



## Justice et injustices spatiales, Nanterre 2008

*Spatial justice through deconcentration?:  
The debate over dispersal and mobility in the U.S.  
La justice spatiale par la déconcentration?  
Le débat sur l'étalement et la mobilité aux Etats-Unis*

**Chapple Karen** and **Goetz Edward**, Professors, Dept. of City and Regional Planning, UC-Berkeley, 228 Wurster Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720-1850 and Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, 301-19<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455

In recent years, urban policymakers have advocated a metropolitan/regional approach to spatial justice that involves moving the poor to suburban housing (so-called “dispersal strategies”) and helping them commute to suburban jobs (“mobility strategies”). Despite the preponderance of evidence showing that these spatial policies are at best a mixed success, major urban thinktanks such as The Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution continue to advocate for them. The argument put forth (most famously by David Rusk in *Inside Game, Outside Game*) is that the nation’s community development corporations have failed to revitalize inner cities (the “inside game”), so we should look at ways to help inner-city residents move to the suburbs through regional strategies. The regionalist approach claims first that the inside game, or community development, cannot address issues of spatial justice without some assistance from the outside game, or dispersal and mobility strategies to shift the poor to the suburbs; second, that the outside game of regulating growth in the suburbs can increase housing and job opportunities for the poor; and third, that regional policies and/or institutions are key to spatial justice.

We offer three arguments to contest the spatial fix for justice. First, there is little evidence that the inside game has failed: rather, the successful revitalization of many of America’s central cities suggests that it has worked, at least in part due to successful community development strategies. To the extent that the inside game has failed, it is through the inability of development strategies to provide enough affordable housing in the new mixed-income downtown neighborhoods. Second, there is little evidence that the outside game, or regulating suburban growth, can actually increase housing and job opportunities—or is politically feasible. Strategies such as tax-base sharing, fair share housing, growth management, and regional governance have not proved successful at addressing poverty. Third, despite a forty-year dialogue about the potential for regional strategies to address issues of spatial justice, they have for the most part failed to take hold and in some cases are faltering in the face of the property rights movement. We suggest that the solution lies instead within the increasingly successful set of community and economic development strategies.

