



Transformation and Continuity in Community Planning

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The paper relates two apparently conflicting aspects of contemporary community life and planning: the well established ideology, continuously developed over more than a thousand years, of communities as values-based, holistic, inclusive and collaborative entities; and the current realities of tides of rapid and often conflicting change affecting their climate, economies, society, technology and politics.

Argument

Though the religious and secular ideologies of medieval European and traditional Islamic cultures differed radically in many ways, they shared a commitment to community life that was:

Values based, including goals of prosperity, trust, justice and continuity,

Holistic, emphasizing the creation of integrated communities, balancing activities of production, domestic life, reverence, recreation, learning and exchange.

Inclusive and hospitable, in both their social organization and physical spaces, with safeguards for travelers and migrants and provisions to accommodate new settlers

Collaborative and negotiate in the organization of government and daily life, including guild organizations, religious communities and representative roles.

In developing these themes, reference is made to the urban revolutions of medieval Italy and Spain, the urban cultures in Abbassid Persia and Ottoman Turkey, and the outward looking cities of the European Renaissance. Illustrations are drawn from European and Islamic writing and paintings of the time. Community planning is shown to have reflected religious and humanist impulses that combined to assist social evolution, cultural exchange and continuity, psychological and physical security and modest innovation and development. The continuing contemporary relevance of these four themes is illustrated by reference to the current theorists including Etzioni (values) Bryson and Chapin & Kaiser (comprehensiveness), Davidoff and Sandercock (inclusiveness) and Forester and Healey (collaborative style), providing a firm foundations for community planning.

However, rapid changes in the physical, social, technological and political environments are transforming community life. Values patterns are becoming more diverse, centrifugal and splintered because of the increasing mobility of people and ideas. Growth in the array of activities and the intensity of their impacts include the effects of the internet, global warming, virtual reality and contact, global scale direct foreign investment in production and property, the spread of international terrorism and the growing militancy of alienated groups. Mutual adjustments which previously could eliminate misfit between environment and innovations are being replaced by their rapid introduction and application often without full exploration of either impacts or potentialities. Collaborative discussion within regional policy and local neighborhood communities is being replaced by Internet and email communication.

Conclusion

The paper concludes by exploring how the continuing cooperative ideology of community planning can help manage these many very rapid transformations by harnessing such innovations as improved communications and distribution networks to fulfill longstanding goals. Prominent among these activities should be promotion of:

- Discussion about diverse values to reach working agreements on common ground;
- Recognition that new activities should have their needs acknowledged and met;
- Rapid response to critical new threats issues such as climate change and AIDS;
- Use of widely accepted values such as prosperity, trust, justice and sustainability as criteria to select directions and manage changes. Most important of all, the painfully evolved techniques of collaboration and negotiation which have marked the slow development of community planning over several thousand

years should be employed to create accelerating opportunities for interaction, conflict resolution and beneficial; physical development.

KEY WORDS: Communication, collaboration, negotiation, conflict resolution, holism, values, change, inclusion.