Recognition, Reconciliation, Participatory Planning and Development of Local Cultures in Finnish Residential Areas: Cultural Planning Approach?

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Cultural planning is defined by Colin Mercer as "strategic and integral planning and use of cultural resources in urban and community development" (1981). It advocates a participatory approach on strategic planning of communities, with anthropological scope on local cultures and on mainstreaming of culture-based development in strategic decision-making and planning. Cities in North America, Sweden and Australia have undertaken cultural planning processes and formed networks for mutual support and sharing of experience. The first Finnish cultural planning processes have started in 2010s. They entail approaches based on urban planning with cultural and participatory emphasis, as in the general planning process of Jyväskylä and the "Cultural Corridor" project of Sibbo. The focus of cultural planning process by University of Turku in Pori is on mapping community needs and on planning culture-based measures to meet them. A process aiming at cultural development policy took place in Turku during Cultural Capital Year 2011. University of Turku has networked Finnish municipalities from 2013. First comparative studies are on their way.

The approach is an alternative to sector-based or commercially motivated development, reframing notions such as cultural equality, accessibility, local governance, life quality and cultural sustainability in general. However, some underlying assumptions need closer discussion. Assumption of local culture(s) may be based on expert recognition and is not necessarily supported by the communities. Participation may prove problematic with groups choosing to abstain from interaction. The presentation discusses the aims of cultural planning and their compatibility with the Pori case, outlining a methodological criticism and precautions.

The sustainability dimension of cultural planning may be understood as a wide cultural understanding that enables cultural development with local anchoring and approval. It can also be seen as a commitment to lasting change of policy objectives and procedures rather than to shortlived projects.

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