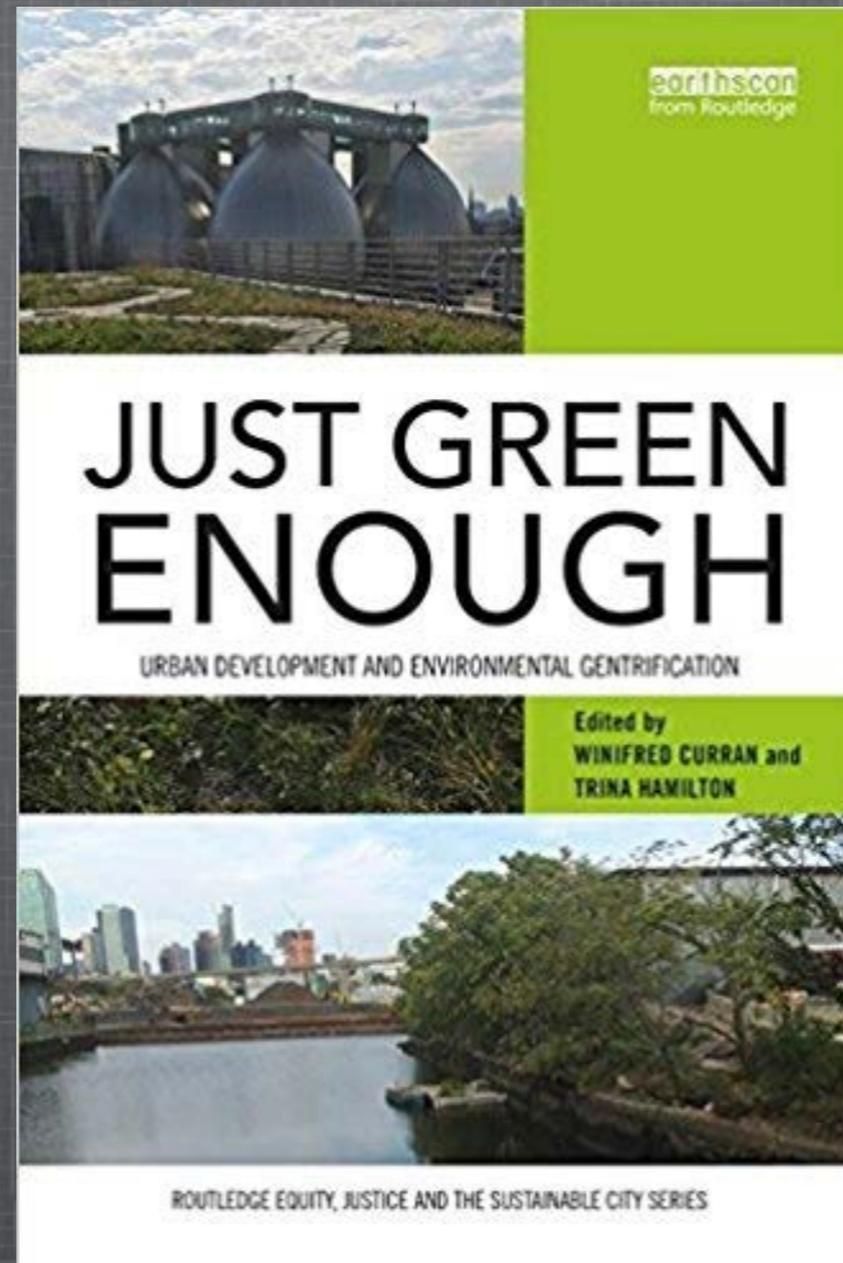
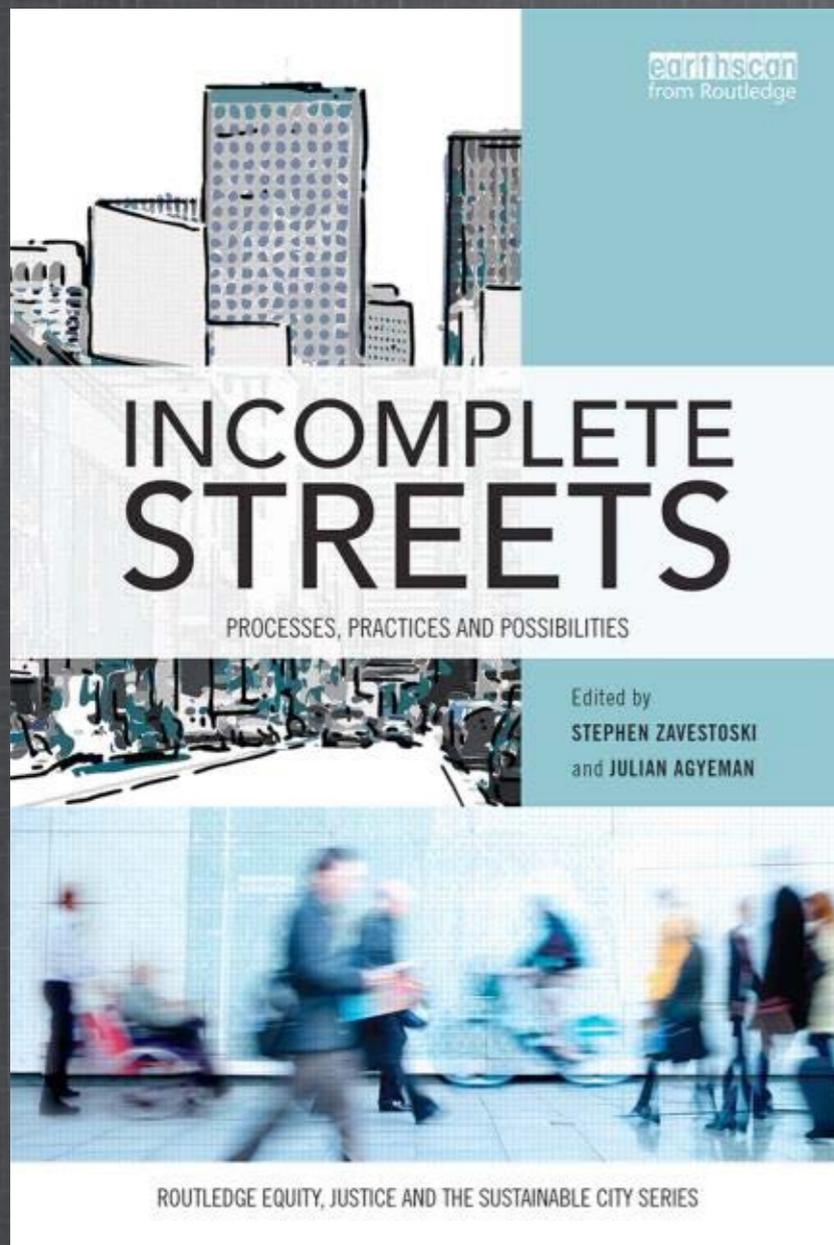
# Complete Streets: The strange case of LA.

From tacos or bacon-wrapped hotdogs. ...these mobile meals create hotspots of social interactions in a city that too often lacks public life.”



“Can streets in a heavily immigrant metropolis, however multi-modal the distribution of lane space, be said to be “complete” if they fail to include the livelihoods and economic survival of vendors; the smells, sights and tastes of homelands; and places for people to pause, shop

# Complete Streets, 'greenlining' and Gentrification?



There are important missing narratives in the Complete Streets movement, discourse and practice. In the absence of these narratives such policies, plans and efforts are *systematically reproducing many of the urban spatial and social inequalities and injustices* that have characterized our cities for the last century or more.

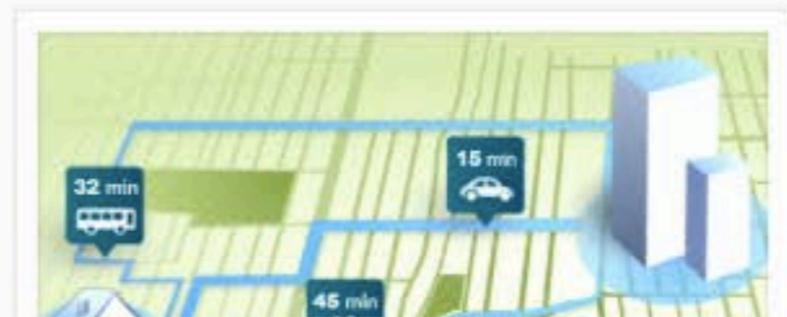
# Live Where You Love

## Great Nearby Places



## Improve Your Commute



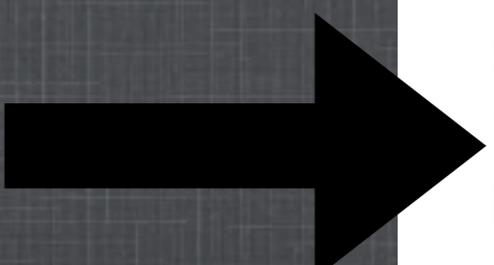
## Fits Your Lifestyle



### Advisory Board

The Walk Score [advisory board](#) includes urban planning, environmental and technical experts from institutions such as The Sightline Institute and The Brookings Institution.

Walk Score is now a part of [Redfin](#) and was originally incubated at [Front Seat](#).



# *Spatial justice: Rethinking urban parks*

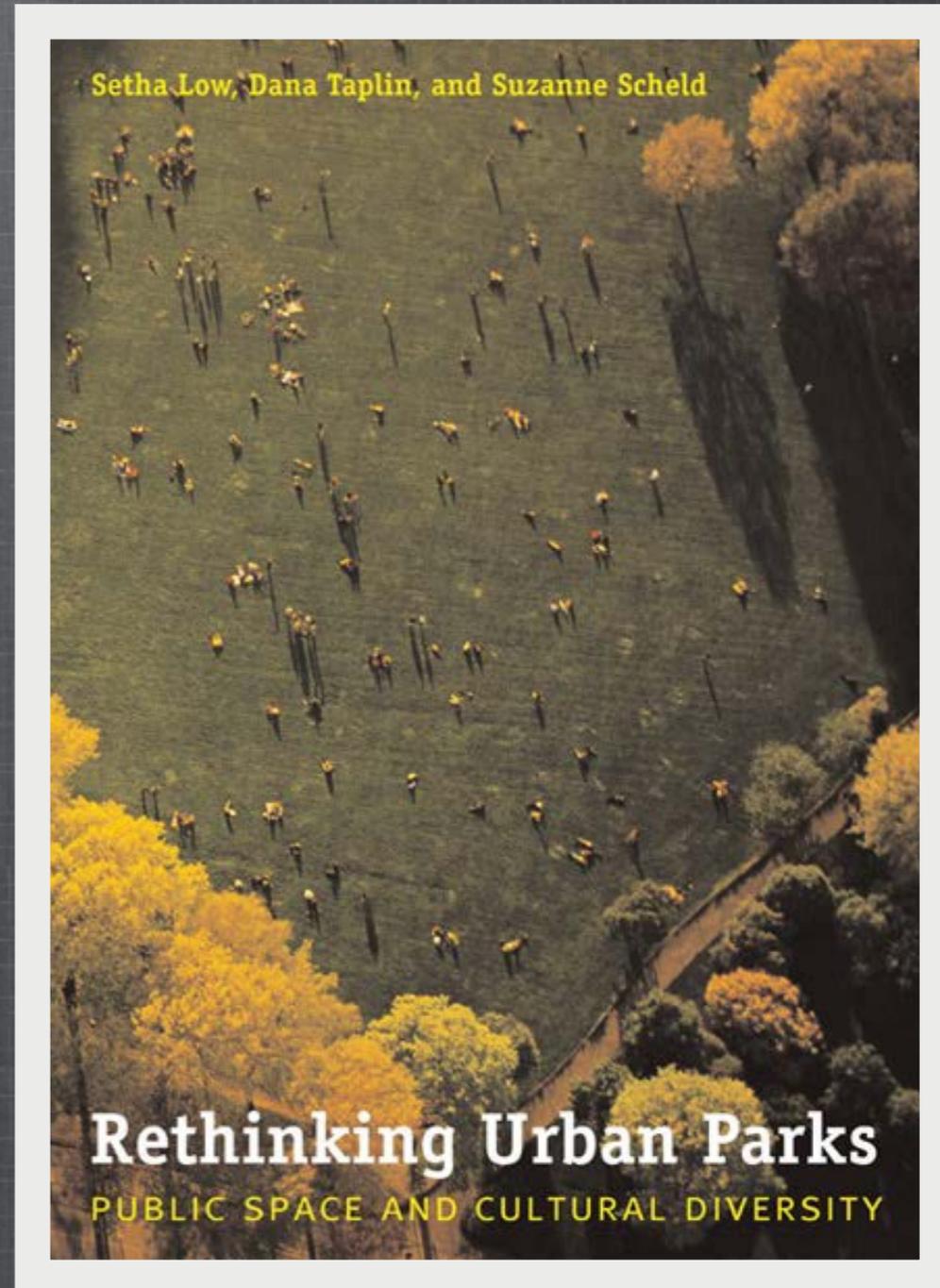
“In this new century, we are facing a different kind of threat to public space-not one of disuse, but of patterns of design and management that exclude some people and reduce social and cultural diversity”.

(Low, Taplin and Scheld 2005)

“contact theory posits that...interracial interactions that occur in leisure settings have the potential to be more genuine and sincere compared with the more obligatory interactions that take place in formal settings”

(Shinew, Glover and Parry 2004)

In the 1980s, environmentalists in Bristol, UK, persuaded the local Parks Department to create wildflower meadows. These are environmentally sound, but are they socially just?



## *Spatial justice:*

# Immigrant Engagement in Public Open Space

“The lack of engagement of more recent immigrants in “friends of the park” organizations and other environmental groups of today has led to concerns that while Olmsted’s vision continues to resonate with a great many Bostonians it may not resonate with the majority of those who will decide Boston’s future.” (Lanfer and Taylor 2004)



# Engagement, belonging: Landscape links?

“Families gravitate toward Herter Park because, for many, the landscape reminds them of home. Extended family gatherings on riverbanks are popular in Central America, and the trees along the shore remind many immigrants of the all-day Sunday picnics they enjoyed in El Salvador or Guatemala” (Lanfer and Taylor 2004)

*“I think one of the reasons that that place...is so popular with us, Latinos, is because of the willows. Willows in Guatemala are very common. They grow beside rivers. People like Herter Park because it looks like home.”*

– Guatemalan-American, Allston, Boston.



# Engagement, belonging: 'Designing in' Encounter? Superkilen Park, Nørrebro, Copenhagen



# Engagement, belonging: We need 'deep ethnographies'

## #refugeeswelcome in parks: a resource book

- ideas for refugee integration and wellbeing
- how parks and urban public space can be more welcoming to refugees and asylum seekers



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## Ethnographic understandings of ethnically diverse neighbourhoods to inform urban design practice

Clare Rishbeth , Farnaz Ganji & Goran Vodicka

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## Department of Landscape

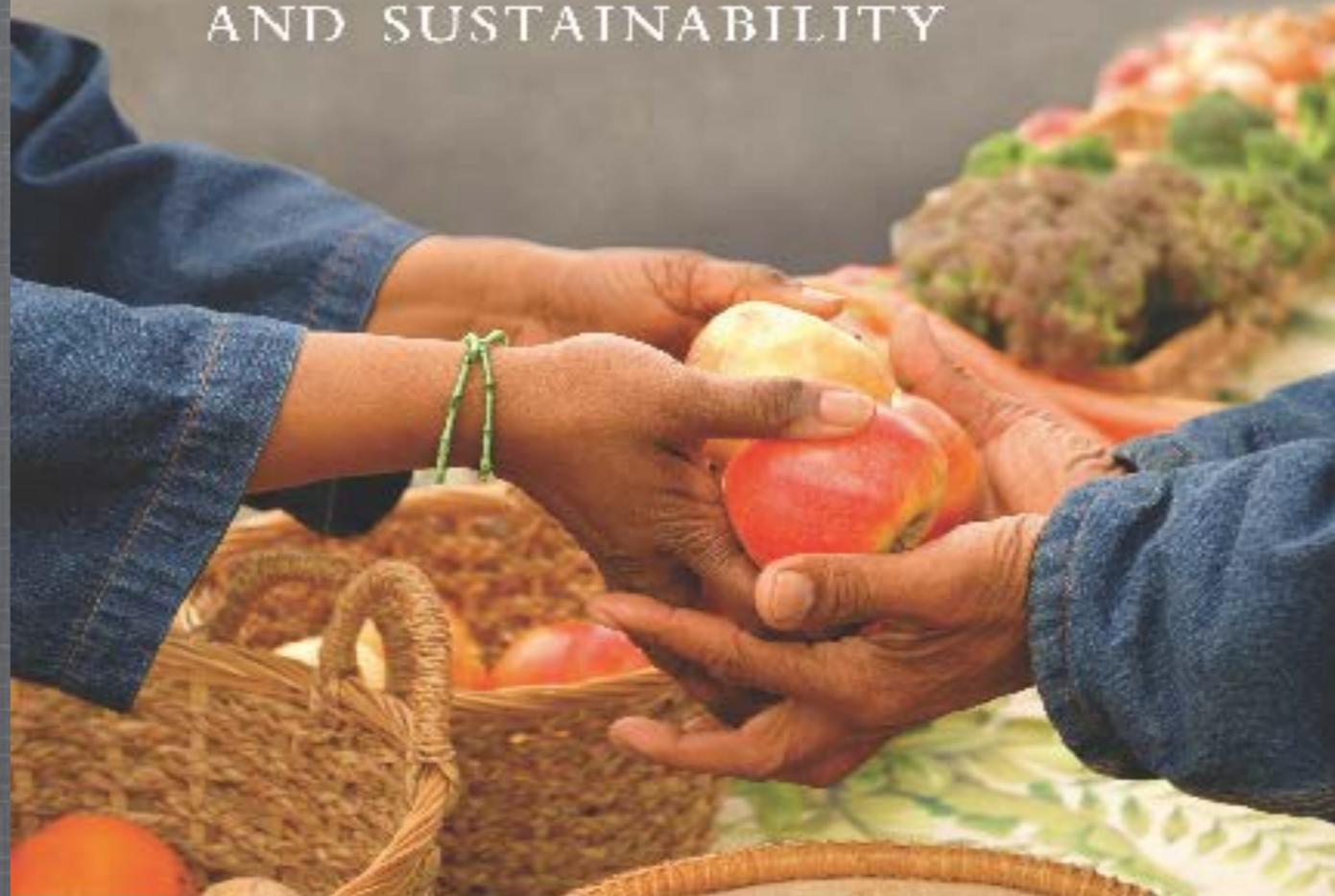
Home > Landscape > Staff > Staff Profiles > Clare Rishbeth > Transnational Urban Outdoors research group

### TRANSNATIONAL URBAN OUTDOORS RESEARCH GROUP

TUO is the Transnational Urban Outdoors research group based in the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield. We are a group of academic researchers who have trained and practiced in landscape architecture and urban design, and also currently teach on professionally accredited courses.

# Cultivating Food Justice

RACE, CLASS,  
AND SUSTAINABILITY



EDITED BY  
Alison Hope Alkon AND Julian Agyeman

## *Food justice:*

What are 'local' foods in intercultural societies?

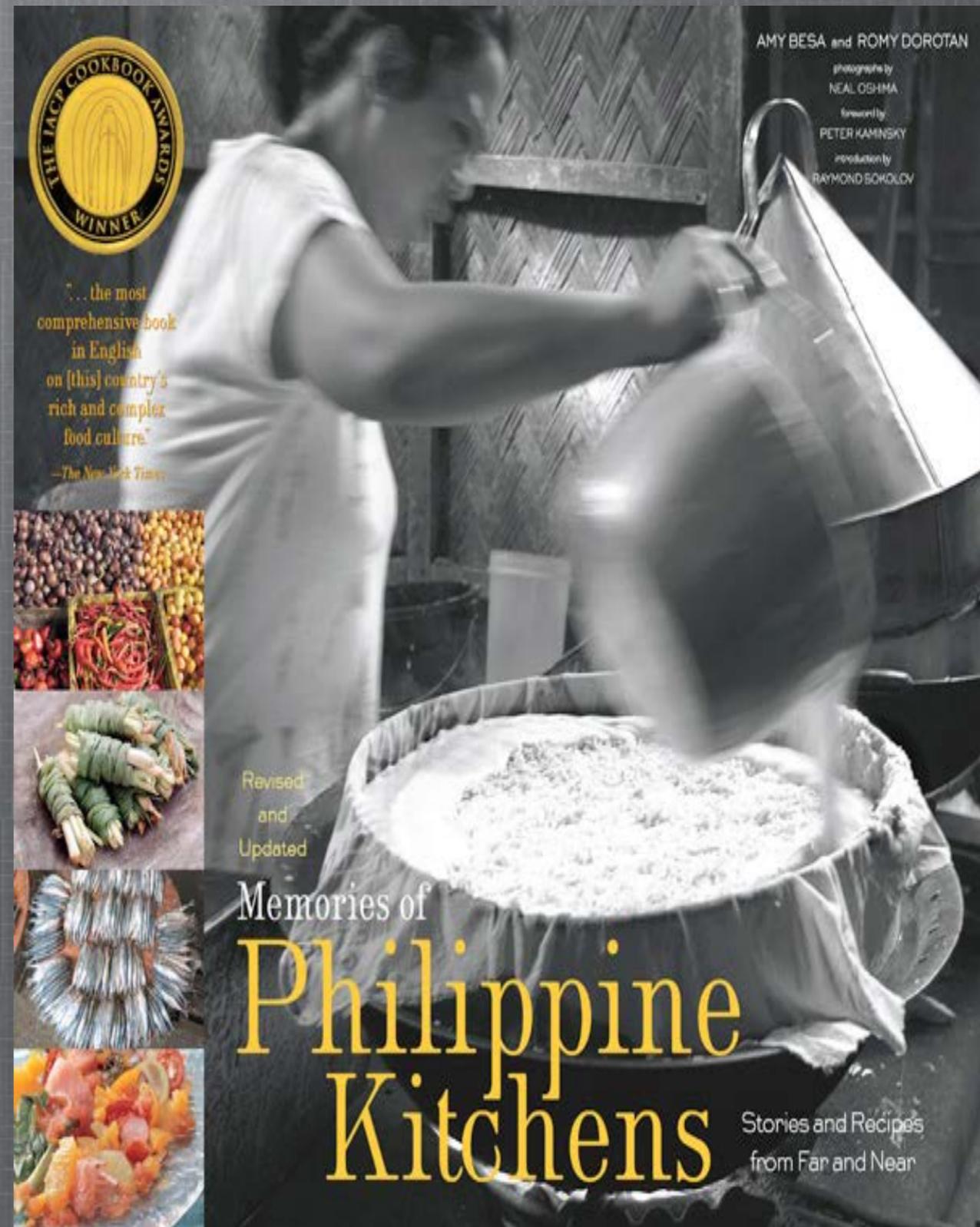
What are 'local foods'? Are they what *should* be grown locally according to the predominantly ecologically-focused local food movement, or are they what our increasingly diverse populations want to buy locally as *culturally appropriate foods*?



George and Julia Bowling, Maryland

# Food justice: *trans-local identities*

Valiente-Neighbours (2012):  
Filipino immigrants in San Diego demonstrate trans-localism, they carry with them the idea that Filipino food is local food, which they cook at home or eat in restaurants. They also exercise this trans-localism when they tend their fruit and vegetable gardens. The discourse within agrifood literature and the food localization movement needs more reflexivity.



## *Food justice:*

# Parallel local food networks in Metro Vancouver

Due to a 'history of anti-Chinese racism in Canada, together with Chinese-Canadian farmers' creative resistance and entrepreneurialism in responding to social and economic changes' Gibb and Whitman (2012) argue that there are 'parallel' networks in which 'both sets of networks are "local" in that they shorten relationships between producers, consumers, and place; however, these networks have few points of intentional connection and collaboration.'



# *Food justice: Autotopographies*

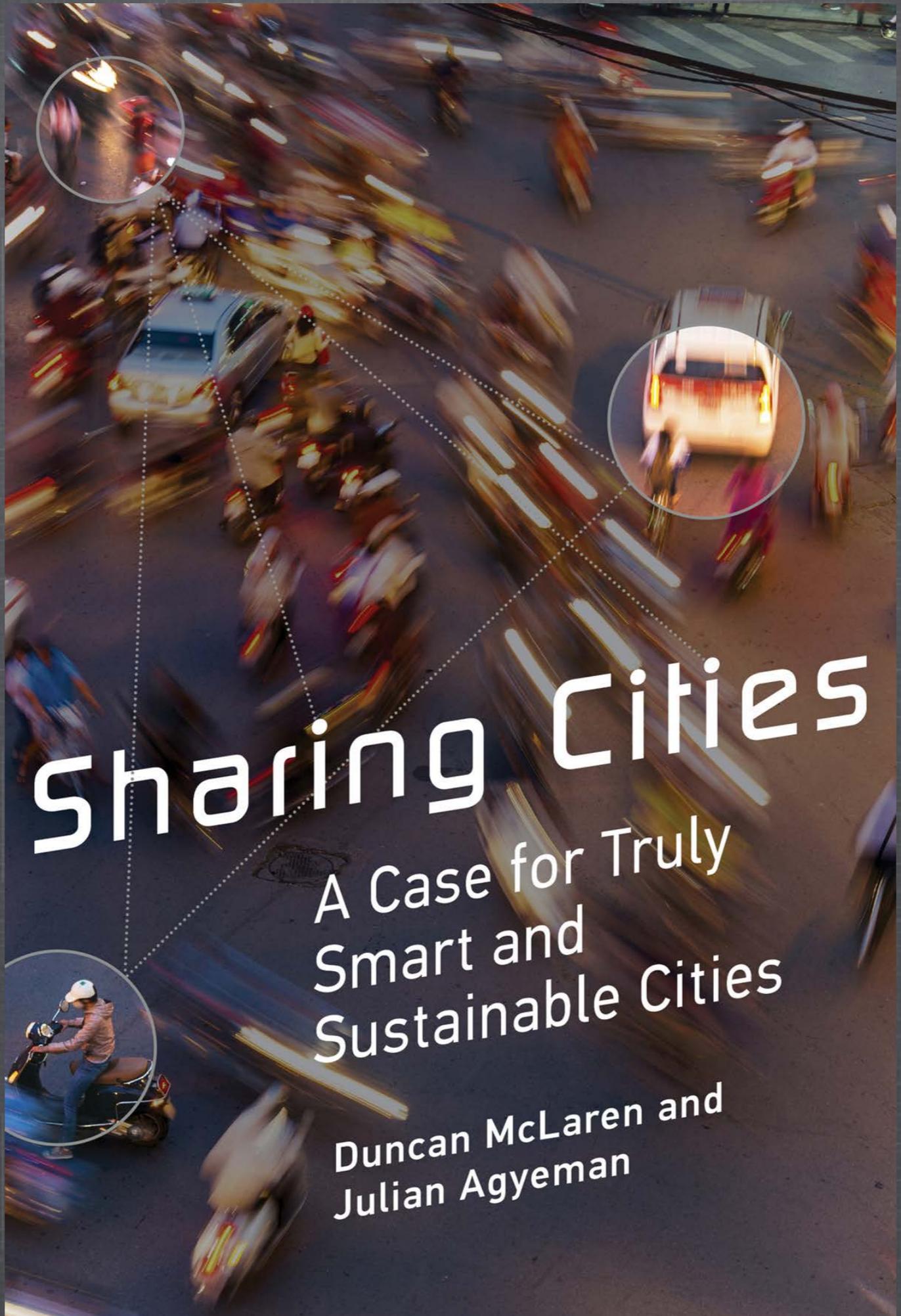


“One gardener at the South Central Farms [LA], a thirty year old Zapotec woman, described her involvement at the farm in the following way: ‘I planted this garden because it is a little space like home. I grow the same plants that I had back in my garden in Oaxaca. We can eat like we ate at home and this makes us feel like ourselves. It allows us to keep a part of who we are after coming to the United States.’”  
(Mares and Peña 2011 p209)

# *Food justice: Refugee agriculture*

“New Roots [San Diego], with 85 growers from 12 countries, is one of more than 50 community farms dedicated to refugee agriculture, an entrepreneurial movement spreading across the country. American agriculture has historically been forged by newcomers, like the Scandinavians who helped settle the Great Plains; today’s growers are more likely to be rural subsistence farmers from Africa and Asia, resettled in and around cities from New York, Burlington, Vt., and Lowell, Mass., to Minneapolis, Phoenix and San Diego”.





# Sharing Cities

A Case for Truly  
Smart and  
Sustainable Cities

Duncan McLaren and  
Julian Agyeman

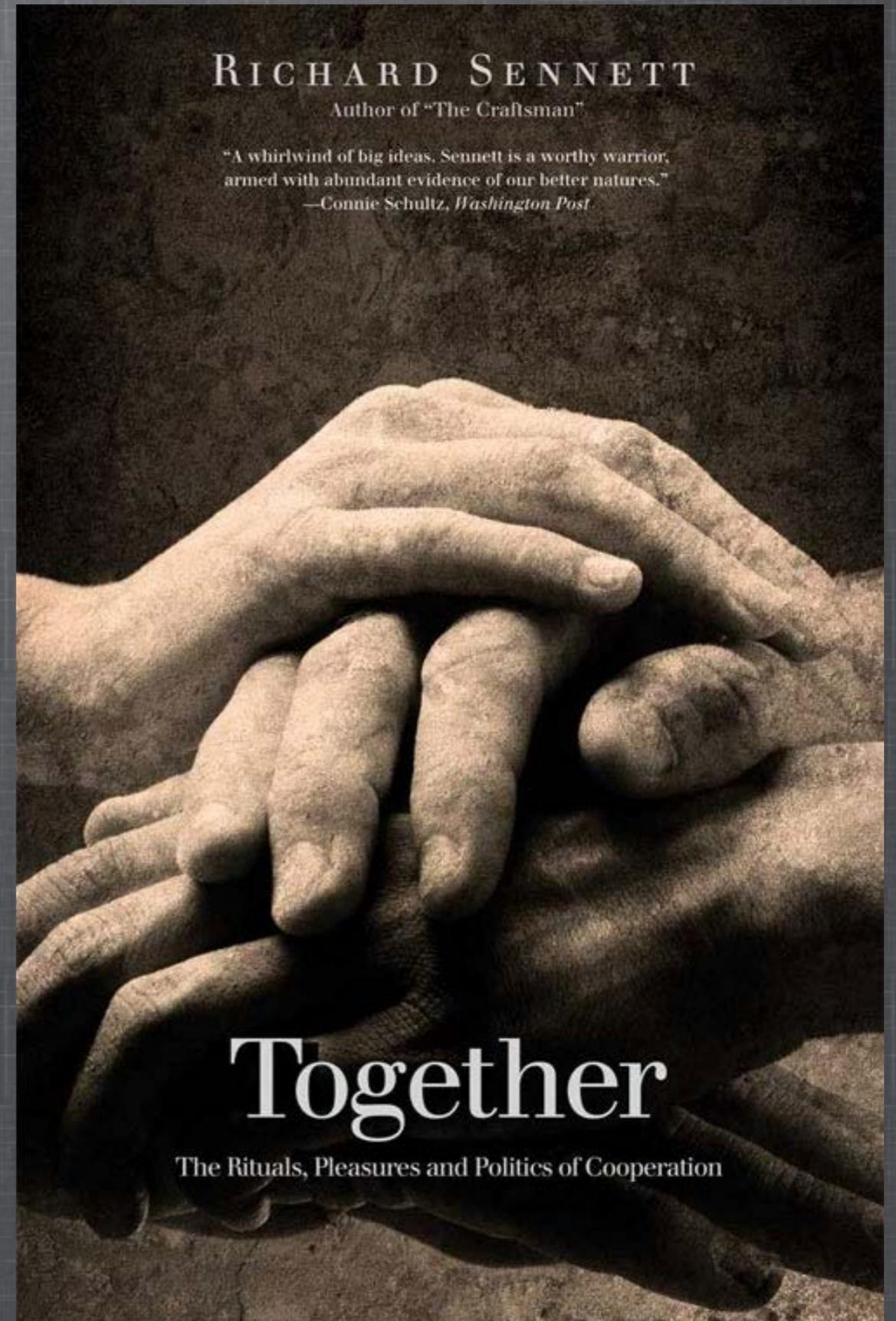
# Back to the future: humans are natural sharers...

Sharing is an evolutionary trait (Schmidt et al 2011).

Shared efforts allowed our ancestors to band together to hunt, farm and create shelter

Altruism arose naturally from repeated interactions in such collective groups where reputation matters (Ridley, 1996).

Hunter-gatherer societies depended on sharing and cooperation and this behaviour instilled a natural preference for fair shares and broadly equal outcomes (Tomasello and Warneken 2008).



# Our claim in Sharing Cities.....

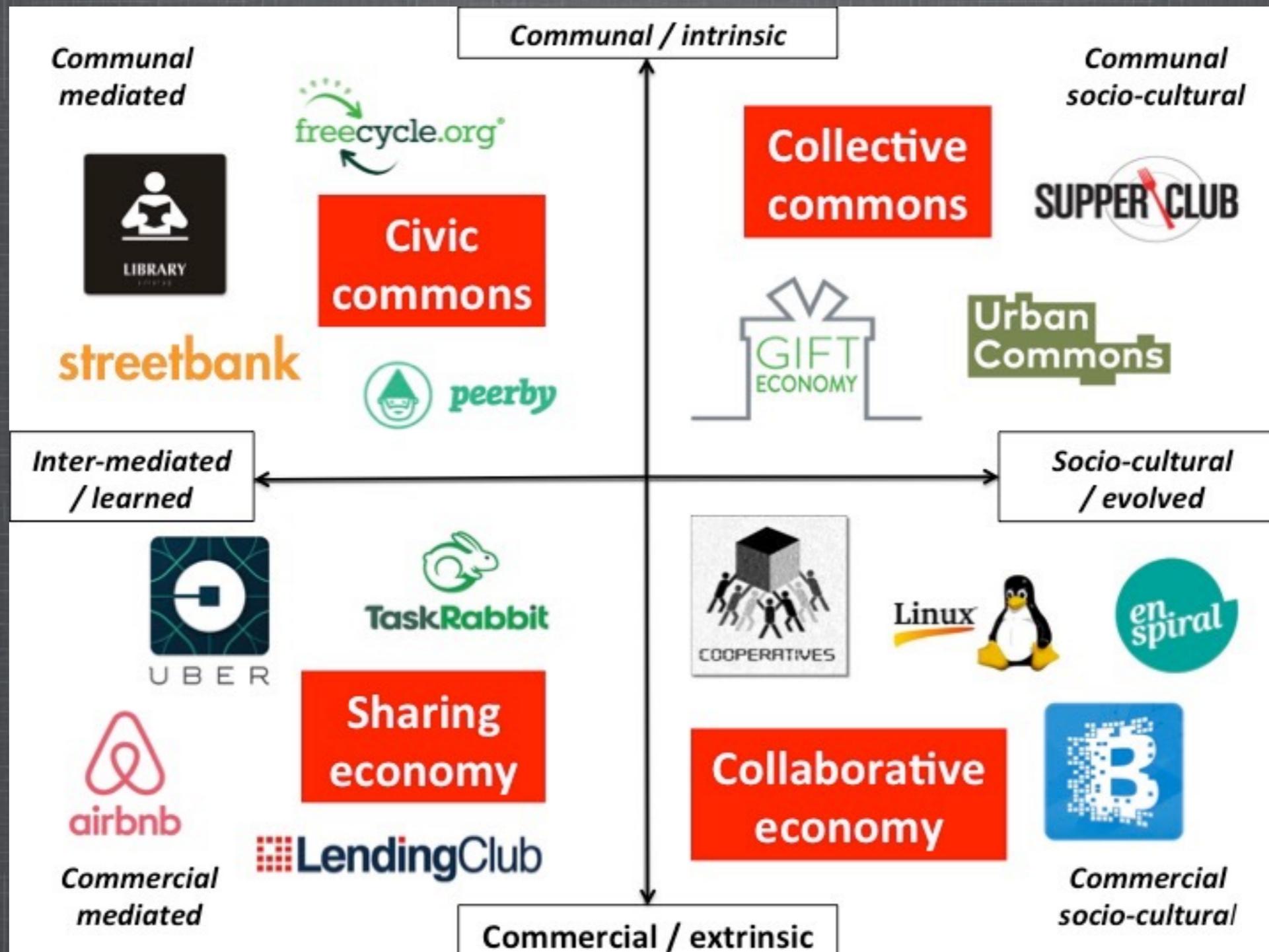
“A reinvention and revival of sharing in our cities could enhance equity, rebuild community and dramatically cut resource use. With modern technologies, the intersection of urban space and cyber-space provides an unsurpassed platform for a more inclusive and environmentally efficient sharing economy.”

(McLaren and Agyeman 2015)



# The Sharing Paradigm

We propose a 'sharing paradigm', which recognises the shift from *socio-cultural* sharing practices to *(inter)mediated* ones as the central transition in contemporary cities, but also highlights a second spectrum from *communal/intrinsic* to *commercial/extrinsic* models.



# A tale of two discourses: the *sharing economy* vs the *sharing paradigm*

| Sharing 'Economy'                  | Sharing 'Paradigm'                            |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Economic activity                  | Social, cultural, political activity          |
| Economy underpins society          | Society underpins economy                     |
| Environment as source of resources | Environment as fundamental arena of evolution |
| Autonomous individuals             | Interdependent and vulnerable people          |
| Transactional                      | Relational                                    |
| Market-based 'solutions'           | Political and behavioural solutions           |

# Co-creating the Urban Commons

In *Sharing Cities*, we go well beyond the 'sharing economy', exploring approaches that are more *cultural* than commercial, more *political* than economic, and that are rooted in a broad understanding of the city as a *co-created urban commons*.





## *Urbanismo Sociale in Medellín*

*Building an urban commons*

Library parks

Public transit

Public facilities

Education and arts

Funded with revenues from public utilities

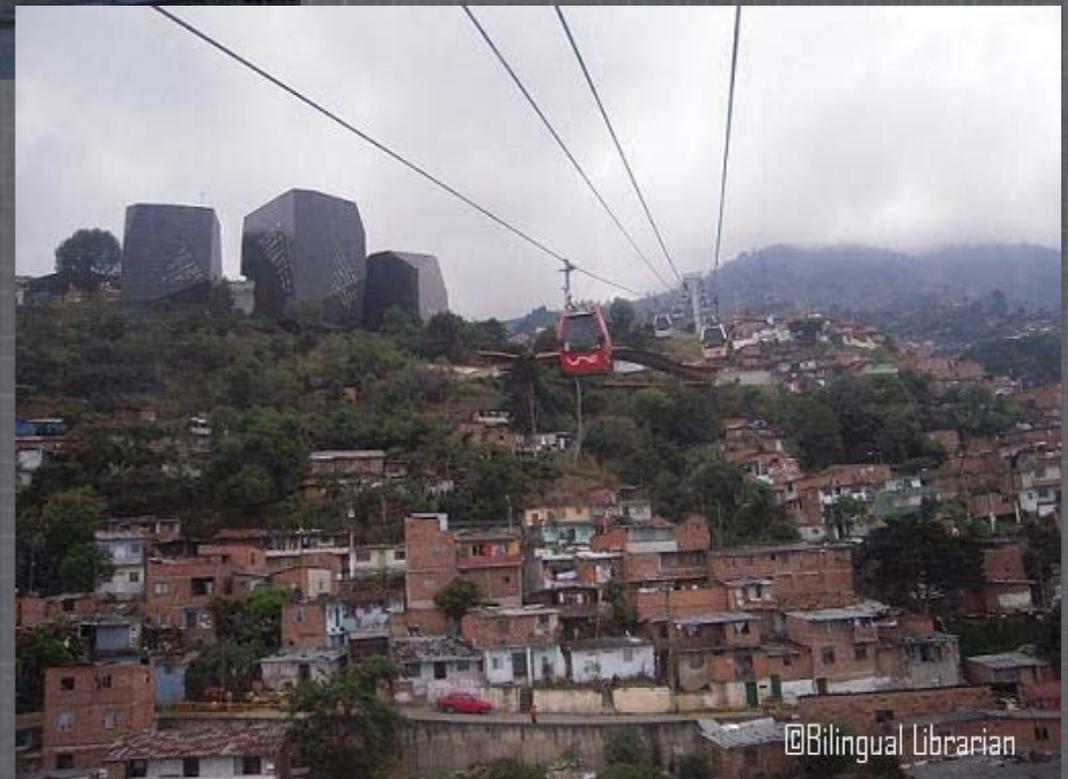
Participatory planning and budgeting

# Medellín

“The generator of the change strategy was the philosophy of, and department of urbanismo social (social civic planning) of the Medellín Academy. In the mid-1990s the idea that a focus on a) empowering citizens and b) beginning in the poorest neighborhoods began to inform the discourse.

The City’s Plan (2004) mentions that: “*public space and infrastructure must become the framework where education and culture are cultivated in places of encounter and coexistence.*” In this way, shared public spaces were seen as focal and were to be designed to fit into and enhance poorer neighborhoods including the award winning Parque Biblioteca, (library park), where people can come to read and use computers or simply relax.”

# Medellín



# Just Sustainabilities in policy, planning and practice: summary

“managing our *co-existence in shared space*” (Healey, 1997);

fostering *belonging* (recognition, difference, diversity, inclusion) and thinking about what cities can *become* (smart, sharing, sustainable);

fostering engagement, belonging, using ‘*deep ethnographies*’;

engaging *intercultural, culturally competent* planning and policymaking

practicing ‘*humane-scaled*’, and ‘*human-scaled*’ urban planning and design;

*Above all, social justice never simply ‘happens’ in planning processes and outcomes. It must be intentional, implicit and front and center in our work.*

Thank you

