

### Editorial: “Integrating Theory and Practice”

This annual issue of *Canadian Planning and Policy* (CPP-APC), which as usual has been prepared in collaboration with the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP-ICU), the Association of Canadian University Planning Programs (ACUPP-APUCU), and the *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* (CJUR), is not a “themed” issue. However, the articles selected may be loosely grouped under the banner “integrating planning theory and practice,” a theme that is effectively captured in the two following statements:

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory”  
and  
“There is no better theory than a good practice”

The first of these statements is a quote from Kurt Lewin,<sup>1</sup> a renowned social psychologist who is also credited with coining the term “action research.” The second is an appropriate rejoinder by practitioners.

The first article in this volume focuses on the ways in which local and regional planning capacity may be assessed and augmented to better cope with increasingly complex demands. In so doing, the authors, Nick Novakowski and Mark Seasons, present a framework that incorporates planning tools that they identified in a literature review and, therefore, are theoretically available to local and regional planners; practical tools, such as financial, legal and political levers that are available in the specific context; and direct measures of capacity which are revealed through a content analysis of existing plans.

After applying this framework to municipalities in the Humber River Basin, Newfoundland, the authors conclude that planning capacity in this area is severely constrained. The plans examined were considered to be conventional, lacking in vision, and failing to incorporate many of the innovations in planning theory and practice that have been made over the past thirty years. In effect, in this context, practice is seriously lagging behind theory. The authors offer practical suggestions that would be helpful in augmenting planning capacity, including the hiring of a “circuit rider” who would be available to assist with local planning issues in small municipalities.

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In their article, “Integrating Cultural Planning and Urban Planning,” Alexandra McDonough and Gerda Wekerle, explore the constraints that have hindered an effective integration of cultural planning within the urban planning and economic development frameworks that are more strongly entrenched in cities. Their research builds on that of Charles Landry and others who have argued forcefully that the “silos” of existing organizational structures and traditional practices in cities hamper creative thinking and holistic problem solving.

McDonough and Wekerle focus on cultural planning in Toronto, which was among the first Canadian municipalities to develop cultural policies in the 1990’s and now has an official policy that is represented in documents such as the *Culture Plan for the Creative City* (City of Toronto, 2003). By tracing the planning and building approval processes for specific projects in Toronto’s West Queen West Triangle, the authors conclude that the regulatory planning process in force provides only limited tools to address the “social, economic and cultural forces that contribute to the competitiveness and vitality of cities.” Their evidence suggests that a more open negotiation process that actively involves citizens, well organized, not for profit groups, developers, and city officials would have better results. Again, practice seriously lags behind theory and fails to deliver on the policy objectives so often articulated by politicians at all levels.

The need to look beyond current planning / regulatory frameworks and to engage the private sector and civil society in finding creative solutions is also featured in “Bridging the Gap,” Sasha Tsenkova and Melissa Witwer’s analysis of the growing shortage of affordable rental housing in Alberta. Their findings, which are supported by empirical evidence, case studies, and interviews with industry professionals, suggest that it is useful to consider a wide range of planning, fiscal, financial, and institutional measures at each step in the design, construction, and operation of affordable units. They conclude that direct subsidies in some form are inevitably required and suggest specific ways in which these may be most effectively provided in association with other policy measures.

Ahmed El-Geneidy, Assumpta Cerda, Raphael Fischler, and Nick Luka’s paper, “Evaluating the Impacts of Transportation Plans Using Accessibility Measures,” differs from the other papers in this volume as it focuses on methodological issues. While most transportation plans are traditionally evaluated in terms of their effect on mobility, the authors argue that accessibility measures—which assess how easy or how much time it takes to get to desired destinations rather than the fluidity of traffic flow—may be a useful complement in the assessment of the likely benefits of alternative planning initiatives.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of accessibility evaluation measures the authors complete an analysis of the most recent transportation plan for Montreal using five indicators, such as the change in the ratio of jobs that may be reached by transit and by car within 30 minutes with and without the planning measures proposed.

They conclude that accessibility measures are especially useful as a means of evaluating the interaction between transportation and land use activities and, therefore, of particular importance to planners who are interested in the spatial impacts of transportation projects.

Julien Landry and Leonora Angeles's paper on "Institutionalizing Participation in Municipal Policy Development" offers early insights into the effectiveness of expert citizen advisory committees (*Comites aviseurs*) in the process of policy development. Their research focuses on the committees that were established by *Projet Montreal*, an opposition party in the City of Montreal that has majority status within the Plateau Montreal borough, a position that offers significant local powers under Montreal's decentralized governance structure.

As the rules of the game concerning *Comites aviseurs* are very much in evolution, the authors are essentially engaged in action research concerning effective ways of involving civil society in decision-making. The paper concludes with an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of institutionalizing this model of participation within existing bureaucratic practices and citizen participation models. They suggest that an ongoing collaborative monitoring process would be helpful in working towards more effective ways of "involving diverse stakeholders in a process that integrates joint learning, reflection, and action."

The final paper in this volume, "The Practice of Multicultural Planning in American and Canadian Cities" by Mohammad Qadeer and Sandeep Agrawal argues that cities have been much more responsive to shifting ethno-cultural dynamics than one would conclude on the basis of theoretical academic discourse. In effect, it is argued that practice, at least in this case, is ahead of theory.

The authors highlight the fact that many cities in North America are emerging as "majority-minority" areas where whites represent less than 50% of the population and the majority is composed of a wide variety of other racial groups. Following a review of the planning literature concerning this phenomena and the ways in which cultural differences have been accommodated in urban planning, the authors present the empirical results of a survey that was completed by 23 US and 19 Canadian municipalities. They conclude that "planning decision-making processes by and large include ethnic interests" albeit in part due to charter rights, inclusive citizen participatory processes, and market forces, in addition to the progressive efforts of municipal officials.

Finally, one of the theoreticians frequently cited in Qadeer and Agrawal's paper offers a commentary entitled "Where Do Theories Come From?" Forcefully refuting the position that planning theorists "have not moved beyond the narratives of the 1970's," she draws attention to the "move from multiculturalism to interculturalism as a description of the new reality" in our cities. Further, Sandercock explains how her own every day experiences, as well as empirical research, including in-depth ethnography, provide the foundation for her evolving theoretical insights.

Together, the paper by Qadeer and Agrawal and the commentary by Sandercocock offer a very rich discourse on one of the most fundamental challenges facing planners in our evolving cities, namely the need to accommodate ethno-cultural diversity in planning practice. As may be witnessed in the tragedy that has recently been experienced in Norway, ethno-cultural tensions may be very destructive.<sup>2</sup> A solution to these issues that provides not only “reasonable accommodation” but also an environment that deepens our appreciation of humanity and respects social, economic and biophysical imperatives is needed.

The central objective of the annual issue of *Canadian Planning and Policy* is to provide a scholarly record of planning in Canada. All of the papers included in this volume contribute to this objective and will, hopefully, be well read by planning academics and practitioners. They are part of an ongoing dialogue between theory and practice and the effort to gain new insights and improve outcomes.

I would like to thank all of the authors who submitted papers for review irrespective of whether their work is published in this issue, as well as the anonymous reviewers who contributed their comments. Special thanks as well to David Gordon and Ryan Walker who accompanied me during the lengthy review and decision-making process. Finally, the financial contribution of the Canadian Institute of Planners to support production costs of this annual issue is gratefully acknowledged.

David F. Brown  
Guest Editor  
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## References

- (1) Lewin, Kurt. (1951). Field theory in social science; selected theoretical papers. D. Cartwright (ed.). New York: Harper & Row. p169.
- (2) The reference is to Anders Behring Breivik, a Norwegian who killed 68 of his countrymen on July 22, 2011 in a tragic effort to draw attention to his personal concern with the shifting ethno-cultural balance in European countries.