

Culture + Place = Wealth Creation

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Authentic urban environments bubbling with lively cultural and entertainment options are magnets that attract and retain creative people. This creative workforce in turn generates wealth in an expanding knowledge economy. To increase their capacity for wealth generation, cities must build culturally rich urban environments by better integrating three kinds of urban planning: land use, economic and cultural planning.

Our Urban Age

For the first time in human history, more people live in urban places (cities) than not. In Canada, the depth and scope of change confronting us today is massive as shown in Table 1.

cultural and industrial revolutions that preceded it. The first wave of the new economy was the information revolution that saw the introduction of personal computing, mass communication and the Internet. The second phase is the emergence of creative economies rooted in culture and design.

Wealth creation is now driven less by the exploitation of resources of the land or the efficiency of manufacturing processes, and more by the exploitation of our imagination and intellect. Innovation is the driver of the new economy.

Place-Based Wealth Creation

Jane Jacobs defined cities simply and profoundly as places that produce

Table 1 – Transition to a Creative Economy

| | 1867 | 1967 | 2007 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Political System | British Empire | Nation State | Cities and Regions |
| Economy | Agriculture and Resource Extraction | Manufacturing and Industrial Processing | Culture and Creativity |
| Rural/Urban Population | 0/20 | 40/60 | 20/80 |

The economic revolution now underway is as transformational as the agri-

wealth. If they cannot generate wealth, they cannot sustain the employment and quality of life needed to attract and retain people.

Success in attracting and retaining a global and mobile class of creative workers and entrepreneurs is now a critical factor in determining which cities

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will flourish, while others languish. One of the central paradoxes of our global age is that *place matters* – it has become *more*, not less, important.

As shown in Table 2, four thinkers have contributed greatly to our understanding of urban economies, and how to leverage growth in these economies.

Together, these ideas point to the need for urban wealth creation strategies based on connecting *land use, economic and cultural planning* in more powerful and effective ways.

Cities and Culture

Of the three types of planning, perhaps the least understood until recently is cultural planning. This is surprising given the history of planning. Planning as a modern profession was the product of late 19th and early 20th century visionaries such as Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford, whose views of cities bore remarkable similarity to those articulated by Jane Jacobs and others many decades later.

Cities were understood as *cultural entities*, places that were shaped by their natural and human heritage, and a product of the values and beliefs of their citizens. Geddes believed that planning was more a *human* than a physical science requiring three types of expertise: planners must be *anthropologists* (specialists in culture); *economists* (specialists in local economies); and *geographers* (specialists in the built and natural environment).

Sadly, the professionalization of urban planning that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, and its institutionalization as a function of local government, undermined these more holistic views. The primary focus was on the administration of land and the efficient delivery of municipal services. If cultural assets were acknowledged by planners, they were narrowly defined, most often in terms of facilities and spaces – museums, galleries, theatres, concert halls, parks and recreational facilities.

Table 2 – Understanding Urban Economies

| Concept | Author | Key Ideas |
|----------------------|-----------------|---|
| Home Grown Economies | George Latimer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80 percent of future investment and economic growth is driven by assets <i>already in the city</i> Rather than leveraging these assets, economic development offices spend too much time chasing a small number of business/industry relocations |
| Place Marketing | Philip Kotler | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic marketing of place is key to building vigorous local economies Cities must invest in essential public infrastructure and market distinctive local features and assets |
| Industry Clusters | Michael Porter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic success depends on geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, suppliers and research infrastructure Cluster strategies are needed to map existing strengths and assess gaps/weaknesses |
| Creative Economies | Richard Florida | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creativity and culture are the new economic drivers Quality of place is a now core competitive advantage because business and investment follow people – not vice versa |

These traditions still have a strong hold on planning departments in many cities. But, recent years have seen a “re-placing” of the planning profession. Jane Jacobs was a major force in this re-orientation, drawing attention to the complex human ecology of cities. She advocated more organic, place-based and context-specific planning models.

From Cultural Silos to Cultural Systems

Today, a growing number of leading municipalities in Canada and abroad are turning to the larger vision of cities and culture advocated by Geddes and Mumford. To realize this vision, they are embracing integrated *cultural planning* approaches. Cultural planning is a place-based approach to local and regional cultural development pioneered in Australia in the early 1990s. It is an

approach built on the following principles of systems thinking:

- ▶ The whole is not only greater, but different, than the sum of the parts.
- ▶ We must understand systems before intervening.
- ▶ Systems knowledge requires understanding connections and inter-relationships among elements of the system.

This whole systems perspective on cultural development runs counter to the discipline-based policy and planning frameworks (eg., separate attention to visual arts, performing arts, museums, etc.) that has tended to drive thinking in the past. Its place-based (rather than discipline-based) focus is consistent with the call for place-based policy frameworks across all aspects of public policy by the recent report of the External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities.

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Examples of Good Practice

Large Urban Centre

Vancouver – Vancouver is widely recognized as one of the leading cities in North America in planning for sustainability. It has also been a leader in cultural planning, successfully integrating the arts, culture and heritage into the daily thinking and practice of all city departments. One result has been the creation of a culturally rich urban environment with high standards in architecture, public space and urban design.

Winnipeg – Winnipeg has established an integrated downtown framework and map. The

integration of tax credits and gap financing of heritage building redevelopment, with free transit, rezoning to multi-use districts, cultural programming, targeted streetscaping and the development of sports, cultural and educational facilities in locations to leverage maximum economic impacts has led to a significant up-swing in property values, economic activity and tax revenues out of the downtown.

Mid-Size Cities

Saint John – The City of Saint John and Uptown Saint John (the business improvement area) are embarking on a new land use plan for the uptown peninsula (including the waterfront) that will integrate cultural and economic plan-

ning in an integrated wealth creation strategy. An initial cultural mapping process has been completed as a first step in this process.

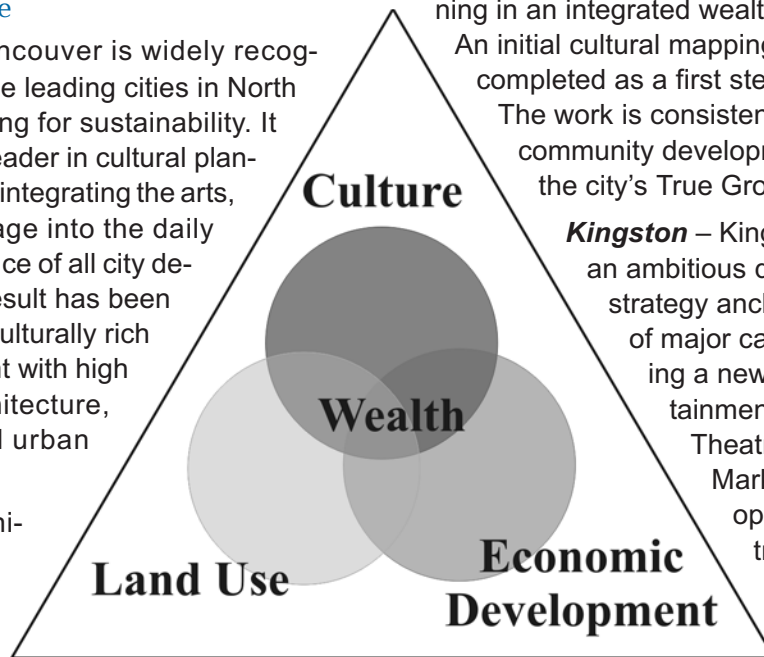
The work is consistent with the integrated community development vision set out the city's True Growth Strategy.

Kingston – Kingston has launched an ambitious downtown renewal strategy anchored by a number of major capital projects including a new large venue entertainment centre, Grand Theatre restoration and Market Square redevelopment. An urban district strategy is being developed to link these developments with a creative economy

strategy. A community roundtable with leaders from higher education, business and cultural sectors has been formed to support these efforts.

Small/Rural Community

Prince Edward County – In 2004, the county completed an economic development strategy based on quality of place and focused around four pillars: culture, tourism, agriculture (in particular specializing in added-value agriculture such as wineries) and industry/commerce. Since then a cultural strategic plan and a tourism strategy have advanced this integrated economic development agenda. New governance structures linking municipal, business and community leaders are driving these plans.



Cultural Mapping

Patrick Geddes got it right – stressing the need for planners to “map before you plan.” Cultural mapping is the first step and defining feature of cultural planning. It is a tool for deepening understanding of local cultural systems and engaging

- ▶ the natural and built environment, including public and open spaces;
- ▶ the diversity and quality of leisure, cultural, eating, drinking and entertainment facilities and activities;
- ▶ distinctive local products and skills in the crafts, manufacturing and services;

tion, GIS produces powerful visual imagery that assist in challenging traditional mindsets.

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communities in this process.

Cultural planning embraces a broad definition of *cultural resources* in cities that are the focus of mapping. For example:

- ▶ the range of human resources connected with the “pre-electronic” media (performing and visual arts, museums and heritage, etc.), as well as the creative and cultural industries (film and video, sound recording, new media, publishing, etc.);
- ▶ the learning strategies and human resource development systems necessary to develop local talent;
- ▶ not-for-profit arts and heritage organizations and libraries;
- ▶ for-profit cultural businesses and creative industries;
- ▶ heritage resources, including built heritage, historic sites and monuments, archaeology, local histories and traditions;

- ▶ local and external *perceptions* of a place, as expressed in local stories, tourist guides, media coverage, etc.; and
- ▶ universities and private sector research centres.

Once cultural mapping is complete, the next step in the cultural planning process is the identification of opportunities to leverage resources for larger economic and community benefit, build on and enhance the strengths of existing resources, and address gaps and deficiencies.

Mapping and GIS

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are now widely used to support standard municipal planning processes. They also provide tools for supporting cultural mapping and for capturing information on cultural resources. Aside from their utility in organizing informa-

more limited view of culture as funding for the local museum or arts group.

Conclusion

Today there is much talk of creative cities. Good practices exist in Canada, successes that must be celebrated. But creative city agendas cannot simply be a new name for traditional arts and cultural strategies or an exercise in city branding.

We are on the cusp of understanding how to transform our cities with sustainable, wealth creation strategies based on linking land use, economic and cultural planning. Many of the important concepts have been defined, and numerous communities are moving to connect the dots and implement these powerful ideas. What lies ahead is the refinement of methodologies and the development of practical tools to support this work – and to deliver bankable results. *MW*

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