

Theories of social and spatial justice: dialogues with Geography beginning in the 1970s

Jean Legroux

Universidade Estadual Paulista.
Presidente Prudente. São Paulo. Brasil

legrouxjean3@gmail.com

 0000-0002-3811-4180

e-188003

revista

Geo 

USP

espaço e tempo

Volume 26 • n° 1 (2022)

ISSN 2179-0892

How to cite this article:

LEGROUX, J. Theories of social and spatial justice: dialogues with Geography beginning in the 1970s. **Geosp**, v. 26, n. 1, e-188003, apr. 2022. ISSN 2179-0892. Available at: <https://www.revistas.usp.br/geosp/article/view/188003>. doi: <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2179-0892.geosp.2022.188003>.



This article is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

Theories of social and spatial justice: dialogues with Geography beginning in the 1970s

Abstract

The debate around justice has been gaining ground in geography, especially beginning in the 1970s, with two seminal works, *A theory of justice* (Rawls, 1971) and *Social justice and the city* (Harvey, 1973). Beginning then, and without pretension of exhaustivity, we propose a journey through the discussions between several theories and principles of justice. As many processes analyzed in geography – such as segregation, marginalization, exclusion, and differentiation – expose injustices with a strong spatial expression, this reflection on justice offers theoretical and analytical tools for geographical analyses. In other words, we intend to establish the outlines of this discussion, to contribute to the understanding of the opening of geography to philosophical and ethics concerns. In that respect, we aim to present a wide vision of justice, around the tripod redistribution, recognition, and space, to finish with considerations about the concept of spatial justice.

Keywords: Theory of justice. Spatial justice. Geography. Urban Studies.

Teorias da justiça social e espacial: diálogos com a geografia a partir da década de 1970

Resumo

O debate em torno da justiça vem ganhando lugar na Geografia, principalmente a partir dos anos 1970, com a publicação de duas obras fundamentais: *A theory of justice* (Rawls, 1971), e *Social justice and the city* (Harvey, 1973). No marco temporal da década de 1970 até o momento atual e sem pretender ser exaustivo, este artigo apresenta um percurso através dos debates entre diversas teorias e/ou princípios de justiça. Na medida em que muitos processos analisados em Geografia – como a segregação, a marginalização, a exclusão e a diferenciação – revelam injustiças de forte expressão espacial, esta reflexão sobre a justiça oferece ferramentas teóricas e analíticas relevantes para as análises geográficas. Em outros termos, trata-se de estabelecer os contornos desse debate para contribuir com o entendimento da

abertura da Geografia a preocupações ético-filosóficas. Nesse sentido, apresenta-se uma visão ampla da justiça, em torno do tripé redistribuição/reconhecimento/espaço, para terminar com considerações sobre o conceito de justiça espacial.

Palavras-chave: Teorias da justiça. Justiça espacial. Geografia. Estudos urbanos.

Las teorías de la justicia social y espacial: diálogos con la Geografía desde los años 1970

Resumen

El debate alrededor de la justicia ha ganado espacio en la geografía, especialmente a partir de los 1970s, con atención a *A theory of justice* (Rawls, 1971) y *social justice and the city* (Harvey, 1973). A partir de ahí, y sin pretensión a la exhaustividad, ese artículo pretende presentar un recorrido a través de los debates entre diversas teorías e/o principios de justicia. En la medida en que muchos procesos analizados en geografía – como la segregación, la marginalización, la diferenciación – revelan injusticias de expresión espacial, esta reflexión sobre la justicia ofrece herramientas teóricas pertinentes para los análisis geográficos. En otros términos, se establecen los contornos del debate, para contribuir a la comprensión de las implicaciones de la apertura de la geografía a preocupaciones filosófico-éticas. Así, se presenta una visión amplia de la justicia, articulada alrededor del trípede redistribución, reconocimiento y espacio, para finalmente hacer algunas consideraciones sobre el concepto de justicia espacial.

Palabras clave: Teorías de la justicia. Justicia espacial. Geografía. Estudios urbanos.

Introduction

Many processes and concepts in research on the relationship between space and society aim to explain unequal and differentiating situations, emphasizing their social and spatial dimension: segregation, differentiation, and (socio-spatial) fragmentation, discrimination, exclusion, marginalization, gentrification, etc.

This article explores some of the theoretical and ethical debate around the issue of justice – with the hypothesis that understanding the broad outlines of this debate can enrich geographic analyzes that discuss situations and processes that are unfair or in which there is no

consensus. Although the debate is not new – particularly at an international level – we believe that the presentation of different theories of justice is not as abundant in Portuguese.

In other words, considering this debate means challenging and examining different theories of justice and/or ethical and moral principles (which guide the definitions of justice) in geography, to deepen the analysis of certain processes and concepts. This raises other types of questioning, such as: What is unjust? Why is it unjust? To whom is it unjust? On what scales is it unjust? Where is it unjust?

The answer to these questions usually reveals the polysemic and conflicting character of the question of justice, because arguing or justifying the unjust nature of a given geographic process requires positioning from an ethical and philosophical point of view. With this in mind, it is worth stating that the diversity of concepts around the idea of justice does not delegitimize this theme as a theoretical-analytical tool for geography. Instead, it allows researchers to substantiate and explain the ideological implications of the concepts and hypotheses that they adopt.

Here, this exercise adopts a time frame that mainly covers the period from the 1970s to the present, when the notion of justice has been increasingly approached by geography. At least two works justify going back to the literature of the 1970s. On the criteria of ‘objectivity’ and ‘scientificity’, a part of geography avoided the theme of justice, rarely debating the contradiction between economic growth and equity (Brennetot, 2011). This position changed with the publication of *Social justice and the city*, a book by David Harvey (1973) in which he attempts to unravel the ‘hidden mechanisms’ of inequalities and confront the positivism of the geographical discipline. The *Theory of justice*, by John Rawls (1971), also represents a starting point for the geographical discussion around justice. In this theory, the *maximin* principle (give more to those who have the least) still guides many principles and programs that aim at equity through redistribution and reparation, such as *Bolsa Família* in Brazil. This exercise of exploring the contours of the debate on justice is relevant insofar as the different conceptions of justice also pervade the spaces, objects, actions, and actors that geographers research.

The article is organized as follows: in the following section, we propose a starting point that distinguishes the notions of inequality and difference, on the one hand, and equality and equity, on the other. Then, the conception of justice as equity (the Rawlsian conception) is explored as opposed to the utilitarian view. Finally, theories of Marxist thought are presented, placing the limits of the (re)distribution paradigm and incorporating the paradigm of recognition and tolerance. Finally, the notion of “spatial justice” is addressed and presented as essential to the debate.

Inequality or difference? Equality or equity? A starting point for the debate about spatial justice

A first step in the issue of justice consists of distinguishing *differences* – *a priori*, ‘neutral’ and ‘essential’ – and *inequalities*, which are circumstantial, constructed as a function of the power games present in a given society. A difference can constitute an inequality if it becomes

a criterion for a distinct treatment (slavery, for example), and vice versa, an inequality can be naturalized to the point of becoming a difference (the nobles, for example) (Barros, 2006). However, addressing the ethical dimension is still essential in this debate.

Inequality is a specific form of difference between people, which is not *a priori* 'natural', about which an ethical concern is formulated (Smith, D., 1994), i.e., when individuals or groups are treated different, although there are no identifiable moral differences between them. In other words, it is about distinguishing between the idea of justice as equality and the idea of justice as equity. The concept of equity admits the existence of just inequalities (which can and should remain) and unjust inequalities (which must be corrected). The difficulty of achieving a situation with 'perfect' or complete equality¹ also provides greater interest to the notion of equity, which allows differentiated treatment between individuals to combat unfair differences. However, on what ethical criteria is it based? The question is contentious as: Who decides the criteria for assessing the existence of inequalities? What should be equal? How are the criteria decided? For example, is an inequality created for the elderly and pregnant women – who have preferential seating on public transport, as society and the law considers them deserving of this priority – a fair inequality, or should it be repealed?

The notions of equality and equity cover two distinct political visions. For some, the concept of equity is an effective and concrete approach to reducing inequalities; for others, it curtails the search for equality, because it legitimizes what could be unequal, by defining what should be corrected (Young, 1990). In other words, redistribution and compensation policies are understood by some authors as mechanisms that do not question the structurally unequal capitalist system, which is based on the concentration of wealth and an unfair socio-spatial division of labor (Smith, N., 1984; Harvey, 2008).

However, some authors advocate overcoming this conflict by approaching the notions of equity and equality in complementarity terms: "Equity is not opposed to equality. It presupposes, on the contrary, the search for more demanding criteria of equality" (Fitoussi; Rosanvallon, 1996² apud Paulo, 2006, p. 25). However, this definition exposes its plural and conflicting character. Who decides what needs to be fixed? How to ensure that the chosen criteria are not determined by the dominant order? How can we ensure that some groups, because they have more visibility and claim power, do not get more reparations than others?

Whether defined as equity, equality, or even, as well-being, good-life, or the *right to the city*, the issue of justice, due to the diversity of concepts at play, keeps the theoretical debates alive (Smith, D., 1994; Gervais-Lambony; Dufaux, 2009; Soja, 2010; Brennetot, 2011; Carlos; Alves; Padua, 2017; Van Den Brule, 2020).

To outline a proposal for the genealogy of the different lines that structure the current debate, we begin with two works. *A theory of justice*, by Rawls (1971), proposes the priority of

1 Engels, for example, in a letter to Marx in 1875, did not deny the irreducible character of some unequal differences: "Between one country and another, one province and another and even one locality and another there will always exist a certain inequality in the conditions of life, which it will be possible to reduce to a minimum but never entirely remove" (apud Smith, D., 1994, p. 49)

2 FITOUSSI, J.-P.; ROSANVALLON, P. *Le nouvel âge des inégalités*. Paris: Seuil, 1996.

the 'just' over the 'good', questioning the models of political philosophy that are based on the maximization of social welfare. In *Social justice and the city*, Harvey (1973) was a pioneer in using the concept of justice when analyzing the geographical problem of social cohabitation in cities.

The break with utilitarianism: John Rawls and justice as fairness

The Rawlsian equity principle against utilitarianism

Early utilitarian theories (Bentham, 1789; Sidgwick, 1907) that advocated the greatest possible well-being for the majority influenced the social sciences and the political and economic ideals of growth and development. Utilitarianism promotes human well-being and is based on the generalized benevolence of individuals: "someone with a utilitarian disposition may act to promote immediate welfare by helping an old person cross the street, for example, or may behave according to such rules as reciprocity or the market exchange market to produce the best eventual welfare outcome" (Smith, D., 1994, p. 59). In this approach, justice is achieved by maximizing collective well-being, considered the sum of individual utilities, i.e., justice is what benefits the majority. For example, Pareto Optimality follows the principle 'of the smallest sacrifice for the fewest possible number of people.' How resources should be distributed, however, is not made explicit once the optimum is reached, which makes it a distribution principle that tends to reproduce the *status quo* (Smith, D., 1994). It remains the backdrop for contemporary urban systems which claim that growth policies result in the greatest good for the greatest number of people (Fainstein, 2010).

The strength of Rawlsian theory consists precisely in the fact that it is not based on theology, altruism, Marxist thought, or a diagnosis of human nature (Fainstein, 2010). Contrary to utilitarian formulations, well-being is not based on the sum of individual situations, leading Rawls to seek a fair theory 'in itself' for society as a whole. Contractarianist and transcendental, more deontological than teleological, his theory is called 'egalitarian liberalism' or 'transcendental institutionalism' (Smith, D., 1994). It consists of imagining, in Rousseau's fashion, an ideal social contract for a society. Thus, the theory starts from a contract between individuals that should be signed in an 'original position', in which no one would have knowledge of their social position nor their personal advantages and abilities (Rawls, 1971). This contract would give rise to five categories of 'primary social goods' desired by rational individuals in this hypothetical situation: (a) fundamental liberties, (b) opportunities offered to individuals, (c) powers and privileges, (d) income and wealth, and (e) social bases of self-respect. Based on these categories, for Rawls, a society is just if it respects three fundamental principles: (i) the principle of equality of liberty (guaranteeing basic liberties for all), (ii) the principle of equality of opportunity (equitable equality of opportunity), and (iii) difference principle, called *maximin* (only inequalities that favor the most disadvantaged should be maintained, or those who have less should obtain more benefits).

This last principle, affirming the priority of equity over efficiency, is the one that most resonates in the scientific and political fields. By promoting redistribution, which maximizes what

a person in an inferior position can obtain, the *maximin* would resolve an impasse of utilitarian theory: the sacrifice of a few for the well-being of the majority.

As an example of the application of Rawlsian theory to a geographical problem, Bret (2006, 2009) analyzes the socio-spatial differentiation of the center-periphery model and its implications in terms of inequality and injustice. The author investigates how growth can lead to development with equity. According to him, Rawls' theory would help to coherently resolve the following contradiction: development is growth with justice, but it is necessarily unequal (Bret, 2009). This contradiction would be resolved by applying the *maximin* principle: if the center (the engine of growth) is able to transform and distribute its wealth, it becomes a pole of development, thus respecting the principle of reparation. In other words, for the author, justice as equity makes it possible to correct inequalities produced by growth, which is necessary for development.

In short, for Rawls, the reasonable takes precedence over the rational, the just over 'the good', and equity over efficiency (Maric, 1996, p. 108). However, a dilemma persists in Rawlsian redistributive justice: How to define disadvantaged individuals or groups, those who will receive differential treatment?

The limits of Rawlsian theory and equity as redistribution

The first criticism of Rawlsian theory is that the concept of equity can, in practice, mitigate injustices without questioning the system that produces them. In this sense, when the idea of equity is captured by the political and media spheres, reparation and redistribution policies sometimes create contradictory situations, which are reflected, for example, in oxymorons like 'human capitalism' or 'green capitalism'. For some, Rawls's original position allows 'coming to Marx as well as Milton Friedman', but, under no circumstances, to liberal or socialist solutions (Harvey, 1973). In this Marxist line, the question is: Why re(distribute) in a capitalist system in which exchange value predominates and in which deprivation, exploitation, alienation, and scarcity of goods and services are inherent? In terms of Harvey (1973, p. 114): "[...] we say that jobs are scarce when there is plenty of work to do, that space is restricted when land lies empty, that food is scarce when farmers are being paid not to produce."

A second criticism points to the transcendental nature, i.e., Rawls' theoretical and universal abstraction, which does not take into account the real historical and social contexts. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the work *The idea of justice* (Sen, 2011), which constitutes one of the main criticisms of the abstract dimension³ of Rawlsian theory: nothing guarantees that, under the hypothetical condition of the 'veil of ignorance', individuals would not choose primary goods other than Rawls's. In other words, Sen (2011, p. 87) invites us to look at "the truly plural and sometimes conflicting interests that affect our understanding of justice." Thus, it is precisely at the point where Rawls' analyzes seem vulnerable that the theory of capabilities begins (Maric, 1996), as discussed below.

3 Despite these criticisms, Rawls envisioned more concrete mechanisms to reduce wealth inequalities through taxation, such as fiscal and redistribution institutions.

Regarding Rawls' primary goods, Sen points out the lack of reparations for disadvantages (such as deficiencies) and/or natural advantages (talent, for example). In other words, Rawls is concerned with a fair distribution of means (primary goods) and Sen with individual capacities to use them to realize ends: It is not enough to have rights, it is also necessary to have the means and the ability to use them; it is necessary to look at 'results' and 'achievements' beyond contracts and move from primary goods to a real assessment of freedoms and capabilities. Thus, the concept of capabilities implies the ability of people to convert primary goods into well-being. In fact, individuals need different amounts of social goods to achieve the same well-being. This stems from Sen's concept of freedom, at the intersection between 'freedom to', that is, positive freedom (which individuals are able to achieve concretely) and 'freedom from' (absence of coercion). In this view, the justice of a society depends on a combination of real institutional and behavioral aspects. Sen (2011, p. 99) asks: "How is it then possible to identify 'just' institutions for a society without making them dependent on people's actual behavior?". To find this 'middle ground', he approaches justice with the artifice of Adam Smith's 'impartial spectator', which would focus on social achievements, on 'real opportunities' and not only on the demands of institutions and rules. According to Connolly and Steil (2009), however, this theory has the same defect as Western Liberalism (which includes Rawls), namely, that it considers the individual an abstract, universal, atomized entity, without taking into account their social relations or historical, cultural, or spatial specificities.

Advancing in the debate, we examine Marxist approaches to justice connected with analyzes within the scope of capitalism in its current phase and urban society – in the Lefebvrian sense, in which the urban prevails in the relationship between space and society (Lefebvre, 1970).

A geographical interpretation of justice in Marxist thought: Toward a broad view of the injustices of capitalism

In addition to Rawls' work – considered an epistemological rupture in *Political Philosophy* (Smith, D., 1994) – Harvey's (1973) accuses the analyzes of that time of legitimizing liberal ethics. For him, the 'utilitarian' ethic would manifest itself through contemporary capitalism, in which individual freedom is prioritized, that is, the right of a person to achieve his goals with the least possible barriers. To understand this ideology, an excerpt from Hayek (1944, p. 78) is particularly enlightening:

The system of private property is the most important guarantee of freedom, not only for those who own property, but scarcely less for those who do not. It is only because the control of the means of production is divided among many people acting independently that nobody has complete power over us, that we as individuals can decide what to do with ourselves.

We now address Harvey's contribution to the debate and some subsequent ones, which are part of the continuity.

The author proposes an analysis of spatial distribution, based on the principles of social justice, presenting two questions: “what are we distributing?” and “among whom or what are we distributing it?” It is worth noting that, for Harvey (1973, p. 101) “territorial distributive justice automatically implies individual justice.” The author compiles principles⁴ (Harvey, 1973, p. 100), three of which would contain the essence of territorial social justice. They are, in order of importance: (i) the need: individuals may require different levels of benefits, in which may be an unequal depending on the need; (ii) the contribution to the common good: those who engage in activities that benefit more people have higher demand than those who practice activities that benefit fewer people; and (iii) the merit, not in the sense of ‘meritocracy’, but of having more rights for those who face greater difficulties and challenges, in their contribution to production (the heaviest and most dangerous jobs, such as miners, for example). As for the first criterion, Harvey lists the main needs, which may vary according to spatial location: food; housing; healthcare; social, educational and environmental services; consumer goods; leisure opportunities; and local and transport infrastructure. The second criterion represents, from a spatial point of view, the impact that the allocation of resources in one territory can have on another. The third, in its geographical application, makes it possible to consider the difficulties related to a territory and the possible compensations that these cases may require.

Based on these three criteria, the author defines ‘territorial social justice’ with two principles: (i). The distribution of income should be such that (a) the needs of the population within each territory are met, (b) resources are so allocated to maximize interterritorial multiplier effects, and (c) extra resources are allocated to help overcome special difficulties stemming from the physical and social environment. (ii) The mechanisms (institutional, organizational, political and economic) should be such that the prospects of the least advantaged territory are as great as they possibly can be” (Harvey, 1973, p. 116-117).

Specifically in these pages, Harvey incorporates Rawls’ *maximin* principle to “to extend it, later, to the concept of ‘needs’, compatible with Marxist theory”⁵ (Brennetot, 2011, p. 120, our translation).

The questions posed by Harvey are in some ways more assertive than his normative formulation of social justice itself. Despite proposing a theory of justice, the author formulates principles and questions related to the spatial forms that would allow social justice to be maximized and to the mechanisms that could guarantee that the poorest regions receive more benefits and facilitate the assessment of which territories are disadvantaged, among others.

4 (1) Inherent equality: all individuals have equal rights regardless of their contribution, (2) estimation of services in terms of supply and demand: individuals who need rare and essential resources take priority over others, (3) need, (4) inherited rights: individuals have property rights or other rights handed down to them from previous generations, (5) merit, (6) contribution to the common good, (7) true productive contribution: individuals who produce the most benefits to the society – properly measured – have more possibilities to demand than those who bring less, and (8) efforts and sacrifices: individuals who make greater effort or suffer greater sacrifices with respect to their innate capacities must receive more than they make any less effort.

5 “[...] afin de l’étendre, dans un second temps, au concept de ‘besoins’”, lui-même compatible avec la théorie marxiste” (Brennetot, 2011, p. 120).

On the one hand, based on Marxist philosophy, Harvey rejects the Kantian categorical imperative⁶ to understand reality as a social and historical construction: the notion of justice embodied in capitalist states reflects the interest of the ruling classes. However, he does not rule out justice as an instrument, a mechanism in the process of raising awareness of the exploited, within conflicts and struggles: “Justice is essentially to be thought of as a principle (or a set of principles) for resolving conflicting claims” (Harvey, 1973, p. 97). On the other hand, he later advocates social justice beyond ‘narrow relativism’, according to which morality would be entirely inscribed in space and time, or as simply a cultural issue (Harvey, 1992). In this sense, moral principles can be found in Marxist theory, although not explicitly, such as the case of the concept of exploitation, which implies the appropriation, by the owners of the means of production, of the surplus value produced by the workers, in the form of rent, profit, or interest. In Marx, the appropriation of this surplus is not described as unfair in itself; however, terms such as ‘theft’, ‘embezzlement’ or ‘assault’ are noted, which can be considered an “invocation of transhistorical and non-relative standards.” (Smith, D., 1994, p. 90). Thus, exploitation, a corollary of “bourgeois law”, is considered an unfair advantage in a system of (re)distribution that concerns access to resources and means of production. Hence, the criterion of ‘need’, to replace the ‘bourgeois right’. Harvey (2008) ‘historical-geographical materialism’ – which aims to show the spatiality of this dimension and geographically understand the mechanisms of reproduction of inequalities, exploitation, and domination – has influenced geography and urban studies. According to Brennetot (2011, p. 130, our translation), since the 1990s:

[...] a more critical current of social geography, inspired by the ideas of David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre, revisits the notion of spatial justice to denounce the geographical excesses of liberalism and the discrimination suffered by certain minorities [...] but also to propose alternatives to urbanity, seeking to reconcile multiculturalism and equity.⁷

The publication *Geography and social justice* (Smith, D., 1994) defends the centrality of justice in Geography. In the same year, a conference took place to celebrate twenty years of *Social justice and the city*, which gave rise to the publication of the book *The urbanization of injustice* (Merrifield; Swyngedouw, 1997). In turn, Fainstein (2010) states that she had the idea for her book, *The just city*, at the 1994 conference. In it, the author advocates justice as the main norm for the evaluation of urban policies, a reaction against the importance given to competitiveness and the domination of neoliberal policies (Fainstein, 2010, 2013). Reports about the growth of alienation and the injustices of capitalism in its current phase, with strong urban expression, gave Young (1990) the bases to formulate a robust proposal for the definition of justice, which is what we will discuss next.

6 Based on rational thought, the Kantian categorical imperative is based on the “pure” reason of human beings, that is, on an autonomous thought, which leads to a morality independent of moral, religious, or political justifications.

7 “[...] un courant plus critique de géographie sociale, inspiré par les idées de David Harvey et d’Henri Lefebvre, réinvestit la notion de justice spatiale pour dénoncer les excès géographiques du libéralisme et les discriminations dont souffrent certaines minorités, [...] mais aussi pour proposer des visions alternatives de l’urbanité cherchant à concilier multiculturalisme et équité [...]” (Brennetot, 2011, p. 130).

Iris Marion Young and justice as the absence of oppression and domination: the integration of structural injustices with the cultural variable

For the philosopher and political scientist Iris Marion Young (1990), the individualism assumed by the redistributive paradigm obscures the phenomena of oppression and domination that demand a relational approach. This paradigm would favor the *status quo* of capitalism and justify bourgeois values and morals. This morality and the relations of production and domination of capitalist societies produce injustices, of which Young proposes to study the symptoms:

I argue that instead of focusing on distribution, a conception of justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression. Such a shift brings out issues of decision making, division of labor, and culture that bear on social justice but are often ignored in philosophical discussions (Young, 1990, p. 3).

The author defines justice in a negative way: a situation or a policy is considered fair if there is no oppression or domination. A reference in studies focused on communities and minorities, Young renounces a general or universalist theory of justice, centered on groups (and/or communities), such as blacks and LGBT populations, rather than individuals, and denounces approaches centered exclusively on socioeconomic inequalities. In other words, the 'just' decision is obtained in a relationally, from the negotiation between groups that are defined more by affinities than by formal criteria. The difference that underlies the identity of the group is not fixed, but the product of interactions. Identities and differences are contextual in Young's thinking (Gervais-Lambony; Dufaux, 2009).

Young's theory (1990) distinguishes two types of injustices: domination (which prevents some groups from making choices) and oppression (which prevents them from acquiring the means to make those choices). These two concepts are supported by the fundamental values of Marx's 'moral perspective', such as freedom (in the sense of self-determination), human community (superior to individualism), and self-realization. The politics of difference, which the author defends, is based on the absence of oppression of minorities and their consequent recognition. The search for justice thus consists of fighting five forms of oppression (Table 1): exploitation, marginalization, impotence, cultural imperialism, and violence.

Young is part of an approach – like Nancy Fraser (1996, 2004), below – that introduces culturalist considerations into Marxist analysis. While the first three forms of oppression are linked to power relations derived from the social division of labor, some struggles, such as feminist and racial agendas, evidence other forms of oppression (cultural imperialism and violence). Strictly speaking, we can imagine how these concerns can be combined with other interpretations. In sociology, the mechanisms that reproduce inequalities, analyzed through the *Bourdieusian habitus*⁸, for example, have commonalities with the concept of cultural imperialism – in the sense that some groups have privileged access to the codes and resources of the dominant culture –

8 From a sociological point of view, *habitus* was popularized by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002). It is basically the behavior and customs acquired by an individual or a social group and which are deeply rooted in their mind and body.

or even the cultural domination of the middle classes, which were in charge of conveying the values of the modern world. In Lefebvre’s view (1971[1968], p. 48):

A new mystification appears: the middle classes will not have more than a shadow of power, more than a crumb of wealth, but it is around them that the scenario is organized. Their ‘values’, their ‘culture’ has an advantage or seems to have an advantage because they are ‘superior’ to those of the working class.

Table 1 – Forms of oppression according to Iris Marion Young (1990)

Forms of oppression	definition
exploitation	The capitalist system oppresses disadvantaged classes, which do not benefit from an equitable redistribution of labor income, are excluded from decision-making processes, and do not have their collective identity recognized.
marginalization	Exclusion from the functional society, especially employment. Designating individuals with a vulnerable profile, such as single mothers or the ‘without’ (without a job, homeless, etc.), it leads to loss of self-esteem and affects self-actualization.
powerlessness	The exclusion from decisions (regardless of economic redistribution, as opposed to exploitation) in all spheres of life in society (work, living spaces, etc.).
cultural domination	The experience and culture of a dominant group is universalized and established it as a norm.
violence	Violence, often physical, can be linked to phenomena of intimidation, humiliation, and stigmatization, which are suffered by different groups (women, blacks, Asians, Arabs, LGBT).

Organization: The author.

Redistribution and Recognition: Nancy Fraser’s Synthesis

The presented authors, theories, and principles of justice may be contradictory or complementary. Within the elements discussed, we identified some trends and dichotomies: *universalism/normativism* versus *relativism/culturalism*; *structural* or *transcendental dimension* versus *procedural* (or relational) *dimension*; or even ‘ethical universalism versus cultural relativism’ (Van Den Brule, 2020, p. 301). The content of this spectrum is a frequent concern for geography that seeks to understand the pairs of inequalities-differences (and their most common solutions, respectively, redistribution and recognition/tolerance). Fraser (1996, 2004) – known for the concept of (social, cultural) recognition and respect for differences – argues that justice must be achieved through simultaneous redistribution and recognition: “In short, no redistribution without recognition” (Fraser, 1996, p. 49).

This vision of justice is built on the notion of ‘parity of participation’: on the one hand, the *redistribution* paradigm is centered on socioeconomic injustices, which implies a focus on the mechanisms of exploitation and reproduction of inequalities; and, on the other hand, the *recognition* paradigm focuses on cultural injustices, as the product of social models of representation, interpretation, and communication, which are related to cultural domination, denial of recognition, and contempt.

Fraser (1996) also differentiates two strategic (and political) positions in the fight against injustices in the redistribution paradigm: ‘affirmative redistribution’, whose objective is to correct a maldistribution, without disturbing the structural economic and political mechanisms that create these inequalities and unfair differences; and ‘transformative redistribution’, whose objective is to change the social structure, the economic system, or the social division of labor.⁹ With these considerations in mind, a brief presentation is necessary about the implications of the adjective ‘spatial’ and of spatiality in the debate on justice.

Spatial justice: the importance of the spatial dimension in the justice debate

Spatiality and space are directly linked to the idea of justice and vice versa. In other words, the question of justice is of direct interest for geographers. For Lévy and Lussault (2003, p. 531), the association between justice and space supposes, on the one hand, that “space offers content to define what is just” and, therefore, to define what is unjust. On the other hand, they suggest that “the capacities for action over space allow us to approach a just agency”. Ivaldo Lima (2020, p. 130, our translation) states that, it is “a scientific concern with fair access to space, or that, with the democratic use of space, which is equivalent to talking about the right to space”. Somehow, the defense and theorizations of the ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 1968), of ‘territorial justice’, and of the ‘right to space’ (Lima, 2020), of the ‘right to land’ in peasant and rural struggles, or the ‘right to housing’, anywhere, are claims for a justice to be won by and for space.

Therefore, the ‘spatial’ adjective of justice is fundamental. In his ‘Differentialist Manifesto’, Lefebvre (2020[1970]) suggests that the ‘right to difference’ – which is significantly connected with the paradigms of recognition and tolerance – is a fundamental element of the *right to the city* or the *right to space*. This is because the conceived space, as a product of the dominant order, oppresses and homogenizes everyday life and spatial practices and eliminates the differences found in the lived space (Lefebvre, 1970, 1974).

⁹ Between these two, the author identifies a third group called the *non-reformists reform*, which seeks to transform the structures of the system in the long term by progressively improving justice in cities and territories. Fainstein (2010, 2013), who belongs to this group, proposes an “operational” vision, in which one must work with existing institutions in the current context of capitalist urbanization in Western democratic countries. Defending herself from the Marxist critique according to which urbanism policies will continue within the “capitalist regime of rights and freedoms”, the author argues that the system can change progressively, based on continuous pressures for justice.

On the urban question about forms and scales, which is preferable? Which urban forms and models are less unequal or unjust? What and to whom is it unjust? On what scale is it unjust? Where is it unjust? All these considerations provide content to the term spatial justice, due to the need to look for the spatiality of injustices to better understand and fight them.

The expression *spatial justice* appeared in the 1970s (Soja, 2010; Van Den Brule, 2020); however, until the 2000s, the expression and the specific concept of 'spatial justice' were still rarely used (Dikeç, 2001). This may be because the term *spatial* in the related to justice appeared less evident, although with a proliferation of expressions that revolve around the same theme:

The idea of spatial justice sometimes appears as just city, territorial justice, social justice and the city, environmental justice, right to the city, territorial equity, unjust territories, unjust urbanization, fair city, etc. (Van Den Brule, 2020, p. 300, our translation).

However, beginning in the later 2000s, a series of works have specifically addressed the issue of spatial justice. The journal *Justice Spatiale/Spatial Justice*¹⁰ (Qui sommes nous?, 2009), for example, promotes transdisciplinary and international discussions on the relationship between justice and space. The reflection also advanced with a series of publications focused on the urban and the search for justice in cities – including *The just city* (Fainstein, 2010), *Searching for a just city* (Marcuse; Connolly; Novy, 2009), and *Seeking spatial justice* (Soja, 2010), or even, a fundamental contribution in Brazil, the work *Justiça espacial e o direito à cidade* (Carlos; Alves; Padua, 2017).

In these approaches, the urban stands out in the search to define, based on the injustices and alienations that are increasingly visible from a spatial point of view, as space has become the main object of contemporary capitalist accumulation, in the current process of neoliberalism urbanization and the commodification of cities (Harvey, 1989, 2008; Jonas; Wilson, 1999). In these processes that create injustice, the spatial dimension is intrinsically embedded: the segregation, fragmentation, differentiation, marginalization, peripheralization of popular classes, etc. Connolly and Steil (2009) state that the search for a just city starts from the injustices of accelerated urbanization and its ramifications on violence, insecurity, poverty, and exploitation. These involve multiple divisions between class, gender, and racial categories and have a fundamental spatial dimension.

Thus, social justice becomes spatial when spatialities and injustices are brought into the discussion. The work *La production de l'espace* (Lefebvre, 1974) provides a basis for several authors who insist on the spatial dimension of justice, with promising interpretations and revisions (Dikeç, 2001; Carlos; Alves; Padua, 2017; Gervais-Lambony, 2017, Soja, 2010; Marcuse; Connolly; Novy, 2009).

Both the triple conception of space (Lefebvre, 1974) and the notion of the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1968) still include developments pertinent for reflection on spatial justice. In relation

10 The journal *Justice Spatiale/Spatial Justice* began with the aim of continuing the debates of the colloquium *Justice and Injustices Spatial* (University of Paris-Ouest Nanterre in 2008).

to the first – with the *conceived space* (of power, the ‘representations of space’), the *perceived space* (of spatial practices), and the *lived space* (of the ‘spaces of representation’ and everyday life) – it still inspires contemporary visions of spatial justice.

For Gervais-Lambony (2017), for example, it is not so much about the spatiality of injustices linked to redistribution and recognition, but about considering space as a third polarity, insofar as its production is political and social. In the same vein, in a *spatial dialectic of injustice*, it is about studying the *spatiality of injustice* and the *injustice of spatiality* (Dikeç, 2001). The first refers to the spatial dimension of justice, which implies a spatial perspective to discern injustice ‘in’ space. In other words, the spatial organization, and the production of space impact the behavior of individuals, political action, and the development of society (Soja, 2010). The second implies the reproduction of the prevailing structures, of the dominant system, that is, ‘through space’.

The term *spatial justice* corresponds, within the scope of the theme of justice, to the *spatial turn* asserted by the social sciences, restoring the explanatory power of spatiality in the production and permanence of injustices. In urban spaces, elements linked to space and territories shape spatial injustices: different movements, (i)mobilities, rhythms, times, locations, and physical and symbolic barriers. However, these same elements can serve to fight against injustices. To the extent that, in the production of contemporary space, space itself is the main element of accumulation. Space is where claims and struggles for justice are concretized and expressed, in a complex, conflicting, and procedural way. We could say that solutions are contemplated in the lived space, in this sense, in: “[...] everyday life, as a place of oppressions-reductions from everyday space to the homogeneous [...], contradictorily, the place of desire that clashes with the manipulated world of needs” (Carlos, 2017, p. 55, our translation).

The triplicity of space could, for example, provide analytical – and spatial – depth, integrated into interpretive frameworks such as Young’s (1990). With Lefebvre (1968, 1974), we could say that justice is achieved when there is no domination, oppression, alienation, and fragmentation of space(s), individuals, and social groups. In this sense, the concept of the *right to the city* – despite its relative capture by State mechanisms – still has transformative potential, in the procedural and spatial dimension of justice (Carlos; Alves; Padua, 2017), when examined “in light of a utopian project of building a new (urban) society [...] as the negative of the modern world” (Benach, 2017, p. 11, our translation).

The ‘gathering of differentiating forces’ in the search for justice must occur in the lived experience (Carlos, 2017), which requires production – in the order of differential space (Lefebvre, 1974) – appropriation and transformation of space-time, of conceived space. In other words, spatial justice expresses its potential in the lived space or in the recovery of this space: the real above the virtual, the use value above the exchange value, the desire above the need, and the true differences above the imposed differences. The *right to the city*, the *right to difference* and the *right to resistance* (or to fight) (Dikeç, 2001) are, in this sense, interesting ways to affirm the importance of spatiality in the debate about justice in Geography.

Conclusion

The pluridimensionality of justice (Gervais-Lambony, 2017), which is the understanding and distinction between different views and approaches to justice, allows rich dialogues in geography. It is not just about looking for empirical efficiency of theoretical models but adapting them to a certain 'ethical operability' (Brennetot, 2010), in other words, producing 'moral geographies' (Lima, 2020). The confrontation between different conceptions of justice – which are also present in society and in space – have generated theoretical attempts at classification. This is the case of the 'geoethics' proposed by Brennetot (2010), which groups different systems of thought around justice, allowing a balance with four major 'ethical categories': (i) property, (ii) equity, (iii) tolerance, and (iv) harmony.

These views, as we have seen, can be complementary and/or contradictory. The principle of redistribution can be combined with the principle of tolerance and recognition of differences and minorities. The ethics of 'property', i.e., neoliberal, and mercantile ethics, which values the individual right above the collective, however, is not very compatible with principles of equity and social recognition. More than choosing one model or another – as we have seen, there are Marxist and liberal, theoretical and procedural, culturalist, and universalist, etc. – it is about defending the idea that a geographical approach should explain the principles of justice from which it observes reality and enunciates "rationally the concept of justice to then rationally qualify the fair or unfair situations" (Bret, 2009, p. 17, our translation).

Thus, some ethical categories that support certain visions of justice may not serve as a theoretical framework in the analysis, but their mark in space cannot be ignored. For example, despite presenting itself as neutral and 'homogenizing', the logic of the *conceived space* (Lefebvre, 1974) produces a growing alienation and domination of life and spaces. Therefore, the moral principles of property ethics – principles of individual liberty, meritocracy, growth above equity, majority above minorities, and exchange value above use value – must be considered not so much for their relevance in theoretical terms, but because they exist in the spaces, territories, struggles, and discourses that, among others, geographers research.

Finally, the fourth ethical category of justice, not explored here, is harmony, which corresponds to a vision that seeks the fulfillment and full potential of human life, harmony with nature, well-being, and happiness, and that translates into various concepts such as environmental justice, or *buen-vivir*.

In geography, the spatial dimension and spatialities should be discussed, because it is in space that these different visions are confronted, which, transferred to the analysis of certain actions, geographical objects, spatial operators, or individuals, reveal the interactions and struggles on different scales (Legroux, 2016). In our view, in addition to the need to reestablish the concept of the *right to the city*, in view of the broad or manipulative uses of the original idea (Carlos; Alves; Padua, 2017), the ideas of unity and difference produced (as opposed to induced differences, manipulated) (Lefebvre, 1974) seem to offer fertile developments to search for justice, in theory, both in praxis and in space.

Finally, this review of the debate could still be enriched by empirical applications, either with the adoption of one of the visions of justice to study a certain geographic object, or with the analysis of a certain case in the conflict between these different visions.

References

- BARROS, J. D'A. Igualdade, desigualdade e diferença: contribuições para uma abordagem semiótica das três noções. **Revista de Ciências Humanas**, Ed. UFSC, n. 39, p. 199-218, 2006. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5007/%25x>.
- BENACH, N. Da desigualdade social à justiça espacial. In: CARLOS, A. F. A.; ALVES, G.; PADUA, R. F. (Org.). **Justiça espacial e o direito à cidade**. São Paulo: Contexto, 2017. p. 15-32.
- BENTHAM, J. **Introduction to the principles of moral and legislation**. London: T. Payne and son, 1789.
- BRENNETOT, A. Les géographes et la justice spatiale: généalogie d'une relation compliquée. **Annales de Géographie**, n. 678, p. 115-134, 2011. Disponível em: <https://www.cairn.info/journal-Annales-de-geographie-2011-2-page-115.htm?contenu=article>. Acesso em: 28 jan. 2022.
- BRENNETOT, A. Pour une géoéthique: éléments d'analyse des conceptions de la justice spatiale. **L'Espace Géographique**, v. 39, n. 1, p. 75-88, 2010. Disponível em: <https://www.cairn-int.info/revue-espace-geographique-2010-1-page-75.htm>. Acesso em: 28 jan. 2022.
- BRET, B. Interpréter les inégalités socio-spatiales à la lumière de la Théorie de la Justice de John Rawls. **Annales de Géographie**, n. 665-666, p. 16-34, 2009. Disponível em: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-Annales-de-geographie-2009-1-page-16.htm>. Acesso em: 28 jan. 2022.
- BRET, B. Inégalité sociale et cohésion territoriale, pour une lecture rawlsienne du territoire brésilien. **Géocarrefour**, v. 81, n. 3, p. 182-192, 2006. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4000/geocarrefour.1931>.
- CARLOS, A. F. A. A privação do urbano e o direito à cidade em Henri Lefebvre. In: CARLOS, A. F. A.; ALVES, G.; PADUA, R. F. (Org.). **Justiça espacial e o direito à cidade**. São Paulo: Contexto, 2017. p. 33-62.
- CARLOS, A. F. A.; ALVES, G.; PADUA, R. F. (Org.). **Justiça espacial e o direito à cidade**. São Paulo: Contexto, 2017.
- CONNOLLY, J.; STEIL, J. Introduction. In: MARCUSE, P.; CONNOLLY, J.; NOVY, J. (Ed.). **Searching for the just city: debates in urban theory and practice**. London/ New York: Routledge, 2009. p. 1-16.

- DIKEÇ, M. Justice and the spatial imagination. **Environment and Planning**, v. 33, n. 10, p. 1785-1805, 2001. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1068%2Fa3467>.
- FAINSTAIN, S. S. Planificación, justicia y ciudad. **Urban**, n. 6, p. 7-20, 2013.
- FAINSTAIN, S. **The just city**. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010.
- FRASER, N. Justice sociale, redistribution et reconnaissance. **Revue du Mauss**, n. 23, p. 152-164, 2004. Disponível em: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-du-mauss-2004-1-page-152.htm>. Acesso em: 28 jan. 2022.
- FRASER, N. Social justice in the age of identity politics: redistribution, recognition and participation. **The Tanner Lectures on Human Values**, Stanford University, p. 1-68, 1996. Disponível em: https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_resources/documents/a-to-z/f/Fraser98.pdf. Acesso em: 28 jan. 2022.
- GERVAIS-LAMBONY, P. A justiça espacial, experiências e pistas de pesquisa. In: CARLOS, A. F. A.; ALVES, G.; PADUA, R. F. (Org.). **Justiça espacial e o direito à cidade**. São Paulo: Contexto, 2017. p. 117-132.
- GERVAIS-LAMBONY, P.; DUFAUX, F. Justice... Spatiale! **Annales de Géographie**, n. 665-666, p. 3-15, 2009. Disponível em: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-Annales-de-geographie-2009-1-page-3.htm>. Acesso em: 28 jan. 2022.
- HARVEY, D. **Géographie de la domination**. Paris: Les Prairies Ordinaires, 2008.
- HARVEY, D. Social justice, postmodernism and the city. **International Journal of Urban and Regional Research**, v. 16, n. 4, p. 588-601, 1992. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1992.tb00198.x>.
- HARVEY, D. From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism. **Geografiska Annaler**, v. 71, n. 1, p. 3-17, 1989. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.1989.11879583>.
- HARVEY, D. **Social justice and the city**. Baltimore, MD: Blackwell, 1973.
- HAYEK, F. **The road to serfdom**. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1944.
- JONAS, A.; WILSON, D. **The city as a growth machine: critical reflections two decades later**. New York: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- QUI SOMMES NOUS? **Justice Spatiale/Spatial Justice**, 2009. Disponível em: <http://www.jsj.org/qui-sommes-nous/>. Acesso em: 3 abr. 2014.
- LEFEBVRE, H. **Le manifeste différentialiste**. Caen, FR: Grevis, 2020[1970].
- LEFEBVRE, H. **La production de l'espace**. Paris: Anthropos, 1974.
- LEFEBVRE, H. **Everyday life in the modern world**. New York: Harper & Row, 1971[1968].

- LEFEBVRE, H. **La révolution urbaine**. Paris: Anthropos, 1970.
- LEFEBVRE, H. **Le droit à la ville**. Paris: Anthropos, 1968.
- LEGROUX, J. **L'accueil de la coupe du Monde 2014 et des JO 2016 et les impacts de la "révolution des transports" sur la justice socio-spatiale à Rio de Janeiro**: tout changer pour que rien ne change? Tese (Doutorado em Ciências Humanas e Sociais) – Instituto de Pesquisa e Planejamento Urbano e Regional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, e Universidade Lyon 2, Lyon, França, 2016.
- LÉVY, J.; LUSSAULT, M. Verbete JUSTICE SPATIALE. In: LÉVY, J.; LUSSAULT, M. (Dir.). **Dictionnaire de la Géographie et de l'Espace des Sociétés**. Paris: Belin, 2003. p. 531-534.
- LIMA, I. Em favor da justiça territorial: o encontro entre geografia e ética. **Revista Política e Planejamento Regional**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 7, n. 2, p. 125-148, 2020. Disponível em: <https://www.revistappr.com.br/artigos/publicados/artigo-em-favor-da-justica-territorial-o-encontro-entre-geografia-e-etica-.pdf>. Acesso em: 28 jan. 2022.
- MARCUSE, P.; CONNOLLY, J.; NOVY, J. (Ed.). **Searching for the just city**: debates in urban theory and practice. London/New York: Routledge, 2009.
- MARIC, M. Égalité et équité: l'enjeu de la liberté Amartya Sen face à John Rawls et à l'économie normative. **Revue Française d'Économie**, v. 11, n. 3, p. 95-125, 1996. Disponível em: https://www.persee.fr/doc/rfec0_0769-0479_1996_num_11_3_1099. Acesso em: 28 jan. 2022.
- MERRIFIELD, A.; SWYNGEDOUW, E. (Ed.). **The urbanization of injustice**. New York: New York University Press, 1997.
- PAULO, C. **Inégalités de mobilités**: disparité des revenus, hétérogénéité des effets. Thèse (Doctorat de Sciences Economiques) – Université Lumière Lyon 2, Lyon, 2006.
- RAWLS, J. **A theory of justice**. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- SEN, A. **A ideia de justiça**. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2011.
- SIDGWICK, H. **The methods of ethics**. London: MacMillan, 1907.
- SMITH, D. **Geography and social justice**. Oxford, UK/Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994.
- SMITH, N. **Uneven development**: nature, capital and the production of space. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.
- SOJA, E. **Seeking spatial justice**. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

VAN DEN BRULE, D. M. As diversas abordagens de justiça espacial na geografia. **Geosp**, São Paulo, v. 24, n. 2, p. 297-316, 2020. doi: <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2179-0892.geosp.2020.168714>.

YOUNG, I. M. **Justice and the politics of difference**. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Received: Jun 30, 2021
Accepted: Jan 20, 2022

LEGROUX, J.