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11.201 Gateway

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Regional Blocs, Regional Planning, and the Blues Epistemology in the Lower Mississippi Delta, by Clyde Woods

Woods asks the reader to reconsider the requirements of regional planning, towards a fusing of regional political economies, cultural studies and regional epistemologies;

Defines “**Blues epistemology**” as the use of the Blues as a theory of social, economic and cultural development and change;

Asserts that planning plays a **central role** in preserving specific regional forms of development with deep historical contestations; contends that these forms structure the language, aesthetics and relations of power under a presumed banner of objectivity and rationality;

Woods seeks to understand the contemporary crisis in the South by exploring **three of the development traditions present in the region**: the plantation tradition, the New South tradition, and the African American Blues tradition, in order to recognize the persistence of intellectual traditions which have often become hidden traditions;

Plantation tradition: the reproduction & expansion of the plantation bloc hegemony organized around the related tenets of: economic monopoly over agriculture, manufacturing, banking, land and water; a fiscal, administrative, and regulatory monopoly over local and county activities; and an authoritative monopoly over the conditions and regulation of ethnic groups and labor. These are traditions structured by the patterns of settler colonialism, subsistence farming, plantation based colonization and cash crop production for the world market;

The New South tradition: social explanation and development practice which emerged out of the dominant bloc of predominantly white rural areas on the periphery of the plantation region, based on a strong relationship between northern capital and the south's banking, commercial, educational, legal, press, utility and political leadership;

African American Affirmation-The Blues Epistemology: defined by resistance to plantation monopoly and attempts to preserve and create a community-centered social order present in several regional groups including Native American communities, Populism among white communities and AA's in the rural South. Refers to the blues as a form of social explanation and reflects the cultural construction within and resistance to, the antebellum plantation regime.

Woods evaluates the development of the LMDDC in order to examine the historical origins and current manifestations of planter bloc hegemony, the appeasement of it, resistance to it, and the roads still open to regional development based on existing traditions of economic democracy and social justice.

Origins of Legal Zoning in the U.S.

Zoning

Early acts had multiple motivations in the U.S.:

- Restrict very large or bulky buildings
- Restrict undesirable land uses such as industry from residential or shopping areas
- Exclude racial minorities and/or ethnic groups

Examples

- San Francisco (1885)
 - Ban laundries operated by Chinese immigrants (invalidated by Supreme Court)
- Los Angeles (1909)
 - Land use zoning, intended to protect property values
- New York City Zoning (1916)
 - Restrict bulk of buildings
 - Prohibit industry from shopping districts

Zoning was legally contested until Supreme Court rules in *Village of Euclid v. Ambler*, upholds zoning (1926) Cities adopt zoning and planning after the U.S. Department of Commerce issues “standard” acts:

- Standard State Zoning Enabling Act (1926)
- Standard City Planning Enabling Act (1928)

A longstanding debate in planning practice has been the proper theoretical and practical connection between *indicative* planning and legally *enforceable* zoning.

Racial Zoning and Planning in the U.S.

- Baltimore adopts zoning restricting residence by race in 1910. Others that followed included Richmond VA, Atlanta GA, Winston-Salem NC, Birmingham AL.
- After Louisville, Kentucky's was ruled unconstitutional in 1917, cities persisted to use zoning and planning to create or reinforce racial boundaries, often through the collaboration with northern professionals.
- As an example, I found the Austin, TX a 1928 Comprehensive Plan proposed concentrating public facilities open to blacks in one neighborhood
- Racially-informed planning connected with public housing planning and urban renewal in north and south
- Racial zoning illegally used in Birmingham through 1951
- Silver argues this history, missing from most narratives of the history of planning, is crucial to understanding deep-seated mistrust of planning by many communities

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