

Urban Form as a Reflection of Governance Practices

Colin O'Byrne

Victoria University of Wellington
School of Architecture and Design



Kibera slums, Nairobi, Kenya. Photo: M. Sommers

Urban Governance: the formal and informal organizations, social processes, and institutions (i.e. the values, norms, and practices) used by society to coordinate and manage relationships and change in cities (Burris, Hancock, Lin, and Herzog, 2007; Pierre 1999; UN-HABITAT, 2002).



Kibera slums, Nairobi, Kenya. Photo: M. Sommers

U.S. Misawa Air Base, Misawa City, Japan



The built form of the base and neighbouring city show evidence of differing:

- Cultural environment
- Community values
- Government policy
- Building practices (Gillem, 2007)



Four Aspects for Comparing Governance Types:

- **Cultural origins and agency** – The original value system and current priorities, goals, and principles.
- **Governance structure** – The organization of social, economic, and political processes.
- **Functional types** – The basic patterns of interaction and operation.
- **Modifying variables** – Those aspects that influence the other three criteria and their expression in the urban form.

Cultural Origins and Agency – The original value system and current priorities, goals, and principles (Ashton, 2007; DiGaetano, 2006; DiGaetano & Strom, 2003; Pierre, 1999).

Scale
National

Cultural Origins

Rate of change
Very Rare

Agency Drivers

Principles

City

Priorities

Slow



Cultural origins and agency in the built form:

- Transportation infrastructure
- Density and open space patterns
- Architectural forms (Gillem, 2007)

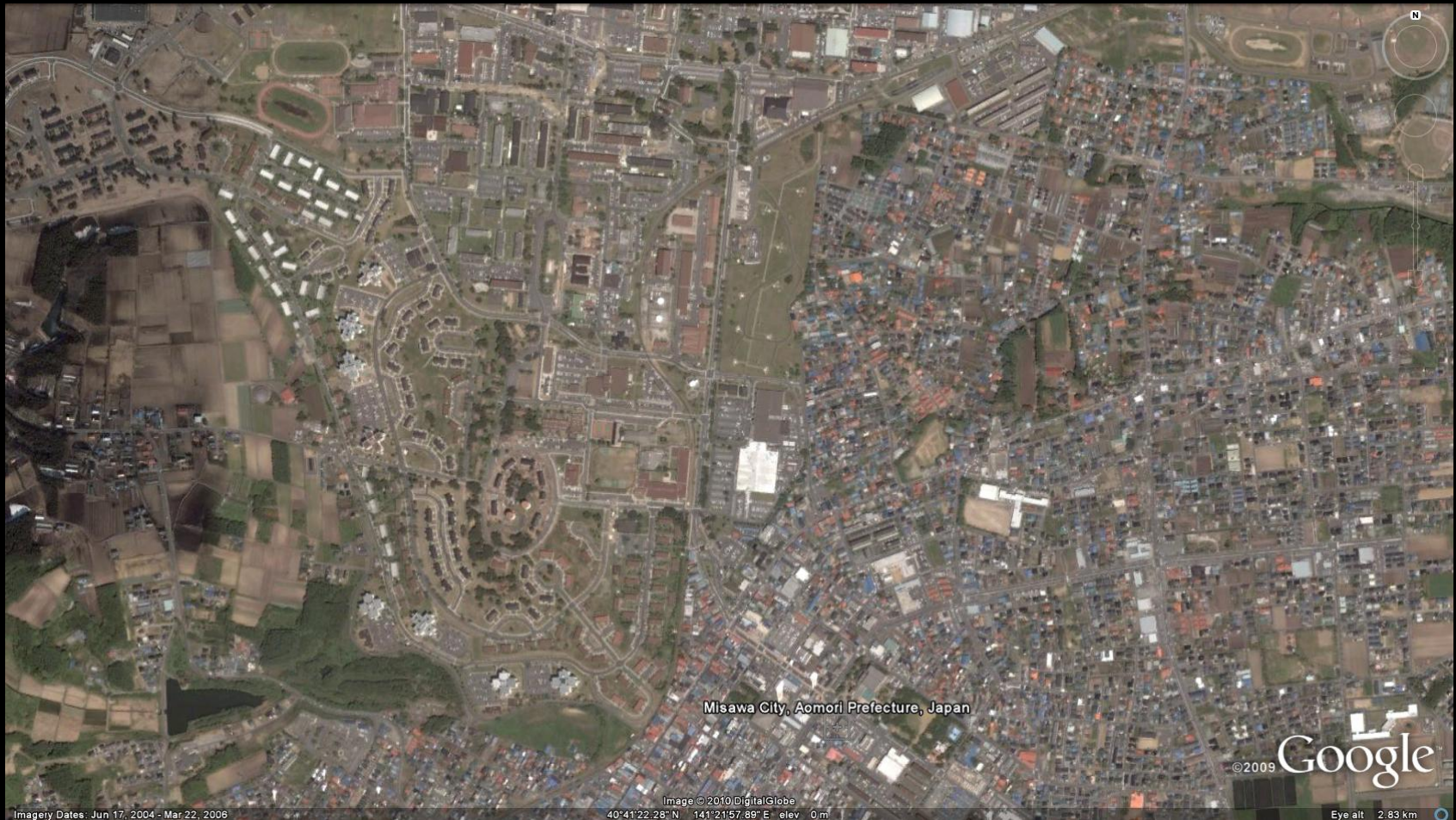


Governance Structure - The organization of social, economic, and political processes (DiGaetano & Strom, 2003; Engelman, 2009).

- **Fragmented** - separate organizations acting (generally) independently with separate responsibilities and/or territories
- **Mixed** - independent organizations working collaboratively with some regional organization of some services
- **Centralized** - urban functions and governance are organized by a central government and specific agencies
- **Comprehensive** - local authorities have nearly complete control of all aspects of local services and development

Governance structure in the built form:

- Coarse versus fine grain zoning
- Allocation of community services (Gillem, 2007)



Functional Types – The basic patterns of interaction and operation

(DiGaetano & Strom, 2003; Pierre, 1999).

- **Clientelistic / pro-growth** – political favouritism towards interests or clients
- **Corporatist** – collaborative power-sharing
- **Managerial** – hierarchical, efficiency focused
- **Pluralist** – mediation of special interests
- **Populist** – grassroots mobilization
- **Welfare** – stagnant, reliant on central government

Functional types in the built form:

- Rate of change
- Types of projects (Gillem, 2007)



Modifying Variables – Those aspects that influence the other three criteria and their expression in the urban form.

- **Political actors** - leadership ability, personal networks (DiGaetano & Strom, 2003).
- **Size of the public domain** - system scale, resources available (Gillem, 2007; Pierre, 2005).
- **Modes of economic and social production** - declining, stagnant, or growing (Pierre, 1999, 2005).
- **Formal / informal structures of cooperation** - inclusive or flexible (Ramirez-Lovering, 2008)

The physical expression of governance in the built environment:

- **Cultural origins and agency** – affects the transportation infrastructure, the density and open space patterns, and the architectural styles.
- **Governance structure** – affects the integration and scope of land uses and services.
- **Functional types** – affect the rate of change and the types of outcomes.
- **Modifying variables** – modify the physical expression of the other three aspects.

References

- Ashton, P. J. (2007). The role of good governance in sustainable development: Implications for integrated water resource management in southern Africa. In Turton, Hattingh, Maree, Roux, Claassen, Strydom (Eds.), *Governance as a Dialogue: Government- society-science in transition* (pp.77-100). New York: Springer.
- Burris, S., Hancock, T., Lin, V. & Herzog, A. (2007). Emerging strategies for healthy urban governance. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 84 (1), 154-163.
- DiGaetano, A. (2006). Creating the public domain: Nineteenth-century local state formation in Britain and the United States. *Urban Affairs Review*, 41 (4), 427-466.
- DiGaetano, A. & Strom, E. (2003). Comparative urban governance. *Urban Affairs Review*, 38 (3), 356-395.
- Engelman, R. (Ed.). (2009). *The state of the world population 2009: Facing a changing world: Women, population and climate*. New York: United Nations Population Fund.
- Gillem, M. L. (2007). *America town: Building the outposts of empire*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Pierre, J. (1999). Models of urban governance: The institutional dimension of urban politics. *Urban Affairs Review*, 34 (3), 372-396.
- Pierre, J. (2005). Comparative urban governance: Uncovering complex causalities. *Urban Affairs Review*, 40 (4), 446-462.
- Ramirez-Lovering, D. (2008). *Opportunistic urbanism*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press.
- UN-HABITAT. (2002). *The global campaign on urban governance: Concept paper, 2nd ed.* Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlement Programme.