

PBE - Lecture 3

Ossama Edbali

January 25, 2015

1 Positivism and planning

Positivism is the philosophy driven by scientific methods, empirical proving and formulation of universal laws.

Positivism has to a certain extent, an impact on urban planning. Looking at the positivist view of the world, urban planners can have a certain influence on the urban form of the world looking at the fact that in a positivist world, science was seen as the way to get at truth, to understand the world well enough so that we might predict and control it. Therefore an urban planner assuming this position would tend to approach planning mainly from the technical aspect of it and not necessarily engage the society in the planning process and therefore planning would be done from a top-down approach and public participation would be very minimal.

The context in which positivist urban planners worked was the post-war reconstruction process. There was a need of comprehensive redevelopment as well as slum clearance. Their view influenced the modern movement:

- Breaking with the past
- Comprehensive planning
- Ordered city
- Linear and rigorous planning
- New materials and technology

Le Corbusier was one of the most famous urban planners (such as Antonio Sant'Elia) who was a pioneer in the modern movement.

However positivist urban planning was too idealist, the scientific method is not appropriate for social science.