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JUST PLANNING: WHAT HAS KEPT THE ARTS AND URBAN PLANNING APART?

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Abstract

The creative and cultural sector, including artists, creative entrepreneurs, cultural practitioners, and most nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, remain on the fringes of the larger enterprise of urban planning and city building. Only recently have limited forays demonstrated potentials that theorists and cultural planners called for 40 years ago. This article examines early ideas to bridge arts and culture with urban planning and explores why these two complementary practices have kept their distance. It surveys the history, theory, and practice of cultural planning and its relationship to urban planning. Meanwhile, increasing complexity and diversity of populations of cities creates greater urgency to bring the disciplines closer. This article argues that a deeper appreciation of culture in cultural planning, and blending of the best of both practices, can bring about a hybrid of *Just Planning* – a culturally informed approach to urban planning that promises greater civic engagement and a move towards social and economic equity. The emergence and evolution of cultural planning practice over the past four decades in the U.S., and many parts of the world, has been steady but neither ascendant nor as impactful as scholars such as Bianchini (1999), Mercer (2006), Mills (2003), and Stevenson (2005) anticipated. Meanwhile, urban planning, as practiced widely by towns and cities of all sizes, fails to acknowledge dimensions of human culture that impact patterns of behavior, livelihood, settlement, social practices, recreation, and other activities.

Keywords: cultural planning; urban planning; cultural policy; creative placemaking

The creative and cultural sector, including artists, creative entrepreneurs, cultural practitioners, and most nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, remain on the fringes of the larger enterprise of urban planning and city building. Only recently have limited forays demonstrated potentials that theorists and cultural planners called for 40 years ago. This article examines early ideas to bridge arts and culture with urban planning and explores why these two complementary practices have kept their distance. It surveys the history, theory, and practice of cultural planning and its relationship to urban planning.

While a full integration of cultural planning with urban planning may not be around the corner, the increasing complexity and diversity of populations of cities creates greater urgency to bring the disciplines closer. This article argues that a deeper appreciation of culture in cultural planning, and blending of the best of both practices can bring about a hybrid of *Just Planning* – a culturally informed approach to urban planning that promises greater civic engagement and a move towards social and economic equity. This hybrid practice may be one of the most underutilized tools available to more effectively address challenges facing communities big and small across the globe, whether these challenges be climate change, inadequate housing, economic disparities, or violence against immigrants.

The emergence and evolution of cultural planning practice over the past four decades in the U.S., and many parts of the world, has been steady but neither ascendant nor as impactful as early advocates such as Bianchini (1999), Mercer (2006), Mills (2003), and Stevenson (2005) anticipated. Meanwhile, urban planning as practiced widely by towns and cities of all sizes fails to acknowledge dimensions of human culture that impact patterns of behavior, livelihood, settlement, social practices, recreation, and other activities.

The assertion in this article is that if planners and policy-makers are unable or unwilling to account for the cultural make-up and dynamics of their communities, they cannot effectively resolve challenges across any of the domains of urban planning. Likewise, if the arts sector continues to see cultural planning as

a “circle-the-wagons” strategy to leverage additional resources for their ongoing operations, they restrict the practice and narrow the ends; cultural divisions will continue to grow. The same will happen if urban planners continue to fixate on spatial and physical uses without giving deeper consideration to users.

A 1979 treatise on how the City of Los Angeles should address the arts, authored by urban planner Harvey Perloff, may not constitute the origins of cultural planning, but it has been cited by various scholars as the “Big Bang.” During that same year, a group of notable American policy makers, city planners, scholars, arts administrators, and others, convened in San Antonio to explore “a utopian marriage of culture – of design, art, and performance – and astute city planning” (Covatta in ACA, 1980, p. i). Proceedings published as *The Arts and City Planning* (1980) by the American Council for the Arts (forerunner of Americans for the Arts), set a stage and a bar still elusive to both urban and cultural planners. While there is evidence of sporadic dating, the marriage called for in 1979 has yet to be consummated.

A simultaneous gravitational pull and repellent force are largely responsible for keeping the two practices apart, with cultural planning playing a relatively marginal role. The disconnects between them stifle progress of both fields. The gravitational pull comes from a narrow default definition of culture promoted by formal arts institutions and agencies to keep cultural planning within their orbit. The established urban planning field, on the other hand, supplies the repellent—fixating on a scientific and physical orientation to communities. Bernie Jones (1993), a planning and community development professor who conducted the first formal research on cultural planning in the U.S., observed that cultural planning emerged at the intersections of urban planning and the arts. Cultural planning, however, remains on one corner, usually with cup in hand asking for spare change.

Interest in arts and culture as a revitalizing agent for cities around the globe exploded in the 1980s (especially in Europe), and took a place central to building new cities and urban districts (especially in Asia and the Middle East). Similar interest grew exponentially in the U.S. with a focus on the creative class (Florida, 2002) and the branding of creative placemaking (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). Much attention has since been paid to arts-led regeneration, cultural districts, creative cities, and the creative economy, among other topics. British scholar Jamie Peck (2005) criticizes the abandonment of comprehensive cultural planning in favor of what he calls urban fragments and the selective development of neighborhood-nodes of upscale housing, coffee shops, and cultural and entertainment amenities designed to attract creative class residents, while leaving out those less privileged.

Cultural Planning: The Promise

Cultural planning emerged in many parts of the world as part of efforts to engage local communities in cultural policy development. Unlike many other aspects of cultural policy, cultural planning is primarily, if not entirely, place-based (Montgomery, 1990). “Unlike traditional arts policy, cultural planning is supposedly not simply concerned with aesthetic notions of culture (e.g. performing and visual arts),” writes Canadian scholar Jason Kovacs (2011, p. 321). “Rather, cultural planning is intended as a joined-up; cross-departmental approach to community development” (p. 321).

According to Australian geographer Deborah Mills (2003), cultural planning should not be:

An argument for justifying why arts and culture should receive public support. Nor is it an argument for the arts as a tool for achieving government economic, environmental and social objectives. Rather, it is a way of making visible what has until now remained invisible to planners, the cultural concepts which underpin, often implicitly, many public planning policies. If we can acknowledge these concepts and recognize them as living, breathing parts of individual and community life, then we can give new meaning and force to efforts to achieve sustainable economic, social and environmental development. (p. 9)

Cultural planning promises a novel approach to urban policy and planning, or, as Kovacs describes it, “an ethical corrective to physical planning” (2011, p. 322). Put a different way, Ghilardi (2001) writes, “Cultural planning is not the ‘planning of culture’, but a cultural (anthropological) approach to urban planning and policy” (p. 125).

In similar arguments related to another dimension of cultural planning, U.K. planning scholar Franco Bianchini (1999) writes, “Cities will not become more ecologically sustainable if we do not address how people mix and connect, their motivations, and whether they ‘own’ where they live and change their lifestyles appropriately” (p. 195). Ghilardi (2008) describes cultural planning as “A way of enabling policy-makers to think strategically about the application of the culturally distinctive resources of localities to economic and urban development, together with the delivery of policies capable of responding to local needs, aspirations and perceptions of place” (p. 4).

As early as 1993, Jones called for greater involvement of urban planners in cultural planning. Urban planners, he writes:

Bring to the table more thorough models of planning and tougher-minded methods. They can help build into plans more of the features that enhance the chances for plans being implemented. Finally, planners could greatly facilitate the integration of cultural plans with comprehensive plans, thus blending the arts more fully into the community. (p. 97)

While social policy in general, including most cultural policy, is typically a one-size-fits-all solution, U.K. planner and writer John Montgomery (1990) argues that each place requires unique approaches and solutions. “Because towns and cities are unique, they will have different problems, different potentials, and different opportunities. It is important to build from what exists rather than pluck ‘off-the-shelf’ models from other towns and cities” (p. 23).

Cultural and urban plans typically serve a single municipality, yet some communities have banded together to create regional plans. The promotion of regional thinking is perhaps one of the less-recognized benefits of cultural planning. Scholar Eleonora Redaelli (2013) asserts, “Cultural planning is much more than a policy framework for the arts because it links cultural resources to the localities’ wide range of social and economic needs” (p. 31). Cultural planners find that cultural concerns, whether in the context of audiences for the arts or in the anthropological context, do not conform to municipal boundaries. Cultural planning both requires and facilitates active engagement of leadership and stakeholders crossing jurisdictions, as well as what is essentially a regional market analysis of cultural assets, conditions, and needs.

Australian cultural planner and author Colin Mercer (2006), one of the early practitioners and pioneering thinkers, describes cultural planning as “the strategic and integral use of cultural resources in urban and community development” (p. 6). Cultural planning has to be part of a larger strategy, he argues. “It has to make connections with physical and town planning, with economic and industrial development objectives, with social justice initiatives, with recreational planning, with housing and public works” (p. 6). To make an impact, cultural planning cannot come after the fact of other municipal planning, he argues. That both marginalizes culture (as in the ways of life of people), and disadvantages urban planning by leaving it detached from culture (as in the ways of life of people).

A way-of-life approach to planning, as described by Montgomery (1990), includes, “having a vision for the future (as well as respect for the past), setting goals, and building up a bank of initiatives to get us from where we are to where we want to be” (p.23). Adopting such an approach forces urban planners to look at cities in a new way, he argues—“from the standpoint of users rather than uses, and with an awareness of quality. The result is to root planning in a cultural sense of place” (p. 23).

Can urban planners shift to such a focus? Rather than beginning with land use, to start with ways-of-life of residents, workers, and visitors, and developing a cultural sense of place – to think first about users and then uses? Has cultural planning provided what Kovacs (2011) called a “joined-up; cross-departmental approach” (p. 321)? Or will it continue to confine itself to a stand-alone practice serving communities in a limited way?

Cultural Planning: The Beginnings

Promoting a greater understanding of how the cultural, social, natural, and built environments affect the quality and prosperity of communities.

– Robert McNulty, Partners for Livable Places (1983, p. 18)

Both Craig Dreeszen (1998), a cultural planner and scholar in the U.S., and Lia Ghilardi (2001), a planner and scholar working in Europe, trace roots of cultural planning to the 19th century City Beautiful Movement, the WPA of the 1930s, and the community arts movement of the 1940s. Dreeszen points out the practice also shares antecedents and tools with urban planning, a practice and profession formalized around the turn of the 20th century (Rohe, 2009).

Ghilardi (2001) also cites roots of cultural planning in the “tradition of radical planning and humanistic management of cities championed in the early 1960s, chiefly, by Jane Jacobs and the idea of the city as a living system” (p. 125). Ghilardi points out that Jacobs acknowledges Scottish biologist and philosopher Patrick Geddes for advancing this line of thinking. Geddes is often credited as originator of the practice now known as urban planning in the late 19th century. Jacobs and her book, *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), are probably the most-cited inspiration by contemporary urban planners. Australian cultural planner and author Colin Mercer (2006), and Canadian planner Greg Baeker (2010) similarly claim the essence of cultural planning appears in the work of Geddes as well as that of mid-20th-century historian and sociologist Lewis Mumford—whose impact on urban planning is profound.

Canadian administrator, educator, and consultant Donna Cardinal found evidence of cultural planning in city planning documents from as early as the 1950s. She argued that cities including Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, and Kitchener explicitly addressed culture through citizen participation, diversity and pluralism, and used a broad definition of culture and the term “community cultural development as the integrating framework for linking arts, heritage and cultural industry to broader civic concerns” (cited in Baeker, 2010, p. 30). These were not stand-alone cultural plans—the form that became dominant in the 1980s. Those Canadian city planners practiced what Covatta (ACA, 1980) called astute city planning. They saw culture as both a phenomenon and a vehicle.

As Dean of the School of Planning at the University of California Los Angeles, Perloff launched the formal practice of cultural planning (Dreeszen, 1998; Kunzmann, 2004). The 1979 Perloff study *Arts in the Economic Life of the City* established the framework of cultural planning as a way for communities to identify and apply their cultural resources to community improvement. Perloff offered a blueprint for arts and culture in Los Angeles – a plan that was largely activated within a decade. His plan made suggestions in four broad areas for establishing a cultural element in the city and county general plan to enhance the arts in city development. To: (a) provide more information about arts activities; (b) make broader and more flexible use of public and private facilities for arts; (c) probe for ways the arts can be tied into public services so as to enlarge the scope of arts-related employment; and (d) make plans for the fuller use of the arts in urban development and redevelopment. This framework remains the dominant model and has since been replicated with some variation hundreds if not thousands of times in cities large and small – although less often integral to city comprehensive or general plans. While Perloff prescribed a relatively broad role for the arts, his plan did not invoke a broad definition of culture as did some planners, particularly in Australia and

Canada (Baeker, 2010; Dowling, 1997; Mercer, 2006).

Jones (1993), Landry (2008), and Ghilardi (2001) credit American Robert McNulty for advocating new thinking about cultural policy and planning beginning in the 1970s both in the U.S and internationally. Founder of Partners for Livable Places (now Partners for Livable Communities), a Washington, D.C. advocacy, research, and publishing group, McNulty moved away from the traditional value proposition of most arts programs. According to Ghilardi (2001), McNulty, “placed the arts and culture in the broader context of community development, building on their economic role, and expanding that role to include other social and community concerns” (p. 127). Building on the concept of livability, McNulty championed amenities as critical and transformational urban assets beginning in the mid-1970s. This set the stage for both holistic thinking about urban regeneration and for the practice of cultural asset mapping (Borrupt, 2006; Baeker, 2010).

While the Perloff plan may have represented the first formal or stand-alone cultural plan, McNulty describes in a 1983 report that many cities involved in his organization since 1975 “identified some aspect of cultural planning as a focus for their local projects” (Partners for Livable Places, 1983, p. 55). In the same report, McNulty recounts a 1976 conference when he was employed at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and a subsequent conversation with Perloff about the idea of examining cultural amenities in Los Angeles. A 1978 NEA grant to a group led by Perloff resulted in the 1979 Los Angeles plan.

As a parallel or precursor to the formal practice of cultural planning, McNulty promoted amenity development strategies. This includes taking stock of local assets including public spaces, design quality, cultural resources, natural and scenic resources, tourism and community image, distinctive neighborhoods, and marketing plans. He advocated leveraging these amenities in economic development strategies.

In the U.K. pioneering cultural planner Charles Landry formed the consulting practice Comedia in 1978 to bridge thinking about city life, culture, and creativity. According to Baeker (2010), “Many consider the Cultural Plan for Glasgow in 1990 developed by Comedia, to be the first integrated cultural plan in which cultural resources were used as a catalyst for urban regeneration” (p. 25). Landry, a leading author and international consultant, helped put arts and culture to work in urban transformation projects across Europe and Australia beginning in the 1970s. His work and writing made major impacts on cultural planning and how cultural solutions and creative thinking can be applied across many areas of municipal policy and city development.

Much of the early and most comprehensive cultural planning was carried out in Australian cities beginning in the 1980s. In a retrospective on the practice, Australian cultural geographer Robyn Dowling (1997) observes, “The theory of cultural planning begins with a fluid and broad definition of culture” (p. 23). Such an approach was advocated by Mercer (2006), among others. In practice, however, most cultural planning focused narrowly, using a material and Western European definition of culture.

A movement towards community arts and community cultural development, away from elitist notions of the arts, was strong in Australia from the 1970s, explaining the push towards a broader definition of culture. According to Australian cultural geographer Deborah Stevenson (2005), all major cities in that country had cultural plans by the early 1990s. In New South Wales all local governments were required to have them by 2004.

McNulty and Landry were articulating approaches that some community activists and artists were already acting upon, yet there were few formal organizations in the U.S. adopting and advancing these practices. One notable exception is the Arts Council of Winston-Salem, North Carolina established in 1958. Director Milton Rhodes described long-range planning he undertook in 1971 when the organization decided, “We were not in the business of serving only the arts institutions in our community. We were in the business of serving the whole community on behalf of the arts” (Rhodes in ACA, 1980). Decades later, this philosophy has begun to spread but is not the norm.

Why urban planning and cultural planning have not been closer when they share so much common heritage and common goals seems a mystery. “In Europe,” writes Ghilardi, “where aesthetic definitions of culture tend to prevail and policies for the arts are rarely coordinated with other policies, cultural planning has had, so far, little application” (2001, p. 126). The tradition in European cultures of separating or elevating the arts from other aspects of life may be one culprit.

Cultural Planning: The Practice

Cultural planning is about harnessing the assets of a community; celebrating the unique resources, such as heritage properties, natural assets, and community spirit; revitalizing downtown cores that too often have deteriorated; honouring and respecting the unique contributions of our artists and artisans; creating diverse and safe neighborhoods; raising the bar for urban design; protecting our green spaces and becoming better stewards of our environment; and the many other elements that make up a community moving forward confidently in the 21st century.

–Greg Baeker (2010, p. vi)

For his cultural planning research, Jones (1993) surveyed 52 U.S. communities that had completed cultural plans and analyzed 32 plan documents. Similar to and building on the Perloff plan, he found typical goals were: (a) enhancing community image and promoting economic development; (b) promoting cooperation among cultural organizations; (c) calling for development of cultural facilities; (d) identifying financial resource needs and improving organizational management; (e) enhancing arts marketing and promotion; (f) increasing quantity, quality, and diversity of arts programs; (g) advocating arts education; (h) supporting individual artists. These remain common elements in cultural plans with a focus on the formal, nonprofit cultural sector, its needs and aspirations.

Dreeszen (1994) conducted similar research at roughly the same time evaluating cultural plans from across the U.S. He prefaces cultural planning with the word community to name the practice *community cultural planning*. He found it “a structured, community-wide, public/private process that identifies community arts and cultural resources, needs, and opportunities, and plans actions and secures resources to address priority needs” (p.vi).

A primary outcome for communities engaging in this process, Dreeszen (1994) concluded, was increased funding for the arts, which stood in contrast with national trends at the time. Seeing pots of gold at the end of the planning rainbows, the practice was further promoted in the U.S. by the NEA as well as state and local arts agencies. A variety of monographs and practical handbooks were published in different countries by entities promoting the arts or providing tools to municipal governments since the 1980s to elucidate the practice and support cultural planning.

In addition to variations of how plans define and embrace culture, cultural planning has been practiced across a spectrum of approaches. And while most plans are undertaken to inform municipal policy and resource allocation, some are undertaken by private nonprofit, or public/private consortia, especially in the U.S., not simply to inform policy but to organize and mobilize collaboration among community players.

Cultural planning in most cases, including Australia, has been commissioned or overseen by arts or cultural agencies. This constitutes one of the challenges, according to Kovacs (2011). “The placement of cultural planning in an arts-centered department,” he writes, “only reinforces the narrow understandings of what culture and cultural planning are all about” (p. 332). The struggle to land on a clear definition of culture remains one of the obstacles to clarifying the real purpose of cultural planning.

When cultural planning in Australia entered the mainstream of municipal governance, it brought an “emphasis on strategic intergovernmental, interagency, and interdepartmental connections with the

publication of the 1993 report *Integrated Local Area Planning*” (Baeker, 2010, p. 27). Described as a joined-up approach, it connected five policy domains: the economy, environment, social policy, infrastructure, and culture.

As the practice has evolved, common purposes of cultural plans fall on a spectrum from: (a) focusing on sustained or increased funding for formal arts activities and organizations; (b) enhancing arts and cultural organizational capacities to advance their individual and collective missions; (c) expanding the range of people and cultural practices included in the identify of a community and/or resource and space allocations; (d) ascertaining and building on distinct cultural assets and community identity typically for tourism marketing or product branding; (e) employing collective cultural assets to address economic and/or neighborhood development or other social or educational challenges; (f) identifying complex community-wide challenges and strategies bringing cultural resources to bear to advance a community vision and/or address challenges; and (g) analyzing the unique cultural characteristics of both people and place – and the diversity within those characteristics – so as to inform an array of municipal policy choices from transit and housing to recreation and health.

The Disconnect – The Gravitational Pull

Many reasons have been postulated for the disconnect between urban planning and cultural planning (Kunzmann, 2004; Mercer, 2006; Stevenson, 2005; Landry, 2008). These scholars argue the promise of cultural planning has been sidetracked by the vested interests of arts institutions and their systems of support, while others argue cultural planning has been marginalized by an urban planning profession unable to see beyond quantitative thinking and the seeming imperative of land use allocations.

According to Mills (2003), “Culture has remained marginalized because it has been viewed as something to add to the list of topics that an integrated planning process must address, rather than something which could inform the whole planning process itself” (p. 7). Language, common metaphors, and dominant paradigms, she adds, “can hold us back from fully realizing the potential of culture as part of integrated local area planning” (p. 9).

In the practice of cultural planning, there is a distinct gravitational pull towards maintenance of the cultural status quo and, at least in the U.S., to advance Western European art forms and organizations. Other (non-Western) cultural practices are sometimes included especially when they conform to institutional delivery-system models built around industrial era organizational structures predicated on production, distribution, and mass consumption (Borrupt, 2011). Organized arts communities have developed a sense of ownership of cultural planning that Stevenson (2005) concludes has “privileged art over culture” (p. 40). Describing such cultural plans, Kunzmann (2004) writes, “Tiresome culture-related shopping lists are not helpful” (p. 399).

Describing a cultural plan development in an Australian community in 1999, Mills (2003) writes, “The cultural policy is informed by and in turn informs the sustainability plan, participation policy, youth strategy, the urban design strategy, the town planning scheme review, the artworks in public spaces strategy, the green plan and the recreation plan” (p. 8). The choice by a city recreation department to build and maintain tennis courts, basketball courts, or soccer fields is a cultural choice, or should be.

“Frustratingly, for Mercer and other proponents of the anthropological definition of culture”, observes Kovacs (2011), “this tendency is often manifested when representatives from the arts community ‘spontaneously’ revert from the latter definition to the former” (p. 326). In the experience of this author, it is not only the default position of the arts community but typically of city officials, planning staff, and the local business community, among others. This surprisingly includes many who value and carry non-Western cultural identities and traditions, thus leaving a cultural plan with little relevance outside a dominant Euro-centric local arts community.

Cultural planning, argues Mercer (2006), “cannot be generated from the self-satisfied and enclosed position which holds that art is good for people and the community” (p. 6). Writes Kovacs (2011), “This discriminating and extremely powerful concept blinds us to the existence of other cultural systems” (p. 323). In other words, it denies the opportunity to apply a culturally tuned lens to other elements of urban planning and policy, and to benefit from ways of thinking outside the so-called norm.

To counter the ‘it’s-good-for-you’ value proposition of the arts, an active research effort since the late 1990s unleashed multiple arguments for benefits of the arts with economic impacts commanding center stage. Impact areas include youth development, health and wellness, public safety, environment, civic engagement, and others. These arguments have often been applied so as to maintain a value proposition favoring institutional arts to the exclusion of understanding the broader implications of culture.

The sway over cultural planning and its outcomes held by local, mostly Eurocentric arts communities serves to secure resources and elevate their capacities to produce and deliver arts experiences. This seems a worthy undertaking to many and it need not be an either/or choice. However, it discounts a wider range of cultural needs and potentials and denies other social systems and infrastructure the benefits of a deeper understanding of their inherent cultural biases and new pathways to solving complex problems.

Beyond its value in economic development, cultural planning has failed to raise the status of cultural concerns within municipal government (Kovacs, 2001), and it fails to promote a fuller “integration of culture into local planning praxis” (p. 322). The ineffectiveness and marginalization of cultural planning, argues Mills (2003), “will continue so long as there remains an arts-led push to cultural planning.” Expanding the definition of culture to include human behavior, interaction, and ways of life, as advocated by Ghilardi (2001, 2008), Bianchini (1999), Mercer (2006), and Montgomery (1990), is core to creating more highly functioning communities.

Another factor in the disconnect between cultural and urban planners may be in the limits of experience of many cultural planners, suggests Bianchini (1999). “A narrow training in arts administration is inadequate for cultural planners, who also need to know about political economy and urban sociology, about how cities work (as societies, economies, politics, and eco-systems, as well as cultural millieux) and of course about physical planning itself, otherwise they cannot influence it” (p. 200). Evans (2001) sees that:

Land-use and culture are fundamental natural and human phenomena, but the combined notion and practice of culture and planning conjure up a tension between not only tradition, resistance and change; heritage and contemporary expression, but also the ideals of cultural rights, equity and amenity. (p. 1)

The Disconnect – The Repellent Force

Minds which for decades have ceased to ask why they do what they do have doomed themselves to mere systems maintenance...The result has been a generation of technicians rather than visionaries, each one taking a career rather than an idea seriously.

–Higgins (1994, p. 3)

On the other side of the equation, the formal field and practice of urban planning has been unsure how to welcome or accommodate cultural planning or even to see its relevance outside occasional creative district or arts facility planning. City planning lacked the astute quality called for by Covata (1980). Bianchini (1999) puts the urban planning profession into context of the historical development of cities. “Every period... seems to need its own forms of creativity. Urban planners this century [20th] have been especially influenced by the creativity of engineers and scientists... responding to problems of overcrowding, mobility, and public health generated by the Industrial Revolution” (p. 195). Moving into the

21st century, he continues, there is a growing awareness that “Physical and scientific approaches can only be part of the solution” (p. 195).

Kunzmann (2004) offers a critique of urban planning. “Creativity has become a topical theme, though still only with a very small audience” (p. 391). He calls for bridging the arts and urban planning in profound ways and makes a blunt assessment of urban planning education, suggesting, “Their creative skills development is neglected, sacrificed on the altar of science” (p. 400). “Many people, both in planning and in the arts, still have a hard time reconciling the left-brain activity of planning with the right-brain one of artistic expression,” writes Jones (1993, p. 89). Kunzmann further argues that planning has to incorporate culture and has to be more creative. His examination of the curricula of planning schools reveals little connection between culture, creativity, and spatial planning. “Few sociologists have brought their concepts of culture into planning education, even when they were very cultivated and culture-minded individuals themselves” (p. 400).

“In short what urban planners also need today,” writes Bianchini (1999), “is the creativity of artists, more specifically of artists working in social contexts” (p. 195-196). He recommends the integration of six attributes into the education of planners, that it be: (a) holistic, flexible, lateral, networked; (b) innovative, original and experimental; (c) critical, enquiring, problematizing, challenging the status quo and questioning; (d) people-centered and humanistic; (e) cultured and critically aware of history, of the culture of the past; and (f) open-ended or non-instrumental.

Part of what city planners are rarely trained to appreciate are symbolic elements of place, and even the symbolism in their own actions as they work in communities. Bianchini (1999) advocates urban planners, “have to learn something from the process of thinking used by people working in the field of cultural production – i.e. the production of meanings, images, narratives, and ideas” (p. 199). The meaning of place often fits more into the silo of landscape architecture but less often urban planning. Mercer (2006) asserts, “Planning is not a physical science but a human science” (p. 5). As such, he writes, planners need to be, “anthropologists, economists, and geographers, not just draftsmen. . . They need to know how people live, work, play, and relate to their environment” (p. 5).

Some critics of urban planning lament the narrow physical science and land-use focus that guides the profession (Landry, 2008; Sandercock, 2003, Kunzmann, 2004). Mercer (2006) argues urban planning has provided a “professional specialization in developing a two-dimensional relationship to the urban environment without a feel for what is actually going on in those coloured rectangles and between those model buildings” (p. 5). Even for leaders in the cultural sector, argues Dowling (1997), the “Physical manifestations of culture remain the focus, rather than webs of meaning” (p. 29).

To the credit of planning practice in Australia, Mercer (in Baeker, 2010) observes what he calls the cultural turn in urban planning. “This manifests through positioning and marketing of towns and cities, in itself, a response to the profound implications for how cities work and survive in the context of two major forces: globalisation and the new economy” (p. 15). The New Economy is known in some circles as the Knowledge or Information Economy and in others as the Creative Economy where technology, creativity, human capital, and capacity for innovation are the primary drivers. Such ideas, popularized by Richard Florida (2002), and the global competition to attract talent have raised the level of awareness of cultural diversity and the development of vibrant places for some urban planners.

Significant differences in approaches to planning are evident where cultural planners focus on the human, social, organizational, and symbolic dimensions of cities. Urban planners begin their work by mapping the physical or natural and built elements. Mercer (2006) describes how in the process of planning, “We must excavate the layers of our city downwards into its earliest past. . . and thence we must read them upwards.” To do so he advocates cultural mapping, “tracing people’s memories and visions and values – before we start the planning” (p. 5).

Can We Conduct Just Planning?

The concept of Just Planning constitutes a creative hybrid where cultural sensibilities and cultural analysis informs all elements of urban planning. What Bianchini, Ghilardi, Kunzmann, Mercer, and others call for is a fundamental shift in how both urban planners and cultural planners approach their work. Language, common metaphors, and dominant paradigms have kept cultural planning and urban planning professions and practices apart (Mills, 2003). Culture has been conflated with elitist notions of art, while critical understanding of human cultures (ways of life) and diversity have been off the table for those designing and building both places and systems.

The debate that is needed is whether cultural planning is really planning by and for arts communities, or whether it is a process to address ways of living in communities and the cultural dimensions of policy options across a spectrum of municipal concerns – or some hybrid. Ghilardi argues:

Cultural planning – with its integrated approach to local development and by linking culture and other aspects of economic and social life – can be instrumental in creating opportunities for a variety of social and cultural constituencies. . . . Cultural planning can help urban governments to identify the *distinctive* cultural resources of a city or locality and to apply them in a strategic way to achieve key objectives in areas such as community development, place marketing or economic development.
(p. 5)

A core question for cultural planning remains in the definition of culture that has privileged some cultural practices and/or institutions over others and masked the real importance of culture in communities. Issues related to cultural equity across all dimensions of concern to urban planners and policymakers cannot be fully addressed unless notions of culture and what it means are laid bare. Ghilardi (2001) argues, “Difference needs to be considered as the constant intersection of many features where none of them can claim importance over another” (p. 124.) Lack of understanding of the various cultures and ways of life within a city result in policy choices and physical development patterns that privilege some while denying others equitable access to resources and to conduct ways of life that respect and accommodate their cultures.

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