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# 3 Cases: London, Paris, and Amsterdam

## London

Economically, socially, and culturally, London is New York's near twin. Our two cities are rivals for dominance in the financial sector, and that sector's ascendancy since the 1980s has brought unprecedented wealth to our respective top tiers, even as other industries that drove growth from the 19th through the mid-20th centuries have contracted, and our economies have polarized into high- and low-end services. In both cities, that polarization is reflected in sharp spatial segregation; you can emerge from any subway stop or tube station, look around, and with a modicum of street smarts, pinpoint at what level on each city's income scale you have stepped out.

London and New York are similar as well — and distinguished from many European capitals — in their ethnic and racial diversity. Over generations, waves of immigrants, first from former British colonies, and more recently from Eastern Europe, have become Londoners; their counterparts an ocean away have become New Yorkers. Though racism and discrimination continue to be pervasive in both the United States and the U.K., citizens of each country's pre-eminent city generally manage to tolerate each other and get on with their lives.

### From the Olympic Bid to the Olympic Legacy

Visiting London in June 2012 afforded the opportunity to explore some of the outcomes of a high-profile competition between New York and London — the 2012 Olympics. London's bid succeeded in part because the integration of the development of the Olympic Park and the regeneration of East



Riders on the Overground — a circumferential transit line, refurbished and extended to connect Outer London boroughs

*Joan Byron*

London's Lower Lea Valley was hard-wired into the proposal from its inception.[10] While the Olympic Park itself was off-limits to urban tourists like myself during the frenetic final weeks before the games, a number of individuals who played key roles in the development of the Olympic Legacy plan and the enhancements already delivered in the Host Boroughs were available to meet and gave generously of their time and thoughts. I was able to see for myself the public realm improvements in the communities surrounding the park, as well as the local and regional-scale transit improvements completed for the Games.

Dan Hawthorn, head of the Greater London Authority's (GLA) London 2012 Unit, described

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[10] Conversations with Mark Brearley, head of Design for London, and Dan Hawthorn, head of London 2012 Unit of the Greater London Authority, and the Convergence Document, cited below.

New Canal Park, Hackney
*Joan Byron*

the relationship between the GLA[11] itself and the agencies established to deliver the Olympic Games, the major venues, and the legacy developments. By separating both the Olympic Delivery Authority (responsible for building and then reprogramming the major venues) and the Olympic Legacy Corporation (responsible for regeneration projects in the communities surrounding the Olympic Park, and for the redevelopment of the Park itself after the Games) from the London Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG), the Greater London Authority was able to maintain control over the design and execution of the plan, and ensure that the interests of its nominal "customer," the International Olympic Committee, did not override the long-term vision of the Olympics as a vehicle for regeneration. He and other commenters pointed to the consistency of vision that was

maintained through the seven-year development process between the 2005 award of the games to London and their remarkably successful presentation in 2012, even through the transition from Ken Livingstone's Labor mayoralty to Conservative Boris Johnson's election in 2009.

Each of the permanent major venues was conceived and designed with a post-Games business plan; while not everything has gone smoothly, major structures including the Aquatic Center, the Velodrome, and the Olympic Stadium itself are on track to become viable public facilities, with relatively lucrative uses in some cross-subsidizing low-cost access to others.[12]

The London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) is responsible for the redevelopment of the 560-acre Olympic Park itself. The park's 20-year buildout will create a total of 10,000 housing units, commercial space and public facilities supporting 8,000 permanent jobs, 252 acres of new open space and permanent sports venues.[13] Importantly, the redeveloped Olympic Park will be integrated into the surrounding communities by new transit, cycling and footpaths, and roads. Most of these improvements were in place before the Games opened; their completion constituted a significant

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[11] The Greater London Authority (GLA) was created by the 1999 act of Parliament that re-established London city government, which had been abolished under Margaret Thatcher's prime ministership in 1986. The GLA is London's permanent administrative authority; the act also established an elected mayor and legislative assembly.

[12] Until early 2013, the Olympic Stadium itself was caught between competing re-use proposals; professional soccer ultimately prevailed over LOCOG chair Lord Seb Coe's vision of a permanent track and field facility.

[13] Figures are for the Olympic Park footprint itself; much more development is anticipated in the surrounding area.

downpayment to communities that were at the same time burdened by one of Europe's largest construction projects.

Eleanor Fawcett, head of design for the LLDC, led the pre-games design and execution of projects "outside the blue fence." These ranged from the restoration of the iconic Hackney Wick sign to the construction of canalside parks and cycle paths. The book *Stitching the Fringe*[14] documents not only the physical projects but the processes of community engagement that conceived and shaped them.

> "*The four key aims of the programme are to:*
>
> - Connect local communities to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park
>
> - Add new amenities to existing public spaces
>
> - Create new spaces to support successful future developments
>
> - Strengthen pride in established neighbourhoods."

According to their planners' accounts, the Olympics served as the indispensable catalyst for the redevelopment of the Lea Valley, which appears as a visible rift in London's fabric created by historic concentration of heavy industry and infrastructure. Environmental cleanup and the undergrounding of numerous high-voltage electric transmission lines required enormous investment by the national government, which only a project as bold as the Olympic bid could have justified.

### More than Growth: "Convergence"

I met as well with Liz Fenton, head of performance and review for the Host Boroughs Unit,[15] and her colleagues responsible for Host Borough public health and employment strategy and also with Kim Chaplain of Workplace Stratford, the agency responsible for maximizing access to games-related jobs for host community residents, who suffer from high rates of poverty and unemployment.

To U.S. eyes, it is impressive that the Olympic plan includes a Convergence Document, which not only laid out broad aspirations for convergence of the health, prosperity, and life chances of East London residents with those of their neighbors across London, but also set quantitative targets for increasing educational achievement and incomes and for improving public health. [16] A report on progress as of 2011 shows that most initiatives have fallen short, and staff of the Host Boroughs Unit were candid in discussing the challenges they faced. The convergence plan has made available some new resources, which have enabled the boroughs to build their capacity for strategic planning and to coordinate their efforts (making it harder, for example, for real estate developers to play the boroughs off against each other in negotiations.) Social marketing campaigns have led to modest gains in childhood immunization, breast-feeding, etc. But hoped-for increases in sports participation have not materialized, and lack of access to affordable post-secondary education has placed the best new job opportunities out of the reach of many east Londoners.

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[15] The Host Boroughs Unit was established by the GLA to coordinate Olympic-related regeneration activity within the six London boroughs — Barking & Dagenham, Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest — whose boundaries lie within and contiguous to the Olympic Park.

[16] *Strategic Regeneration Framework: An Olympic Legacy for the Host Boroughs,* October 2009 http://www.hackney.gov.uk/Assets/Documents/strategic-regeneration-framework-report.pdf

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[14] http://www.londonlegacy.co.uk/the-park/around-the-park/

Stratford Broadway: "Small Retail Units to Let," six weeks before the start of the 2012 Olympic Games

*Joan Byron*

Host borough businesses were also failing to realize the gains they had expected. Local shopkeepers were grumbling that the International Olympic Committee was vigorously enforcing rules prohibiting anyone but its corporate sponsors from using the word "Olympic" in any commercial promotion. Stratford's old-school shopping center was dwarfed, and drained, by the Westfield mega-mall that opened in 2011. Six weeks before the opening of the games, window signs on Stratford's high street offered vacant retail units for rent.

At the same time, area rents are rising. Some social housing developments now charge up to 80 percent of market rate. The low rate of production of new affordable housing, along with policies that give employed households priority for subsidized units, have led to increased overcrowding. In Tower Hamlets, only 35 percent of 2,000 recently completed new housing units are affordable, while 20,000 families remain on the waiting list.

External critics have also noted that the Convergence Plan's measurement tools fail to account for gentrification and displacement; if improvements and new development bring newcomers who skew income and social indicators upward, the plan's metrics will overstate its achievements.

Though the risk of displacement is real, it has not yet widely taken place; a large-scale reproduction of Charles Booth's 1889 map of poverty in London hangs on the Stratford borough office wall, a reminder of the degree to which poverty remains stubbornly anchored to place.

### London's Public Realm: Beyond the Olympic Legacy

Without strong design leadership, it is unlikely that the public space improvements brought about by the Olympics would have remained as true as they have to the regeneration vision that powered the bid, nor would they have been as extensive and as physically transformative as they have indisputably been for the surrounding communities, and for London as a whole. Credit for this accomplishment is due in some measure to Design for London

(DFL),[17] a small and agile team established by the GLA to guide the planning and design of projects meant to bring coherence to the city's vast and unruly public realm.

Even as the Olympic project progressed, DfL was simultaneously responsible for a vast number of small-scale interventions across the city, many of which are likely to have at least as great an impact on the daily lives of nearby residents as the Olympic Park. Mark Brearley, head of DfL since 2008, spoke with me about its



Improved streetscape and typical shopfronts in Barking

*Joan Byron*

work to improve the quality of London's 600-odd high streets, the social and economic hearts of the vast agglomeration of villages that the city is comprised of. Many were already struggling against competition from malls and chain stores when the summer 2011 riots broke out. What began with a shooting by police of a young man in Tottenham spread to scores of commercial areas in London and beyond, ultimately resulting in five deaths and £200 million in property damage.

In response, Mayor Boris Johnson committed £70 million to long-term improvements in the most affected areas. An additional £50 million has been awarded for locally initiated projects aimed at increasing the attractiveness and economic competitiveness of local high streets. While no one in or

outside of government expects that good design alone will overcome the sense of economic and social exclusion deepened by a stubborn recession, the £120 million commitment represented by the Mayor's Regeneration Fund and the Outer London Fund demonstrates a recognition — by what in British terms is a conservative mayoral administration — that the gulf in economic opportunity and quality of life between London's rich and poor areas must be addressed.

Design for London's role has been to coordinate the work of public entities and private consultants, and to provide a unifying vision. For high streets, the vision's key elements are simplicity — de-cluttering of streets, and the use of simple and durable materials that can be well-maintained without resorting to U.S.-style private underwriting of expenses. I visited a number of projects where parks, squares, and high streets have been regenerated with a workman-like touch. But the clean new detailing of

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[17] In January 2013, the Greater London Authority announced plans to eliminate Design for London as a unit, eliminating most of its staff and merging the remaining positions into a new Regeneration Unit within the London Development Agency.

streets in Leyden, Barking, and other places makes for a jarring contrast with the content of working-class street economies, in which every known means of extracting money from poor people's pockets jostle for space. Every other store seems to be a pawnshop, a betting parlor, or a payday loan operation. Good design may indeed help to instill positive feelings about one's neighborhood, but no one, including the staff of Design for London, would claim that streetscape quality alone is sufficient to overcome London's entrenched disparities.

### London Citizens: A Healthy and Equitable Public Realm Requires more than Hardware

If London is the European city whose economy — and depth of economic disparity — most closely resemble those of New York, it is fitting that an emerging activist movement also bears a striking family resemblance to its U.S. counterparts. London Citizens, a coalition of local groups trained in U.S.-style community organizing, waged a campaign that forced the London Olympics contractors, subcontractors, and vendors to pay all workers a London Living Wage, defined as the hourly rate required for a Londoner to provide for a family's basic needs with earnings from a 40-hour week, now £8.55 per hour (the U.K.-wide minimum wage is £5.93 per hour.) London Citizens is now working to extend the Living Wage to workers in other low-wage sectors like health care and building mainte-nance.

Inequality in the public realm is linked to racial and economic disparity, but it can also be generational. Mark Brearley at Design for London spoke of the use of open spaces by a mix of ages as a hallmark of community health. Young members of London Citizens recognize this as a life-and-death matter, with gang violence effectively putting public spaces off-limits to young people in many parts of the city. In response, they are mobilizing citywide to reduce gang crime among London youth.

During my visit, I sat in on a planning meeting for the group's CitySafe Campaign. The campaign is focused on local high streets, where young leaders recruit shopkeepers to identify their stores as Safe Havens for young people fearing or fleeing from attacks. A series of events they called "The 100 Days of Peace" (modeled on an ancient Olympic tradition providing safe passage between countries during the 50 days before and 50 days after the games) was launched with a spectacular dance flash mob in Euston Station on June 9, 2012.[18]

London Citizens' work is a reminder that a city's public spaces are a fabric woven not only of transit lines and streetscapes, but from a web of social and economic relationships that can be strained by inequality, or strengthened by shared commitments to fairness and inclusion.

## Paris

Paris boasts a historic center whose quality makes it the most visited city in the world. Its incomparable wealth of buildings and public spaces has been embellished, beginning in the 1980s with *les Grands Projets*. [19] More recent projects, like the Parc Bercy, with the Passerelle Simone-de-Beauvoir, and the Frank-Gehry-designed Cinémathèque Française carry the now-standard program of urban water-front transformation to new design heights. Other kinds of amenities have come as well. The Velíb bikeshare system's overwhelming success has led to its emulation in cities from Quito, Ecuador, to Hangzhou, China — even, finally, in New York.

The unmatched beauty and architectural distinc-tion of Paris' inner arrondissements make the contrast with conditions in many of its banlieues all the more stark. The poor design, lack of basic

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[18] http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ApdmTzyFlYM

[19] *les Grands Projets*: the Louvre Pyramid, Musee d'Orsay, Parc de la Villette, Arab World Institute, Opéra Bastille, Grande Arche de La Défense, Ministry of Finance and the Bibliothèque Nationale.

commercial services, and isolation from the city's center of much of the region's stock of public and low-income housing contributed to violent disturbances in 2005 (Clichy-sous-Bois) and 2007 (Villiers-le-Bel).

### A Notable Counter-Example: Saint-Denis and the Plaine Commune

There are examples, however, of suburbs that have followed a different trajectory and that are undergoing a decades-long process of steady regeneration. Beginning in the 1990s, the Plaine Saint-Denis region has integrated spatial planning with economic development. The revitalization of a region north-east of Paris in what had seemed to be irreversible post-industrial decline is remarkable in that residents and businesses already inhabiting the area at the beginning of the process have been able to remain in place and benefit from growth. Though there have been some catalytic large-scale projects, most redevelopment activity has been fine-grained enough to strengthen rather than obliterate the area's existing assets.

Paul Lecroart, senior urban planner at L'Institut d'Amenagement et d'Urbanisme de la Region d'Île-de-France (IAU),[20] worked on the plan in its early days and cites a number of factors in its success.[21]



New tram and station in Saint-Denis

*Joan Byron*

Most notably, he recounts, it was an exercise in "…constructive cooperation not only between different levels of government (central government, region, county, local authorities) but also between the public sector (the French Railways, the Île-de-France Transport Agency), the public transport company, public land owners such as the City of Paris or the French Electricity Board, the private sector (local businesses, developers, investors) and the local communities (citizens, associations.)"

From the beginning, the creation of a grid of green circulation and public spaces was an integral part of the plan. These were integrated with new residential and commercial neighborhoods, and with the improvement of existing pathways along the Canal St-Denis. The development of a new soccer stadium to host the 1998 World Cup was — unusual among stadium projects of that time — also integrated with the surrounding communities, and well-connected to new and upgraded transit lines that also bene-

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[20] L'Île-de-France is the French administrative region that includes Paris and its suburbs.

[21] http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/GRHS2009Cas-eStudyChapter08Paris.pdf

fited the area. Written agreements among the central, regional, and municipal governments, and the PPPs who would build and operate the stadium itself, set terms for employment, for the mix of private and social housing, and for public investment in the needed infrastructure. Rather than becoming a typical "entertainment bubble," an island in a sea of blight, the Stade-de-France anchored and catalyzed an area-wide revitalization that continues today.

Thanks in part to the coordination of transit improvements — new regional rail service, extension of the #13 Metro line, and most recently, the construction of a circumferential tram line that will link area residents to growing centers of employment along the Périphérique — the area has continued to grow, adding 5,000 new housing units and 25,000 new jobs since 1998.

In areas where transit and open space development have lagged, problems of isolation and exclusion persist. After touring by bicycle along the Canal to the center of Saint-Denis, Paul Lecroart and I rode on to a public housing project in Stains. In addition to the poor access to transit and commercial services, the massive scale and poor design of the housing developments there have concentrated poverty within an already low-income area. The complex we visited is finally undergoing improvements to the building interiors, and to its internal circulation and connectivity within the site and to its surroundings ("désenclavement"). Aissata Maiga, the onsite manager of the renovation project, explained that the original design of the project included ground floor shops, but these were poorly planned, and most failed. Since few residents own cars, they are forced to walk long distances through the project's circuitous interior roads to access transit, employment, and basic necessities. The new design will provide easier access and accommodate new shops



Wedding celebration outside the Hôtel de Ville, Saint-Denis
*Joan Byron*

within the complex. But the project seems haunted by bad decision-making from its past, going from an underbudgeted, poor-quality renovation years earlier that yielded many complaints, to a hasty decision to proceed with a new plan, based on the availability of new funding from the central government.

The suburbs of Paris offer examples of failure as well as success, and some local governments seem determined to repeat past mistakes. In Créteil, to the south-east, housing blocks just outside of the Paris-Est Université campus are so dominated by drug dealers that Christine Lelevrier, the planning professor who was my host there, warned me not to take photos. Meanwhile, a new market-rate housing

development nearby resembles a U.S.-style condo community, complete with residential cul-de-sacs branching incoherently from deserted, multi-lane boulevards.

### Community-Based Planning within Paris

Just inside of the Périphérique, I spent a morning with Bacary Sané, planner and *chargé de développement local* for the Quartier Porte Montmartre-Porte Clignancourt-Moskova, and his colleagues. This office, established by the Mairie de Paris, has the mission of integrating the physical and social regeneration of its very diverse 17th and 18th Arrondissement neighborhoods. Once a no-man's land outside of the wall built to protect 19th-century Paris from the Prussians, "la Zone" was cleared of squatter settlements after World War I, and Paris' first "habitations à bon marché," six-story red-brick housing blocks were built around large court-yards, and initially occupied by auto workers who had migrated to Paris from the provinces. A few longtime residents remain, now joined by Asian and African immigrants. The area's decline, driven by the disappearance of industrial jobs, mirrors the story of working-class neighborhoods across Europe and the United States, even to the level of old-time residents blaming newcomers for wors-ening conditions.

The area's proximity to the Périphérique as well as to railyards, factories, and busy local roads, led to its designation as a "Sensitive Urban Area." City authorities working separately on physical and social issues recog-

nized the need for coordination, and Sané's office opened up shop in a local storefront.

Heading a professional planning staff embedded in its subject neighborhood enables him to far better grasp the realities local stakeholders face and the issues they prioritize. The quality of local schools is of paramount concern, and the first major building project, now under construction, will include a new school, a child care center, a support center for parents, and new housing.

Upgrading public spaces is more a matter of improving people's perception of their neighbor-hoods, and ultimately of raising expectations about public services. Putting better light fixtures in the park (and immediately replacing them when they are broken) helps to build a sense of order that residents felt was lacking. Over time, Sané has worked with property owners to find new tenants for storefronts, bringing a café and new shops to a street where there were formerly only kebab shops and taxi stands. As we walked past the shops, new sidewalk paving was being installed around new



Developer's sales office in Créteil, with graffiti additions to poster

*Joan Byron*

planters and furniture. When I asked whether such improvements might provoke fears of gentrification and displacement — as they might in a comparable New York neighborhood — he replied that trust and confidence have been established with and among local residents over several years before any physical improvements were undertaken. The sequencing of projects demonstrated that residents' priorities truly came first.



Bacary Sané and local residents in Clignancourt
*Joan Byron*

In addition to many informal interactions, Sané organizes monthly walks on which residents point out specific problems, such as the failure of the city department to clean the streets, or the illegal spillovers from the area's famous flea market into surrounding streets. He views residents' assertions that "they wouldn't tolerate this on Les Champs-Elysees," as evidence of appropriately rising expectations. Being able to access the agencies in charge and get results has built people's confidence in their ability to bring about larger change.

Becary Sané, the middleman in this process, admits that it can be a demanding role. The public agencies, he said, can be harder to deal with than the residents. As valuable as the placement of a planning office in a local community can be, there are inherent challenges in coordinating the work of citywide agencies that the planner does not control.

## Amsterdam

More than one of my Amsterdam informants described the Netherlands as "the world's most planned country," in which centuries of struggle with the sea have demanded many cycles of collective decision-making about land use, infrastructure, and livelihood. Tracy Metz, journalist and author of *Sweet & Salt: Water and the Dutch,* posed the question when we met of whether the cohesion of Dutch society has enabled its strong planning culture, or perhaps that cohesion has itself been brought about by the never-ending imperative of planning. Either way, the Dutch public realm has been a textbook for the world not only on water management, but on transportation, street design, and and the public realm at large.

Amsterdam's core is tightly built and intimately scaled. Most streets are too narrow for cars to move much faster than walking speed, and a parking management scheme requires visitors and residents to obtain permits. There is no free on-street parking; a 24-hour transient permit costs €39,60, a rate that makes parking at garages outside of the A10 ring road attractive. Parking policy is thus an effective substitute for congestion pricing, gener-

ating revenue while creating a strong incentive for anyone entering the city to do so by transit.

Amsterdam's cycling infrastructure is legendary; transportation plans now address "bike clutter" by encouraging the construction of underground cycle parking below new buildings. According to Juliane Kürschner and Ton Schaap of Amsterdam's planning department (the Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening, DRO), cycling accounts for over 50 percent of kilometers traveled within the city center.

The distance from the center to new developments to the east and south makes cycling a less viable option for some trips, but all of the new development areas are located near existing and planned transit lines. The integration of transit and development planning is even deeper in Amsterdam than it is in other European cities. I saw projects on the outskirts of Paris, for example, whose location and design incentivize car ownership. Transit may be available nearby, but has clearly not driven planning decisions in those cases. New projects in Amsterdam, by contrast, put most residents within convenient walking distance of the city's comfortable and efficient trams, whose network is continually being expanded as an armature of new development. Amsterdam's planners are committed to providing a full range of mobility and connectivity options, even to residents of developments far from the city center, as a means of mitigating what might otherwise be major spatial disadvantages.

Bart van den Heijden, a DRO transporta-

tion planner, discussed long-range possibilities for Amsterdam that include extending the Metro north to IJburg and south to Schiphol airport (a connection that would be valuable to the airport's many blue-collar and service workers.) But like others I interviewed, he noted that the financial crisis and recession have made it more difficult to undertake transit and land development projects at the scale that was common in the past.

The largest post World War II housing and commercial development has taken place outside of the city's core, with large-scale corporate office parks developing in Zuidas (the South Axis); some development has also followed the working port, which has moved to the north west, leaving the inner harbor and Eastern Docklands areas also open for commercial and residential development. The latest large-scale development initiative is IJburg, a series of artificial islands being constructed in the IJmeer, east of the city center.

The land on which these projects are taking place is publicly owned, and is leased for development under terms that specify a mix of affordable,



24-hour underground bicycle parking, near Leidseplein

*Joan Byron*

middle-income, and upper-income housing. Leasing rather than selling the land provides stronger mechanisms for enforcement of affordability and other planning specifications than is common in the United States, where developers usually acquire sites outright, even when governments have invested significantly in infrastructure and environmental remediation.

IJburg in particular reflects Amsterdam's current planning goal of accommodating a young professional and creative class, and retaining them as they have children, rather than allowing them to relocate to "overflow" municipalities like Almere and Lelystad.



IJburg
*Joan Byron*

Critics see this as a plan for gentrification, consistent with initiatives to clean up Amsterdam's image as a destination for drug tourism. Anna Nico-leava and Dana Dolghin, researchers at the Vrije Universitiet Amsterdam, pointed to funding cuts in services for vulnerable populations including the homeless, and to increasingly strident anti-immi-grant rhetoric, as consequences of the post-2008 recession. Their assertion that Amsterdam's center is more or less fully gentrified and/or given over to tourism is difficult to dispute. Still, the planning of new development, and efforts to address the deficits created by 1970s projects, appear to support Susan Fainstein's contention that "Overall, in relation to the three criteria of diversity, democracy, and equity [that define a Just City] Amsterdam remains

exemplary,"[22] far more so than either London or New York.

### *Bijlmermeer: Redesigning and Reconnecting a Failed Public Housing Project*

A failed design concept — placing vehicle streets and parking on elevated decks, with pedestrian circulation below, as well as segregating residential and commercial use — made the Bijlmermeer housing project a difficult place to live in or to manage from its completion in 1975. Failures of elevators and trash collection systems — both critical to high-rise livability — and its isolation from transit and commercial services also contributed to its decline. By 1985, a quarter of the project's 12,000 housing units were vacant.

Bijlmermeer's residents were vocal about the shortcomings of the complex, but both surveys by its managers and government agencies[23] and accounts

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[22] Fainstein, Susan S., *The Just City,* 2010, Cornell University Press (p.164)

[23] The renovation of Bijlmermeer was carried out by the Municipality of Amsterdam, the City District of Amsterdam-Zuidoost, and Rochdale Housing Organisation;

by longtime observers affirmed that most of the 30,000 residents preferred to stay, though many conditioned that decision on the completion of significant alterations. A Multiculturalisation and Participation Bureau was established in 1996 to ensure that residents were able to participate effectively in planning for the reconfiguration of the complex.

Ultimately, buildings containing some 6,500 apartments were demolished, but 7,200 new units are being built. These new units will change the income mix of the project as a whole; with only 30 percent of the new units affordable at council rates and 70 percent available for rental or purchase at market rates, the new Bijlmermeer will contain 50 percent market and 50 percent subsidized units.[24] Because of the high vacancy levels that preceeded the makeover, no subsidized tenants will have been displaced.

Despite the huge scale of the complex, decision-making about its future was remarkably fine-grained, as was the integration of physical and social planning. The redesigned development includes spaces for adult education, vocational training, and job placement, a center for newly arrived immigrants, a women's empowerment center, and services run by and for immigrants from Surinam and the Antilles. Services and retail



Vocational and Technical Education Center, Bijlmermeer

*Joan Byron*

uses create a walkable, though lengthy, connection to the Metro station; additional shops and restaurants line what are now surface (rather than elevated) streets within the complex.

When I visited, Bijlmermeer's public spaces were enlivened by people of every age and many races. People were coming and going in the schools and community centers; others were shopping and eating in cafes; still others — seemingly a mix of black residents and white hipsters — were caring for farm animals in a cluster of pens and sheds.

I traveled to Bijlmermeer by bike, approximately seven miles from the center of Amsterdam. Before heading out, I stocked up with paper maps and topped up the data plan on my phone. Even in other European countries, my experience has been that cycling networks may be excellent in city centers, but quickly become illegible or disappear altogether in the urban fringe. Not so in Amsterdam Zuidoost. Bike paths cross the canal

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[24] Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office (Projectbureau Vernieuwing Bijlmermeer), *The Bijlmermeer Renovation: Facts and Figures,* 2008

belt, then the A10 ring road without interruption; wayfinding signs point out railroad stations and town centers, and easily led me to my destination.

Leaving Bijlmermeer en route to IJburg, the bike paths meandered through marshes and fields. It was mid-afternoon, and children were riding home from school; parents were walking with kids; and veiled women in long skirts greeted other women in Western dress. Concluding my field research on equity in the public realm for the day, I thought again of a statement by Enrique Peñalosa:



Bike Path Near Bijlmermeer; new metro line and apartment towers in the distance
*Joan Byron*

> *Parks, plazas, pedestrian streets, and sidewalks are essential for social justice. High quality sidewalks are the most basic element of a democratic city. It is frequent that images of high-rises and highways are used to portray a city's advance. In fact, in urban terms, a city is more civilized not when it has highways, but when a child on a TRICYCLE is able to move about everywhere with ease and safety.[25]*

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[25] Enrique Penalosa, *Urban Transport and Urban Development: a Different Model*, Center for Latin American Studies, University of California Berkeley, April 2002 http://clas.berkeley.edu/Events/spring2002/04-08-02-penalosa/index.html