

New Lines of Thinking and Practicing Urban Planning and Community Development

Tiina-Riitta Lappi

Maunu Häyrynen & Antti Wallin (eds) 2017. *Kulttuurisuunnittelu. Kaupunkikehittämisen uusi näkökulma*. [Cultural planning. A new approach to urban development.] Tietolipas 258. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.

Developing today's dynamic cities and planning urban environments successfully is no longer possible if the task is left solely in the hands of sector-based administrators leading from above, as has generally been the case within modernistic planning practices. Cultural planning offers an alternative perspective on how to develop cities so that they could better deal with global influences and related complex changes in operational environments. The aim of this book titled *Kulttuurisuunnittelu. Kaupunkikehittämisen uusi näkökulma* is to introduce cultural planning to Finnish audiences and present some examples of how it has been applied in Finland and neighboring countries. At the core of cultural planning is the idea of understanding culture as something that runs through all spheres of life and consequently touches all administrative sectors. Another central aspect has to do with the promotion of inclusive participatory practices ranging from definitions of local cultures to decision-making processes as well as putting the decisions in practice. Overall, cultural planning aims at advancing fair and flexible community development which is based on local identities.

In the first chapter of the book, Maunu Häyrynen gives an overview of what cultural planning is and how it relates especially to Finnish planning practices. Even if having reached Finland quite recently, cultural planning as a model for overcoming sectorial boundaries has been implemented in many countries for decades. There are a number of variations in how the model has been applied according to theoretical and administrative contexts, as well as variations in the scale of the target. Despite such differences, however, all cultural planning projects share the following characteristics: firstly, they are connected to particular places or sites, and secondly, they pursue collaborative planning practices and strategies. Cultural planning projects are usually divided into two stages and start with cultural mapping, which aims at describing such issues as lifestyles, social relations, environmental values, future expectations, and locally defined cultural resources and identities.

The realization of cultural planning makes use of the knowledge produced during the mapping phase, and measures to be taken later on are planned based on that knowledge. Ideally, cultural planning operates as an ongoing process so that both cultural mapping and actions for the realization of plans can be updated whenever needed. Continuing from the general introduction of what cultural planning is, Christina Hjorth gives concrete guidelines on how to proceed with a cultural planning process step by step. Her chapter is based on Cultural Planning Laboratory, which was launched in West Götaland in Sweden to support the area's communities interested in trying this new planning approach. Hjorth states that the main target as well as the basis of the whole process is to obtain knowledge and an understanding of cultural resources, which then reinforces local identities and makes visible the uniqueness of that particular place.

For cultural planning processes to be successful in reaching their targets, it is crucial, according to Hjorth, that they are anchored with the work of administrators and politicians. In addition, there needs to be enough time and patience especially for the collaboration between different parties. Furthermore, all the work must be connected with other community plans and strategies. Since these requirements need to be fulfilled to obtain satisfactory results, it would have been interesting to read more about how administrators and politicians in particular have experienced these kinds of planning methods. Probably, such research is still missing since cultural planning is quite a novelty in the Finnish context, and for that reason the focus, throughout the book, is clearly more on the mapping of local cultures and activating local residents instead of looking at how they have been received by the decision-makers within communal institutions.

In many of the chapters, the approach towards attaining cultural knowledge appears somewhat simplified, i.e. they give an impression that one just goes and collects local knowledge without assessing, for example, power relations, social roles and positions, or gender aspects more deeply. However, Simo Häyrynen's chapter, examining cultural planning in governing communal change in mining communities, makes an interesting and thought-provoking exception. He deliberates upon the question whether cultural planning can bring additional value to the governance of fluctuating, temporary, and locally arranged circumstances. Mining communities are prone to constant changes not least due to the fact that their commercial value is based on non-renewable natural resources, which means that their lifespan is limited and often calculated beforehand from the beginning until the end.

This calls for cultural planning that is not confined to very established, uniform, or coherent ideas concerning the local culture. According to Simo Häyrynen, the impact assessment of cultural characteristics in a state of change requires sensitivity towards divergent cultural articulations and silent or implicit cultural signals. To accomplish this, it is important to take into consideration cultural distances between those who stay put more or less permanently and those whose presence is more temporary and related solely to industrial activities. In order to capture alternative identities and values, it is necessary to study spontaneous cultural reactions in other situations besides formal or organized hearings or discussions. All this leads to the realization that the questions asking who has a share and what the nature of individual participation is, which in my opinion should always be at the centre when cultural mapping is pursued.

Antti Wallin and Suvi Rosendahl write about the cultural change of a suburban neighborhood Sampola in Pori as an example of how to map a residential area and search for a sense of a place that has developed over the years. Pia Hovi-Assad focuses on the question whether methods of cultural planning and methods of community art can be combined to implement collaborative culture-based development. Helka Kalliomäki and Jukka Vahlo examine what possibilities and challenges cultural planning poses for the co-creation of cities. They argue that cultural mapping should be integrated into planning processes right from the beginning in order for the obtained knowledge to be effectively applied later on. This creates a basis for collaborative planning processes genuinely aiming at developing cities to become more user-oriented. The last chapter, written by Daniel Nagy and Hans Schlappa, introduces the concept of placemaking as something that brings together ideas about community-based place development. It is based on a research project aimed at improving public open areas in four European cities and focuses on transferring knowledge between the cities that have taken part in the project.

The book as a whole seems somewhat incoherent but maybe it just tells what cultural planning is about. It has certain underlying common characteristics but the ways in which it has been applied so far in the context of Finnish planning and development projects vary a lot both in their implementation and in relation to the targets of the presented projects. It would have been interesting to read more about how those parties used to working with sectorial administration have experienced this kind of planning approach and the collaborative working methods related to it. Some kind of a summary at the end of the book would have been beneficial for the reader to get an overview of the variety of ways and disciplinary contexts of applying cultural planning

methods in city planning and development. For ethnologists and anthropologists working with urban issues, the book offers many interesting ideas on how to apply cultural knowledge and ethnographic expertise within practices of urban planning and community development.

AUTHOR

PhD Tiina-Riitta Lappi is a docent in Ethnology at the University of Jyväskylä. She is specialized in urban and migration studies.