Spatial Justice: A Value Axis for Urban Spatial Governance in the New Era

Yanfeng Liu
South China Normal University, China

Abstract: In the process of urbanisation in the 21st century, spatial justice has become a focus of attention for many scholars, policy makers and urban planners. Space is not only a physical extension, but also an embodiment of social relations, cultural values and power structures. The issue of spatial justice surfaces when urban space shows obvious imbalance and segregation. With the acceleration of urbanisation and economic globalisation, spatial alienation, deprivation and inequality are increasing, posing serious challenges to the sustainable development of cities. Therefore, exploring the significance and path of spatial justice in urban governance in the new era is not only an academic demand, but also a realistic issue of current urban development. The purpose of this paper is to deeply analyse the origin, current situation and response strategies of spatial justice, so as to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the construction of a more just and harmonious city.

Keywords: Spatial Justice; Spatial Production; Urban Governance.

1. Introduction

In today's era of rapid development, cities are no longer just steel forests; they are the epitome of modern civilisation and the gathering place of human wisdom and vitality. With the deepening of globalisation and the continuous progress of science and technology, urbanisation has become a major trend of global development. The constant influx of people to cities has made them the main battlefield for human survival and development. However, the rapid development of cities also brings a series of problems and challenges, one of which is how to achieve and maintain spatial justice. Spatial justice refers to ensuring fairness in the enjoyment of urban spatial resources by different social groups in the process of urban planning and development. It is the pursuit of rationality in the distribution of urban space, and the requirement that every corner of the city reflects equality and justice, without discrimination or exclusion on the basis of economic, racial, gender or other social divisions. In such a city, not only will the affluent areas prosper and thrive, but the poorer areas will also be able to receive the necessary attention and investment, thus achieving the harmonious development of society as a whole. A just spatial layout reflects the inclusiveness and advancement of a city. A city that pays attention to spatial justice is better able to attract talent, promote innovation, and enhance the well-being of its residents, thereby improving the city's overall competitiveness. To achieve this goal, the concept of spatial justice must be analysed in depth to understand its multiple connotations in different cultural and social contexts. This is not only an expansion of the theories of urbanism and sociology, but also a guide to the practice of urban planning in the real world. Therefore, exploring spatial justice not only promotes in-depth academic research, but also provides policymakers with operational frameworks and principles to promote sustainable urban development.

2. The Origin of the Claim for Spatial Justice: the Alienation of Urban Spatial Production

For a long time, production has always referred to material production, and space is the field or container or platform for material production. However, with the advancement of modern urbanisation, spatial production has shifted from the production of things in space to the production of space itself, i.e., space is not a vehicle for production, but rather an object of production, a product filled with various ideologies. People in modern cities need to produce more space to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding cities. Space production on the one hand is manifested in the expansion of the spatial scope of material entities, the natural space is gradually transformed into the space of human activities, and the continuous reorganisation and reconstruction of the natural space provides human beings with the spatial products needed for production and life; on the other hand, the production of space can no longer satisfy the spatial needs of human beings. Urban space has become a product of various interests, and the power of capital, government intervention, and urban movement play an indispensable role in the process of urban space production. Under the joint action of capital, power and class, urban space and spatial production have been fundamentally changed, and capital, power and class have become the decisive forces for the reconstruction of urban space, and urban space has also become a field for capital, power and class to pursue their own interests. In this context, spatial justice has become the value demand of the public.

2.1. Capitalisation of Space

Capital mainly represents the power of the market, and the market is an important force influencing spatial production. Capital is one of the main driving forces to promote the development of urban spatial production, and the reorganisation of capital often brings about the reconstruction of space. Profit-seeking is the main characteristic of capital, and the operation of capital is to gain more profit. In the process of urbanisation, capital reorganises the political, economic, cultural and other forces in the city according to its own interests and with the basic principle of obtaining greater benefits, thus influencing the planning and use of urban space. The change or reorganisation of modern urban space structure is often affected by the role and influence of space, and the tall buildings and smooth roads in the city are the inevitable
results of the market and the operation of capital. At the same time, the flow of capital itself will also have a certain impact on the urban space, affecting the change of urban space, such as the transformation project of the old city is the need for economic development, is the result of the operation of capital. "The scale of capital flows is both a motivation and a consequence of the social structures that shape accumulation." David Harvey explains the relationship between the operation of capital and spatial development in terms of its circular movement. Harvey proposes a three-tiered cyclical process of capital, namely the primary cycle of capital, the secondary cycle of capital, and the tertiary cycle of capital. In the primary cycle of capital, the contradiction between the socialisation of production and the capitalist private ownership of the means of production leads to the emergence of crises such as the surplus of commodities and the unemployment of workers. In order to escape from this series of crises, capital moves to the secondary cycle and invests in artificial space. The secondary circulation of capital into the production of artificial environment promotes the development of space production, which means that space production is actually the result of the continuous operation of capital in pursuit of higher profits. "Under capitalism, urban space is constructed and re-constructed like a machine is built and modified, all in order to make the operation of capital more efficient and create more profit." In the process of the primary cycle of capital, production in space alone can no longer satisfy the profit-seeking needs of capital, and thus capital chooses to commodify space as well, selling it as a commodity to further generate higher profits. In the process of urbanisation, the man-made environment creates more profits and attracts more surplus capital, and when the demand for capital in the urban centre tends to be saturated, the capital will be transferred to new areas such as peri-urban areas. In order to pursue more profits, the capital that has entered the urban centre will speed up the reconstruction of the original space, such as the transformation of the old city. In the process of spatial restructuring and spatial reconstruction, the contradiction between the socialisation of production and the capitalist private ownership of the means of production once again leads to over-accumulation, and in order to solve the contradiction, capital enters the third level of circulation, i.e., it is invested in scientific and technological research as well as in social and public undertakings. The fact that capital enters the third level of the cycle does not mean that the crisis of over-accumulation can be completely lifted and dissipated. The third level of the cycle of capital solves the crisis of over-accumulation by "spatial organisation", that is to say, by looking for new areas for investment and investing in underdeveloped countries and regions. Throughout the capital cycle, in order to resolve the crisis of over-accumulation and to seek more surplus value and higher profits, space becomes a commodity and spatial production is dominated by capital.

2.2. Spatial Power

The influence of power on urban space is mainly reflected in the fact that some interest groups or interest organisations, through their own power advantages, give priority to their own interests and adjust the use of urban space, especially land use, in their own favour. The construction of cities is carried out under the logic of capital operation, and the role of capital has been infinitely enlarged under the conditions of market economy, but relying only on the power of the market and relying on the "invisible hand" to regulate the spatial production and the development of cities will inevitably lead to the imbalance of the development of cities. Allowing capital to dominate urbanisation will inevitably lead to more and more serious imbalances in spatial production, and it is therefore necessary to use government power to regulate urban development. Urban planning is accomplished under the joint action of the market and the government, and is the result of the combined action of the "invisible hand" and the "visible hand". The government plays an indispensable role in the process of spatial production, and its macro-control plays a coordinating and balancing role for various forces in the process of spatial production, and also plays a key role in the distribution of spatial resources. Urban planning is formulated by the government, which determines the main development direction of the city and the allocation of urban spatial resources. The government influences spatial production by controlling the theme and content of urban planning, especially through the adjustment of land use rights, which may also lead to the power of urban space, making urban space dominated by power. Custer analyses spatial production from the logic of "consumption - collective consumption - government intervention". Collective consumption means that "the character and scale of the problem is such that the organisation and management of the consumption process can only be carried out by the collective and no one else". Collective consumption is a category of consumer goods in which private capital is unwilling or unable to engage in the production of such goods because of the large sums of money invested in them and the slow returns on those investments, which necessitates the intervention of governmental power. On the one hand, the government invests directly in the production of collective consumer goods, either by direct investment or by choosing to issue bonds to raise funds; on the other hand, the government encourages and guides private capital into the production of collective consumer goods through taxation and other policies. The existence of collective consumer goods allows the government and capital to work together in spatial production, and because collective consumer goods have a relatively large impact on the spatial structure of society, they also become an important factor in the development and change of urban space. For example, the construction of a motorway will inevitably lead to adjustments in the spatial structure of society, the migration of population, the increase in employment opportunities, and this series of changes will lead to spatial structure changes. The government plays a dual role in the development of cities, playing a dual role. On the one hand, the government represents the interests of the ruling class and seeks more benefits for the ruling class; while on the other hand, the government must first of all ensure the stability and prosperity of the society, and ease the contradiction between classes to prevent social unrest. Capital plays a huge role in the process of urbanisation, and government intervention has a tremendous impact on spatial patterns. However, increased government intervention can easily lead to the politicisation of urban space, and the problem of urban consumption is not only an economic problem, but also a power problem and a political problem, and the problem of urban space and the problem of power are thus linked.

2.3. Classification of Space

Class is another important force and factor affecting spatial production besides capital and power. Class power is the
3. Manifestations of the Lack of Spatial Justice: Dispossession and Segregation

3.1. Urban Spatial Deprivation

Spatial deprivation is a manifestation of spatial alienation and an important result of excessive capitalisation of space. The capitalisation of space is a "double-edged sword" for human beings, playing a double role. On the one hand, capital has played a great role in the development of human beings, and it has opened a new era for the development of human beings. The expansion of capital has directly promoted the integration of human space, and the generalisation of capital has made the living space of human beings become an integral whole, and capital has become an important force to break down the barriers of space. On the other hand, the unlimited expansion of capital has led to the alienation of space, and the over-capitalisation of space has hindered human development and progress. Capital makes the contradictions in human society expand, human living space becomes a whole with the expansion of capital, and the contradictions in space naturally spread to the globe with the expansion of capital. The biggest beneficiaries in this process are generally powerful interest groups, while relatively backward regions and residents are marginalised. In the process of capital expansion, space is fused into a whole, which also becomes an important carrier for the global accumulation of capital. Spatial deprivation has a wide range of contents, which can be divided into natural space deprivation and psychological space deprivation. The deprivation of natural space is mainly reflected in the unbalanced distribution of public resources and the deprivation of public space, while the deprivation of psychological space is mainly due to the psychological differences of urban residents.

The most direct manifestation of natural space deprivation is the imbalance in the distribution of public resources, with some areas enjoying fewer public resources or higher costs for residents to enjoy public resources, which is also known as existential space deprivation. "Shopping and commercial service facilities, medical and health facilities, sports and recreational facilities, public transport and communication facilities, educational facilities, social and cultural service facilities and other six elements of public resources, constituting an important resource system to measure the healthy living space of urban communities." Foreign scholars evaluate whether there is spatial deprivation and the degree of deprivation by establishing a complex system of indicators, among which the allocation of resources such as educational institutions, transport routes and medical institutions is an important indicator system for measuring spatial deprivation. In the development of modern Chinese cities, subways, high-level hospitals and high-level schools are mostly located in the centre of the city, and the allocation of public resources in the centre of the city is much higher than that in the peripheral areas of the city[2].

Psycho-social space deprivation or deprivation of psychology refers to the differences in the social psychology of the same urban residents, mainly referring to the widening of the gap in psychological identity. In the process of urbanisation, the city's economic level has been rapidly improved, and in this process, the income gap between urban residents has been gradually widened, and the degree of social stratification has also been deepened, which makes the distance between the lower class residents and the upper class residents constantly increase. Urbanisation has brought about an overall improvement in the quality of life in the city, but at the same time, the lag between the lower and upper classes will produce a sense of deprivation, and with the accumulation of the sense of deprivation, it will also make the lower class residents express the possible rupture of the society with the mentality of self-deprecation. The emergence of terms such as "migrant worker" and "labourer" is a reflection of the sense of deprivation in the social psyche, and further exacerbates the deprivation in the social psyche. At present, the number of people who call themselves "migrant workers" is expanding, but this does not mean that the group of "migrant workers" (the bottom of the social class) is really expanding, which is more a kind of social mentality expanding after the sense of deprivation has been strengthened. The deprivation of psychological space is reflected in the following aspects: cultural deprivation, economic deprivation and self-perception deprivation. The process of urbanisation is actually the process of turning rural areas into cities and peasants into citizens. Urban and rural areas were originally two relatively closed cultural systems,
and under the influence of their respective cultures, urban and rural residents formed their own different habits and norms of life, and had different self-perceptions and self-identification of their roles, which directly led to the differences in their social psychology and individual behaviours. Urbanisation has transformed farmers into citizens, and due to the influence of the original social culture, they are difficult to integrate into the city within a short period of time, and psychologically have difficulties in adapting to the urban culture. This psychological difference makes it difficult for farmers to integrate into the city in terms of their behaviour. The socio-cultural differences lead to the passive acceptance of urban culture by the civilised farmers, but their behaviours are in conflict with the urban culture. In this way, the pace of cultural change is not consistent with the change of social roles, and the concepts and ideas of rural areas, such as closure, self-sufficiency, and disdain for competition, are in conflict with the values of urban areas, such as freedom, openness, and competition, and a sense of psychological deprivation of space arises naturally. Economic psychological deprivation should be the first thing that farmers encounter in the process of urbanisation and citizenship. In the process of farmers' urbanisation, due to the fact that their own quality and labour skills are lower than those of urban residents, they are likely to be subjected to various kinds of unfair treatment or even discrimination in the process of employment selection. Many peasants can only engage in some low income, work intensity of the work, compared with the high income of the public, low intensity, high social prestige of the work of the great gap, so the economic gap is also obvious, economic psychological deprivation is also very easy to produce. The low income of farmers is destined to only maintain subsistence, but not the same as the public to enjoy a variety of consumption and entertainment, which also leads to the farmers in the process of citizenship to produce a sense of "parasitism". The deviation of self-perception is one of the important factors of psychological deprivation. Under the influence of the traditional thinking of "not suffering from poverty but from inequality, not suffering from scarcity but from insecurity", farmers who work hard and still live at the bottom of the society develop a sense of unfairness, which in turn leads to a sense of deprivation. Fairness and equality are different concepts, fairness is relative, while equality is absolute, fairness does not mean equality, and equality does not mean fairness, but the perception of these two concepts in the process of farmers' urbanisation is not entirely correct. The process of urbanisation is accompanied by land expropriation and demolition, and for the compensation of land expropriation and demolition, farmers seek a kind of equality, not fairness. Due to differences in geographic location and other aspects, compensation for land acquisition and eviction varies, which in the view of farmers is a kind of unfairness, and a sense of deprivation arises as a result.

3.2. Urban Spatial Segregation

Spatial segregation is in fact a spatial social division of different types of urban population, that is, the aggregation of urban residents and the separation of different groups due to similarities in income, occupation, cultural level and so on. "Urban social segregation manifests itself in different levels of agglomerations, within which there is a convergence of values, often homogeneous residential neighbourhoods, with large differences between the various types of agglomerations and the uniqueness of their own development." The spatial segregation of urban society is the result of the development of urban society, that is, a kind of social stratification is reflected in the social space. The study of urban spatial segregation should grasp two dimensions: the segregation of urban physical space and the segregation of urban psychological space[3].

Urban physical space segregation reflects the state of urban physical space differentiation, and there are many factors affecting this differentiation, which may be due to the influence of innate factors such as ethnicity, religious beliefs, traditional customs, clan power, etc., as well as the influence of acquired factors such as urban planning, the income level of urban residents, and the type of occupation of urban residents. These various factors lead to changes in the members of urban society or social classes, and also lead to urban spatial differentiation. That is to say, residents who have the same or similar situation in some aspects are gradually gathered together, and residents who are more different from themselves in some aspects are gradually separated, thus forming different segregated areas or isolated zones. For example, groups with higher income generally live in high-grade neighbourhoods with better environment and convenient living conditions, while groups with lower income live in areas with poor location and inadequate facilities.

Urban spatial segregation is not only manifested in material aspects such as urban residential zoning, but also more importantly in urban psychological spatial segregation, the psychological distance between residents of different residential areas. Urban spatial segregation has the influence of social class, and at the same time, the solidification of class further aggravates the segregation of urban psychological space. The exchanges, communications and interactions between people living in different areas of the city are extremely lacking, and the exchanges between the rich and the poor in the city are extremely rare. The widening of the psychological distance between different classes of people also means the widening of the social distance. Each person is self-centred and expands in all directions, forming a psychological defensive space that causes tension, vigilance and resistance when others intrude. As urbanisation continues, the gap between the rich and the poor widens, the psychological distance between people in the city continues to widen, especially between different classes. The communication between people of different occupations and income levels is becoming less and less difficult, which directly leads to the increasing defence between people, and the psychological distance between people is naturally getting bigger and bigger, which leads to the segregation of the psychological space in the city.

4. A Just Way Forward for Urban Spatial Governance in the New Era

4.1. Balanced Spatial Development

Cities have great appeal as centres of attraction for population, economy and resources, yet the problems of unbalanced urban development and unfair distribution have become increasingly prominent. This imbalance not only undermines the quality of life of urban residents, but also exacerbates social inequality and causes irreversible damage to the environment and natural resources. Behind the pursuit of balanced spatial development is the need to ensure that every urban resident has equal access to urban infrastructure, public services and opportunities.
First, equal distribution of infrastructure and services must be achieved. First, areas with unequal distribution problems must be identified through comprehensive urban analyses, and policy and legal frameworks must be established that clearly establish equal rights to infrastructure and services and prohibit discrimination, while ensuring equitable distribution of resources and financial support. The allocation of resources must be based on the needs of different areas and unequal regional disparities, and include finance, human resources, technology and equipment. Urban planning needs to take into account the equal distribution of infrastructure and services by planning the location of transport networks, schools, medical facilities, recreational facilities, etc., to meet the needs of different areas. For areas with significant inequalities, governments can prioritise investments to improve their infrastructure and services, including rebuilding, expanding or upgrading existing facilities. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are established to track the distribution of infrastructure and services and assess the effectiveness of policies and measures, as well as to ensure that the public can participate in the planning and decision-making process for infrastructure and services. Fiscal transparency is necessary so that the public can track the allocation and use of resources and prevent fiscal blues. Cross-sectoral collaboration is also essential to ensure coherence and coordination across different policy areas and to avoid wasted resources and conflicts. Working together, these measures can help to ensure that all urban areas have equal access to infrastructure and public services, improve the overall quality of life in cities, reduce social inequalities and promote sustainable and inclusive urban development.

Second, green and sustainable development plays an important role in the spatial development of cities. This involves ensuring that urban development can meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. Firstly, renewable energy promotion. Cities need to shift to renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. This will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and environmental pollution and improve air quality, while promoting the development and utilisation of sustainable energy sources. Secondly, urban greening and ecological protection. Through measures such as urban green spaces, parks, protected areas and vegetation belts, cities are able to provide more ecological space, improve air quality, water quality and reduce the urban heat island effect. It is also key to protect the natural environment, wildlife and ecosystems to ensure ecological balance and healthy urban ecosystems. And then, sustainable transport and urban planning. By encouraging public transport, cycle paths and pedestrianised areas, cities can reduce private car use, traffic congestion and tailpipe emissions. At the same time, sustainable urban planning is developed to rationalise residential, commercial and work areas to reduce commuting distances and energy consumption. Finally, waste management and circular economy. Promote sustainable waste management systems, including waste segregation, recycling and resource reuse. Cities can encourage a circular economy model that reduces consumption of limited resources, extends the useful life of resources and reduces waste generation while promoting economic growth.

4.2. Equal Rights in Space

The report of the 20th Party Congress points out that "let the fruits of modernisation benefit all the people more and more equitably", which means that guaranteeing social fairness and justice has become an important part of building a harmonious society, and has been put into a more prominent position, and social fairness and justice has become the strongest note in China's social development. The development of urbanisation has brought a rich material life to mankind, but there are still many social problems, and social contradictions are even becoming more and more acute. The reason for this is, to a large extent, the lack of the concept of fair development in the process of urbanisation, uneven distribution of resources, unbalanced regional development, leading to the further widening of the gap between the rich and the poor in society, and the development of the city has shown a kind of deformed state. Of course, the establishment of a fair concept of development, the advocacy of social justice and the promotion of social equity do not rely on the words of various documents and regulations, but have to be put into practice. We need to change the existing concept of development, break through the shackles of traditional concepts, and more importantly, to remove those who "take, take, take" rent-seeking power, favouritism and law-breaking order destroyers, to maintain social justice, and more importantly, to touch the vested interests of some people.

Equitable spatial planning is a key urban planning concept in realising equal spatial rights and ensuring a fairer and more equitable urban development process. This approach emphasises that urban planning and development should not provide advantages for only one social group or region, but should be based on the principle of inclusiveness, integrating social justice into all levels of urban planning. Broad social participation is a key element in equitable spatial planning. This includes open and transparent dialogue with citizens, community representatives, stakeholders and experts to ensure that a variety of voices are heard and can influence planning and decision-making processes. This helps to eliminate inequalities and injustices in decision-making and thus ensures that urban planning better responds to the diverse needs of society. In addition, equitable spatial planning emphasises diversity and inclusion. It encourages urban planners and designers to take into account the needs of different groups of people, including people of different ages, genders, cultural backgrounds and abilities. This means that planning needs to provide a wide range of types of housing, public transport and services to meet the needs of different groups and to create friendly, accessible environments for all. Equitable spatial planning is also concerned with equality in the distribution of resources. This includes the equal distribution of infrastructure, public services and social support to ensure that the various benefits of the city are available to different communities. This helps to reduce social and economic inequalities and improve the quality of life of disadvantaged communities. Sustainability is also a core principle of equitable spatial planning. Planners need to consider the environmental impacts of urban planning and take steps to minimise resource wastage, pollution and carbon emissions. This helps to create healthier and more sustainable urban environments, thereby improving the quality of life of residents. Finally, equitable spatial planning aims to achieve a balance between spatial justice and economic development. Rather than pursuing one side of the amenity equation for the benefit of the other, it seeks to ensure that the growth and prosperity of the city benefits all residents, not just some. In particular, it is important to note that the concept of
equitable development does not exist only in the present, but also in the future, and refers not only to equity among the present, but also to intergenerational equity between the present and future generations. Intergenerational equity describes the intergenerational responsibilities that the present generation should assume towards future generations, and mainly refers to the fairness of the sharing of rights and responsibilities between the present and future generations with regard to natural resources and the environment, and access to opportunities for survival and development. In the course of modern social development, future generations are always in a state of "absence" when it comes to the distribution of natural resources and the environment, and access to opportunities for survival and development, and intergenerational justice is to look at the problem from the standpoint of future generations. Intergenerational justice is a kind of vertical justice, which is the justice between people in the same space but different time; at the same time, intergenerational justice is also a kind of unidirectional justice, in which the present generation undertakes a certain obligation to the future generation, but it is not possible to ask the future generation to undertake the same obligation to the present generation. In the construction of modern new urbanisation, sustainable development is the most crucial guiding principle, and sustainable development is based on intergenerational justice. In the process of urbanisation, the concept of "fair" development should not only focus on the balanced development of different spaces and regions within the same timeframe, but at the same time, it should not ignore the fact that people in the same space but at different times have the same rights as the current generation to occupy natural resources and the environment, and to have the same opportunities for survival and development.

References

