

# Co-creating cities of the future: Are We Asking the Right Questions?



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Twitter @julianagyeman #justsustainabilities

# Part I: The background: *Just Sustainabilities*

## JUST sustainabilities

Development in an Unequal World



Edited by **Julian Agyeman,**  
**Robert D. Bullard,** and **Bob Evans**

The book broke new ground by embarking on a sustainability and sustainable development-based discourse 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)

# The problem: How do we balance *environmental quality* and *human equality*?

“This social justice perspective must be included in green campaign agendas because, short of coercive measures, true environmental well being will only exist when there is human well being.”

(Agyeman, 1988)

“Equity, that’s not an issue for us. We’re here to save the world.”

(Interview with Greenpeace UK, 1990)

“the issue of environmental quality is inextricably linked to that of human equality. Wherever in the world environmental despoilation and degradation is happening, it is almost always linked to questions of social justice, equity, rights and people’s quality of life in its widest sense”.

(Agyeman, Bullard and Evans, 2003)



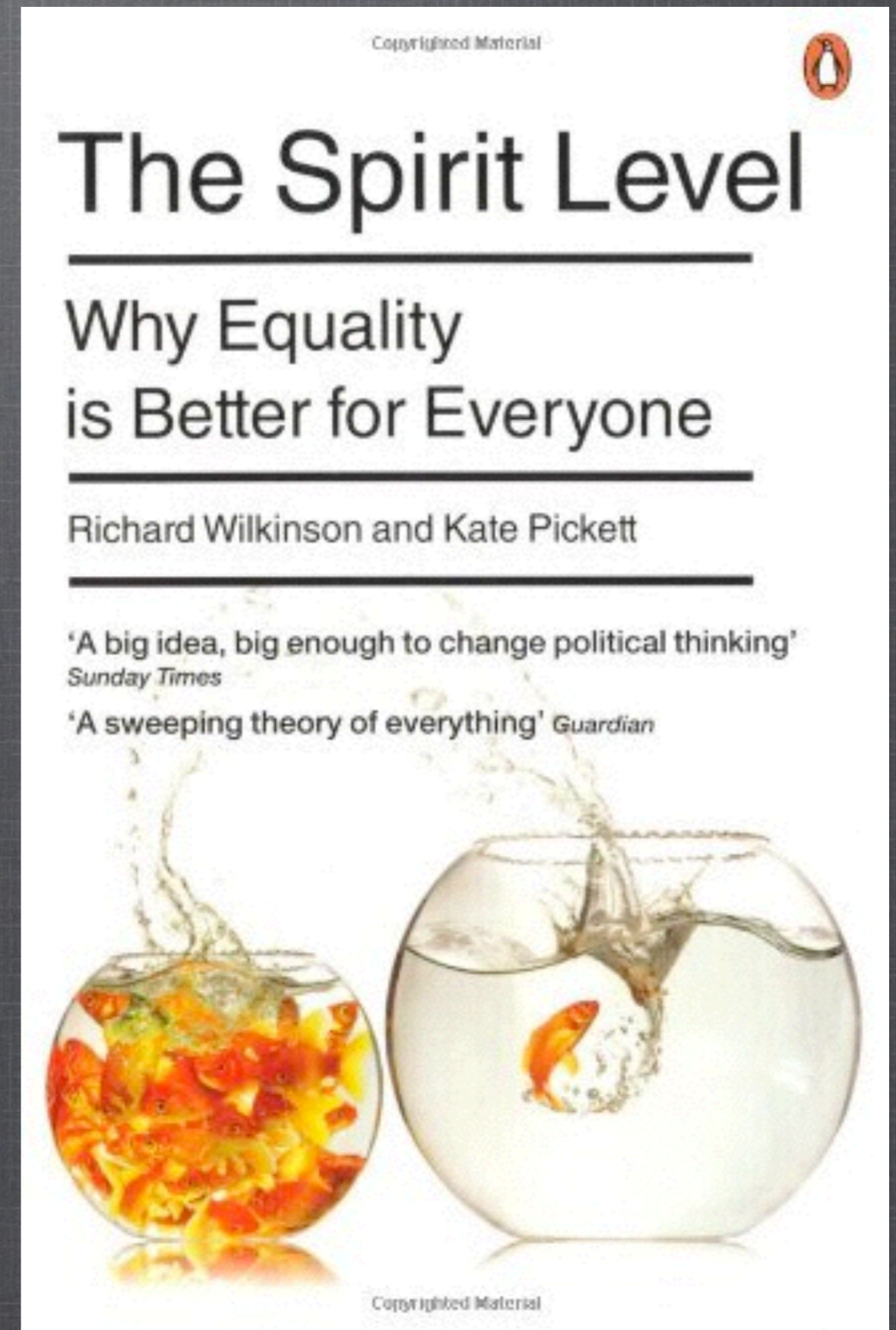
# Interrelated: *human equality* and *environmental quality*?

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.**



# Human equality and environmental quality as activism(s): Two separate US activist paradigms.....

## Env. Sustainability

## Environmental justice

“more than 40 percent of the largest cities..had sustainability projects on the web, but only five of these dealt with environmental justice.”

(Warner 2002)

“while there has been an increase in the number of cities incorporating environmental justice elements into sustainability plans since the early 2000s, their conceptualizations and implementations of sustainability remain highly constrained”

(Pearsall and Pierce 2010)

“most cities that have sustainability indicators do not explicitly use social or environmental equity”.

(Portney 2003)



The two dimensions of EJ:

It is, predominantly at the local and activist level, a vocabulary for political opportunity, mobilization and action.

At the same time, at the government level, it is a policy principle, that no public action will disproportionately disadvantage any particular social group”.

(Agyeman and Evans 2004)

# **Or is there a middle way paradigm, a '*just*' sustainability..... Who is doing it in the US?**

**0 - No mention of equity or justice in core mission statement or in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material;**

**1 - No mention of equity or justice in core mission statement. Limited mention (once or twice) in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material;**

**2 - Equity and justice mentioned, but focused on intergenerational equity in core mission statement. Limited mention (once or twice) in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material;**

**3 - Core mission statement relates to intra- and intergenerational equity and justice, and/or justice and equity occur in same sentence in prominent, contemporary textual or programmatic material.**

Organization	Just Sustainability Index
American Rivers	0
Center for Health and Environmental Justice	3
New American Dream	3
Defenders of Wildlife	0
Earth Island Institute	2
Earthjustice	2
Environmental Defense	3
Environmental Law Institute	1
Friends of the Earth	2
Greenpeace	1
League of Conservation Voters	0
Izaak Walton League	1
National Audubon Society	0
National Environmental Trust	0

**“New American Dream helps Americans consume responsibly to protect the environment, enhance quality of life, and promote social justice.”**



**“Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.”**



Organization	Just Sustainability Index
National Parks Conservation Association	1
National Wildlife Federation	0
Natural Resources Defense Council	2
Nature Conservancy	0
North American Association for Environmental Education	2
Physicians for Social Responsibility/ Environmental Health Action	1
Redefining Progress	3
Resources for the Future	0
Sierra Club	2
The American Solar Energy Society	0
The Ocean Conservancy	0
The State PIRGs	0
The Wilderness Society	1
WWF	1

“Explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth. Practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources. Educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment. Use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.”



“Deliver to future generations an unspoiled legacy of wild places, with all the precious values they hold: Biological diversity; clean air and water; towering forests, rushing rivers, and sage-sweet, silent deserts.”





**“US Big Green” All White Men?**

**Nature Conservancy? White male**



**League of Conservation Voters? White male**



**World Wildlife Fund? White male**

**Environmental Defense Fund? White male.**



**Friends of the Earth? White male.**

**National Audubon Society? White male**

**But wait.....**

No, not all white men....



In 2014, Annie Leonard (“Story of Stuff”) heads Greenpeace USA

In 2014, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) announces Korean American Rhea Suh as New President



And, from 2015-17, Aaron Mair chosen as first African-American president of The Sierra Club

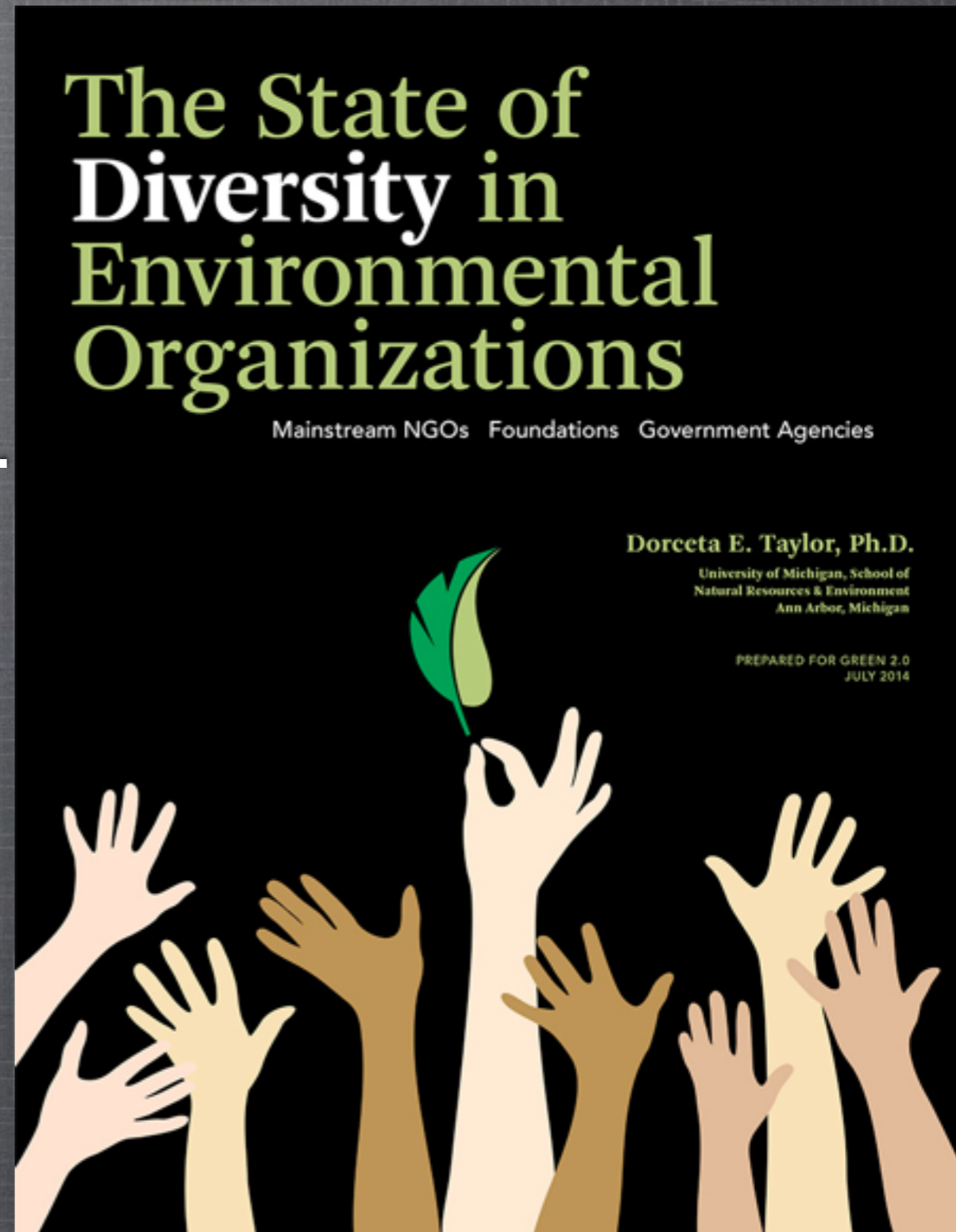


# There's more to do: Green 2.0

Green 2.0 is an initiative dedicated to increasing racial diversity across mainstream environmental NGOs, foundations and government agencies.

The Green 2.0 working group advocates for data transparency, accountability and increased resources to ensure that these organizations increase their diversity.

The most influential environmental NGOs and their funders will commit to and implement measures to scale up diversity, especially at the senior executive and board levels



# Urban Ecology, San Francisco: A case study in just sustainabilities.

“Urban Ecology has not focused on the traditional environmental priorities of preserving land, air and water. Neither have we had a traditional community development focus aimed at, for example, generating affordable housing. Rather, our work has integrated elements of these disciplines and others, with *healthy human habitats* as the common denominator”.

*Healthy human habitats* = Just sustainability

*Community Design Program* -

Planning and Design services to low income communities.

*Sustainable Cities Program* -

Approaches municipal governments to promote more just and sustainable development patterns.



# Networks: Bringing activist paradigms together through coalitions or “movement fusion?”

“*Clean Buses for Boston*” was an Environmental Justice/Green Groups coalition that focused on an agenda that *all could agree on* and delivered 350 CNG buses.



“Movement fusion is a necessary ingredient for the long term success of the environmental justice movement because, put simply, environmental justice advocates do not have a large enough power base to win the larger struggle for justice on their own”.

**Sustainable  
Communities**  
and the Challenge of  
Environmental  
**Justice**



*(Cole and Foster 2001)*

## **Just sustainabilities definition:**

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

**(Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2003)**

**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’)**

**(Agyeman 2013)**





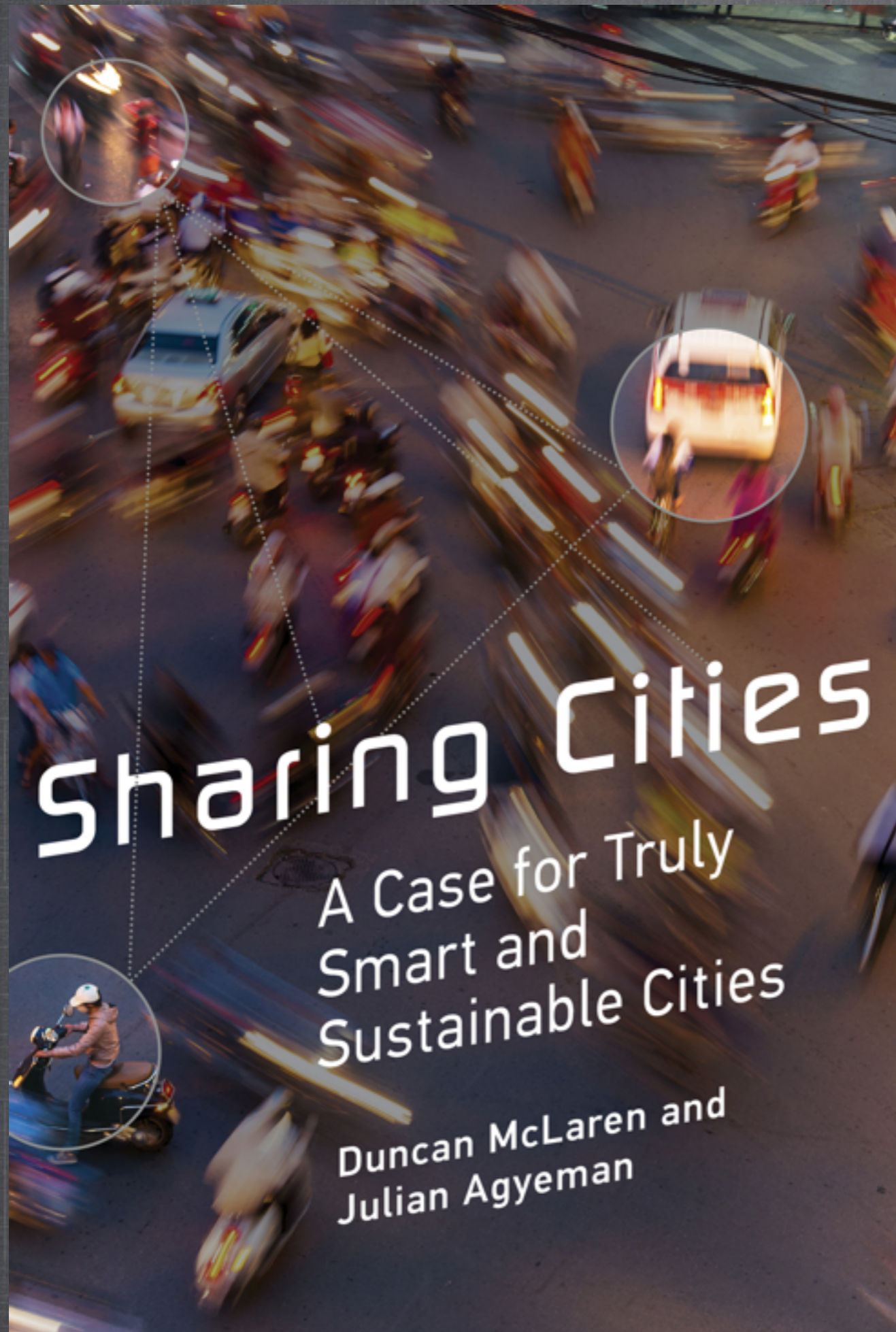
Introducing  
**Just Sustainabilities**  
Policy, Planning and Practice



**Julian  
Agyeman**

**Just Sustainabilities**

Policy, Planning and Practice



**Part 2:  
The overarching  
question:**

**“managing our co-  
existence in *shared*  
space”**

**Healey (1997)**

# Question 1

Are we asking not what is *probable*, but what is *possible*?



# Question 2: Are we planning for 'intercultural' cities?

Where there is

a 'diversity advantage';

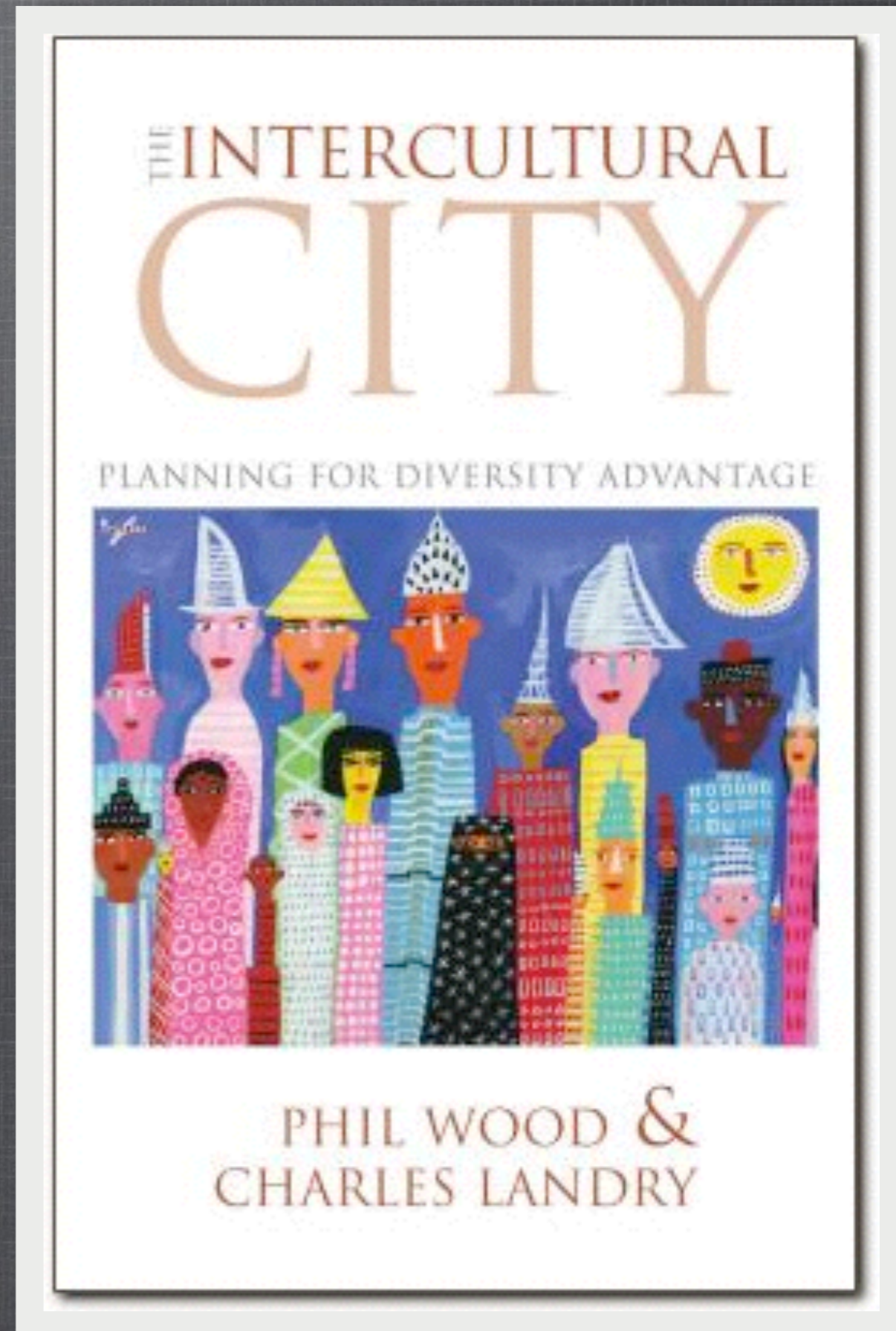
interaction/exchange of ideas between different cultural groups;

a pluralist transformation of public space, institutions and civic culture;

proactive engagement between cultures;

mutual learning and joint growth;

cultural competency



# Question 3:

Are our community's spaces spatially 'just'?

Södra Vägen, Gothenburg, Sweden

Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA



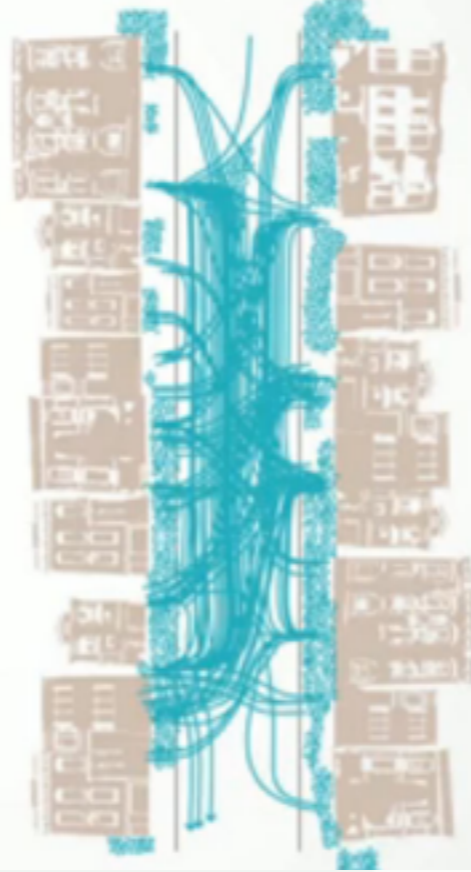
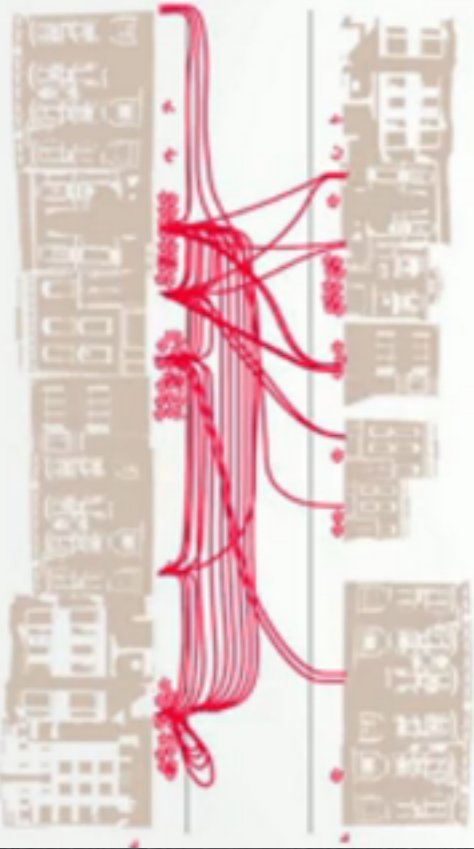
Streets are our most commonly used public space. Södra Vägen has been *democratized* but not Mass Ave. What does this say to adults, children who use these streets daily and become acculturated to *spatial justice* on Södra Vägen or *spatial injustice* on Massachusetts Avenue?

# Social Interactions on Three Streets - Neighboring and Visiting

HEAVY TRAFFIC

MODERATE TRAFFIC

LIGHT TRAFFIC



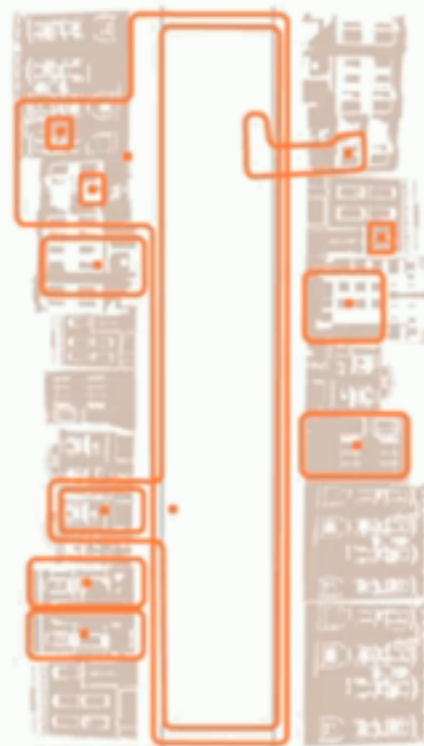
Where people have friends  
Where people gather

# Home Territory on Three Streets

HEAVY TRAFFIC

MODERATE TRAFFIC

LIGHT TRAFFIC



Areas people indicated as their "home territory"

# Delivering 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?



# Question 4: 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*?

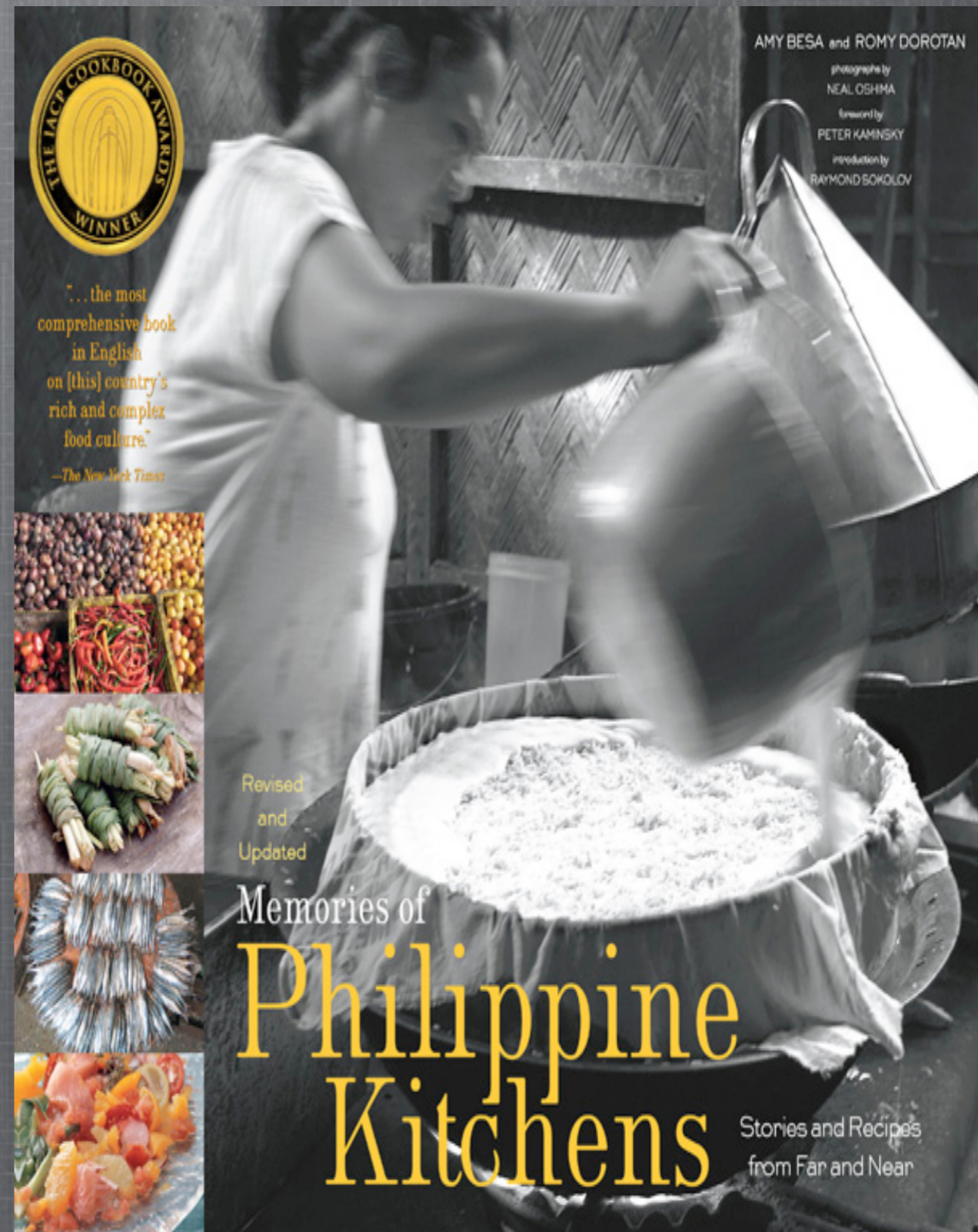


George and Julia Bowling, Maryland



# *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.



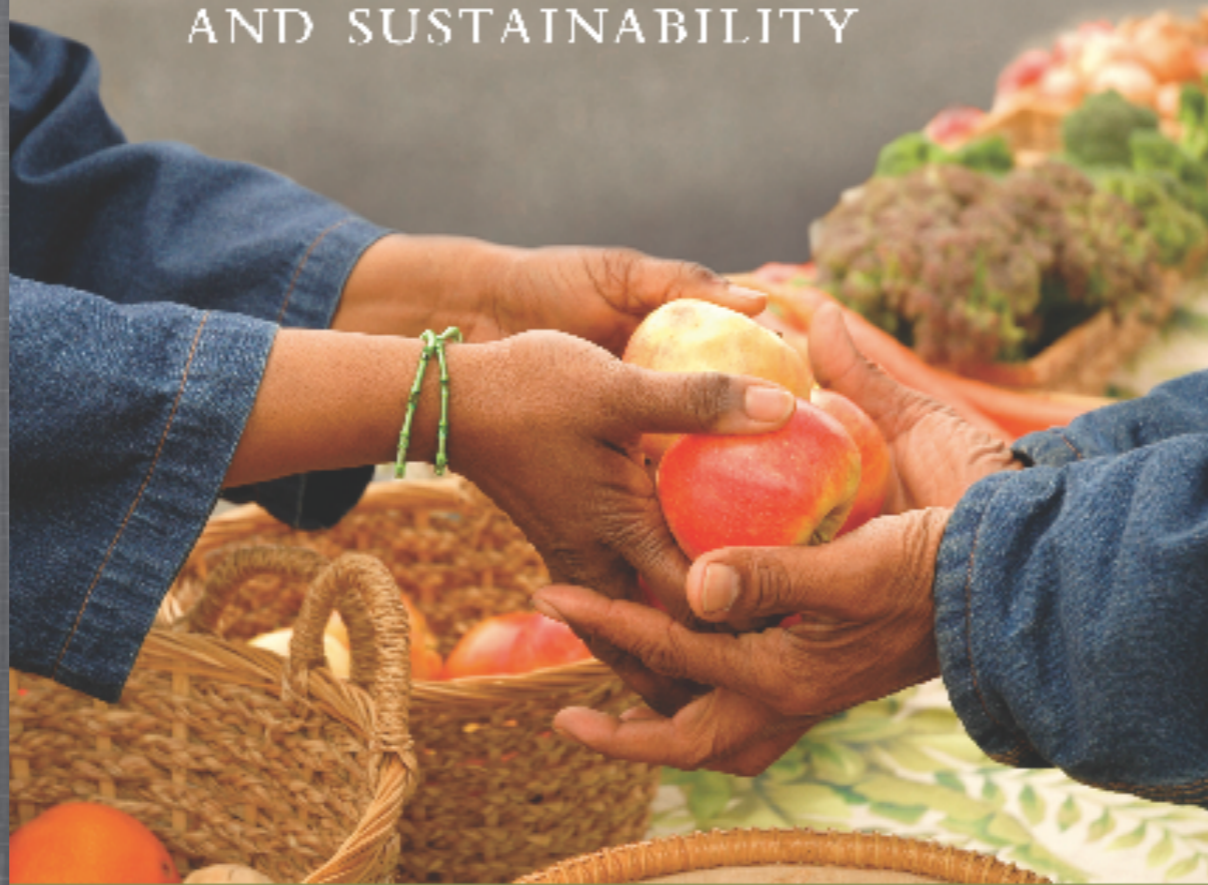
# Parallel local food networks in Metro Vancouver

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.'



# Cultivating Food Justice

RACE, CLASS,  
AND SUSTAINABILITY



EDITED BY  
Alison Hope Alkon AND Julian Agyeman

# Question 5:

## What are Complete Streets, who decides?

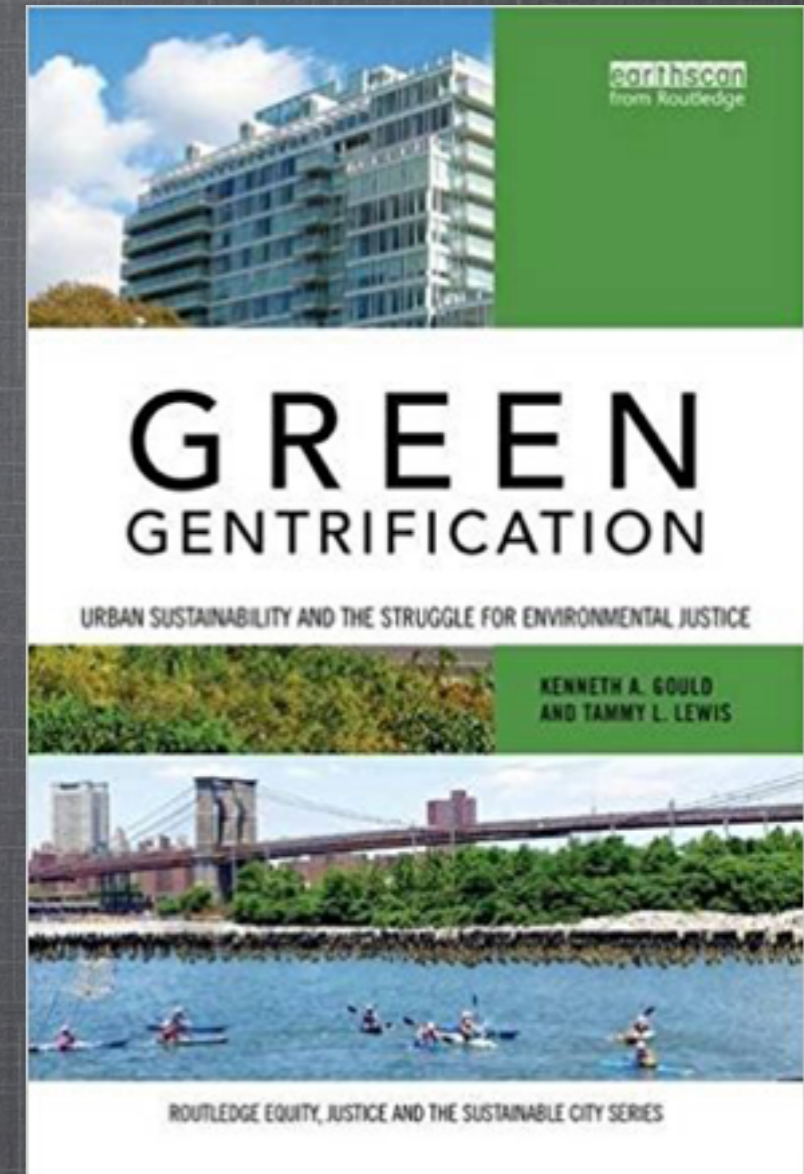
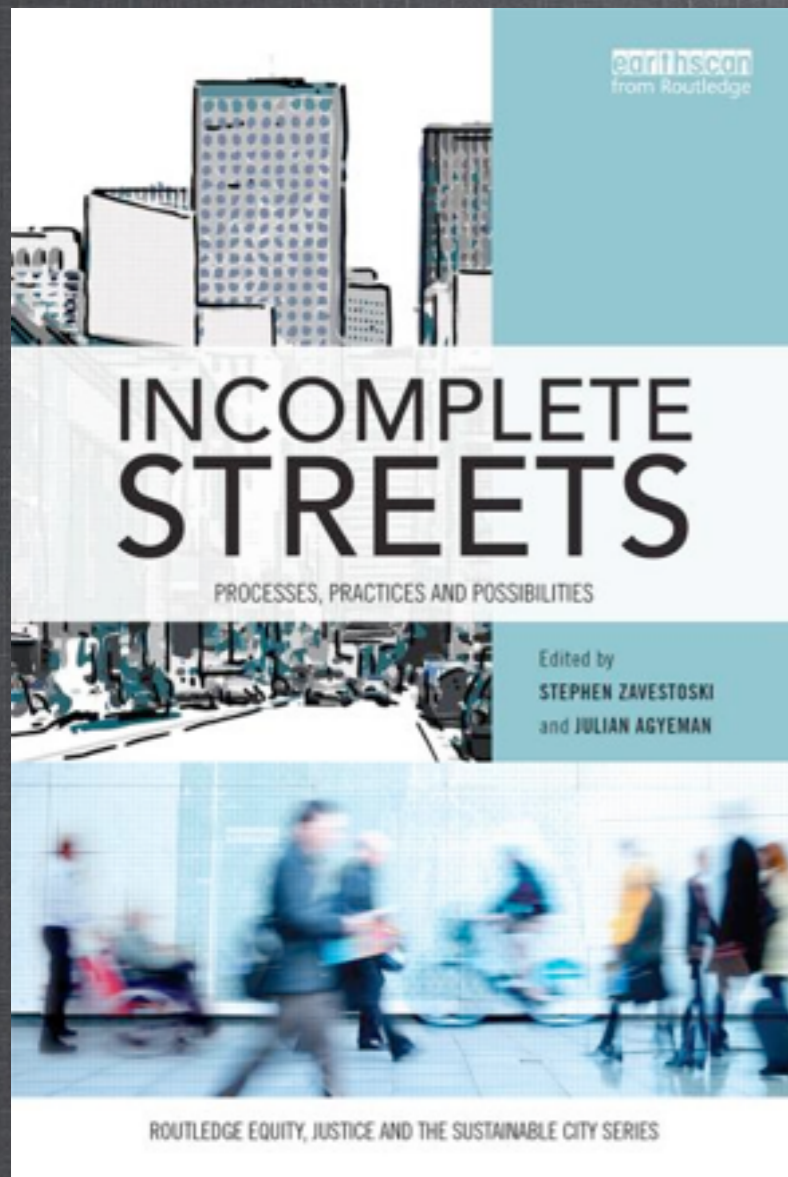


# Complete Streets: Urban Design Disconnect?



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 *urban design-focused* Complete Streets rhetoric disconnects streets from their significant *social, structural, symbolic, discursive, and historical realities.*

# Complete Streets and gentrification?



“These physical changes can make certain street users and the dwellers in some neighborhoods, invisible, further diminishing their rights and roles in the community. In these *predominantly low-income communities and neighborhoods of color*, people worry that such changes will foster gentrification”

Zavestoski and Agyeman (2014)

# Question 6: Who is using bike share schemes?



# What would a bike-share look like if it were designed around equity and justice?

## Ethnicity

- Boston is a majority minority city.

## But...

- 85.7% of Boston cyclists are caucasian
- 87% of Hubway members are caucasian

**Bicycling is growing fastest among African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans, rising from 16% of bike trips in 2001 to 23% in 2009**

Photo: Ed Hernandez  
Credit: Liz Clayman

New Report: [bit.ly/1avt705](http://bit.ly/1avt705)  
[#pedalingequity](https://twitter.com/pedalingequity)



The policing of communities of color has always had a large impact on **HOW** we get around our communities.

Miguel Ramos



# Question 7:

Does your organization look like the people it serves?



If not, are you legitimate?

There is a pressing need is for a more diverse set of  
*place-making and development professionals*

A word cloud centered around the phrase "Shared Space" in a large, dark green font. The words are written in various colors (brown, green, black) and orientations, representing concepts related to urban planning and community development. The words include:

- Apartness
- Communication
- Values
- Desires
- Principles
- Conflict
- Aspirations
- Non-places
- More-than-local
- Collaboration
- Togetherness
- Engagement
- Scales
- Awareness
- Consensus
- Intra-generational
- Vision-sharing
- Democracy
- Participation
- Resources
- Beyond-global
- Personalities
- Geography
- Who Decides
- Priorities
- People
- Comfort
- Rights
- Virtual
- Practices
- Places
- Stakeholders
- Responsiveness
- Responsibility
- Power
- Accountability
- Respect
- Inter-generational

***Co-creating cities of the future:  
Are YOU Asking the Right Questions?***