

“Complete” Urbanism and City Planning: A Preface to Understanding the City’s Social Aspect.

SUSTAINABILITY THEORY.

Sustainability is the balance between the economic, social and physical aspects of life...over generations. The nuance which is not so subtle is that the physical aspect has natural and built subsets plus the balancing mechanism of governance. Thus, the need to understand each of the three primary aspects, their subsets, their synergistic effects and the operation of the balancing mechanism of governance while employing predictive analytics to understand the future of each, individually and in combination.

One train of thought focuses on the built subset of the physical aspect with the implied outcomes for natural economic and social performance. Convenient but hardly rigorous. Deep understandings of urban economics and urban sociology result in a more balanced approach to city planning.

THE “COMPLETE” SOCIAL ASPECT OF CITY PLANNING.

The sociological professions are generally neglected or short shrifted in the traditional comprehensive planning process. The generally excluded sociological professions include, at least, Urban Sociology, Urban Anthropology, Urban History and Urban Psychology. It seems that a sociologist from any of these fields would be a valuable member of every city planning team; and that sociology would be an important course in every university curriculum on city planning.

The physical aspect of cities may be the least important of the three sustainability aspects. While a pleasant and efficient built environment is an objective in and of itself, one could argue that the primary purpose of the physical aspect is to support the prosperity of the economic system and the enrichment of the social aspects of life; all framed with a vibrant natural environment and an ethical governance system.

Regardless of one’s opinion about the relative importance of the three aspects, it is critical to have the sociological aspects represented by a strong professional. Professionals are available from universities and many NGOs that support urban programs.

The purpose of this “preface” is introductory. The skills and knowledge of the professional sociologist of every ilk require more exploration and involvement than possible here. Expand the range of professional disciplines involved in comprehensively planning the community.

URBAN SOCIOLOGY.

Think of the implications of “the interrelation of space and social interaction”, as noted below. There is a professional field of study that works to determine this interrelationship, namely urban sociology. It seems an important consideration when planning the future of the city. Find a sociologist for the planning team.

From LibreTexts libraries...

- “Georg Simmel is widely considered to be the father of urban sociology, as he pioneered studies of **the interrelation of space and social interaction**.
- “Urban sociology attempts to account for the interrelation of subcultures in urban areas, as well as the internal structures of segments of society.
- “Like biological systems, urban subgroups are dependent on one another for healthy functioning and are also dynamic—that is, they flourish and decline based on political, economic, and social tides.”

“Urban sociology is the sociological study of life and human interaction in metropolitan areas. It is a well-established subfield of sociology that seeks to study the structures, processes, changes and problems of urban areas and to subsequently provide input for planning and policymaking. In other words, it is the sociological study of cities and their role in the development of society. Like most areas of sociology, urban sociologists use statistical analysis, observation or ethnography, social theory, interviews, and other methods to study a range of topics, including migration, economic and demographic trends, as well as things like poverty, race relations, crime, sexuality, and many other phenomena that surface in dynamic cities.

“After the Industrial Revolution sociologists such as Max Weber and Georg Simmel began to focus on the accelerating process of urbanization and the effects it had on feelings of social alienation and anonymity. Notably, Georg Simmel is widely considered to be the father of urban sociology for his contributions to the field in in works such as *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, published in 1903.”

“The LibreTexts libraries are Powered by MindTouch® and are supported by the Department of Education Open Textbook Pilot Project, the UC Davis Office of the Provost, the UC Davis Library, the California State University Affordable Learning Solutions Program, and Merlot. We also acknowledge previous National Science Foundation support under grant numbers 1246120, 1525057, and 1413739. Unless otherwise noted, LibreTexts content is licensed by CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Have questions or comments? For more information contact us at info@libretexts.org or check out our status page at <https://status.libretexts.org>.”

LINK:

[https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Sociology/Book%3A_Sociology_\(Boundless\)/17%3A_Population_and_Urbanization/17.04%3A_Urban_Life/17.4A%3A_Sociological_Perspectives_on_Urban_Life](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Sociology/Book%3A_Sociology_(Boundless)/17%3A_Population_and_Urbanization/17.04%3A_Urban_Life/17.4A%3A_Sociological_Perspectives_on_Urban_Life)

URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY, OR CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY.

“The cultural forces that shape urban forms and processes”, as noted below, beg the questions to be answered, or at least addressed, when planning for the future of the city. Invite a sociologist to join the planning team.

From Britannica...

“Urban anthropology is the study of cultural systems and identities in [cities](#) as well as the various political, social, economic, and **cultural forces that shape urban forms and processes**. Although anthropologists have studied the city since the 1930s, the label *urban anthropology* became common only in the early 1960s.

“Interest in urban issues was originally an extension of the anthropological interest in peasants and rural areas. Using research methods developed for and through studies of small tribes and ‘primitive societies’, anthropologists studied spatially bounded [communities](#) such as ghettos, ethnic neighbourhoods, and “urban villages.” Social problems (especially [poverty](#)) were the focus of most urban anthropological research. In the 1960s and early ’70s, Oscar Lewis’s controversial “[culture of poverty](#)” thesis generated intense debates on the meaning of culture, the need for historical contextualization, and the structural factors that produce urban inequalities.

“Anthropologists also debated the meanings of *city* and *urban*, which were initially informed by Western-biased knowledge. To avoid this ethnocentrism, urban anthropologists used ethnographic methods, historical analysis, and cross-cultural comparisons to explore the social mechanisms and cultural institutions that [differentiate](#) cities from “primitive” societies and peasant communities as well as Western from non-Western cities. Unlike earlier views, which depicted the city as the site of fragmentation, alienation, and impersonal relationships, urban [ethnography](#) has been powerful in showing the strong friendships, [kinship](#) relations, and ethnic solidarities that may structure interactions in urban centres.

“During the 1970s, urban anthropologists also shifted attention from studies in the city (i.e., viewing the city as merely a site for research) to studies of the city (i.e., making the urban dimension central to the analysis of relationships and symbols). Some argued that only the latter should be considered “urban anthropology”. Typologies continued to be formulated to map [diverse](#) urban forms.

“One common [typology](#) was based on a distinction between industrial and preindustrial cities. Within these two categories, other classifications were presented. Focusing on historical

articulations between economic and political structures, [Richard Fox](#), for example, distinguished among regal-ritual, administrative, mercantile, colonial, and industrial cities. Others have added types such as postcolonial, modernist, and postmodern cities.

“Research in cities posed several methodological and conceptual challenges to anthropology. In particular, urban anthropologists were pioneers in questioning emphasis on holism and synchronic analysis. Political economy became useful in analyzing historical and contemporary forces that produce inequalities within and between cities. In addition, urban anthropologists tried to find other methods (such as network analysis and extended case studies) to research the city.

“By the early 1980s they also drew on methods and theoretical insights from other fields to grasp the complexity of urban life and to account for the multiple actors that shape the city and its spaces. Current studies are careful not to homogenize urban types and are sensitive to diversity between and within cities. Since the early 1990s, urban anthropologists have been studying a broad range of practical and theoretical issues such as homelessness, spatial practices, popular culture, social movements and citizenship, gender and racial inequalities, global processes, and transnational connections.”

LINK: <https://www.britannica.com/science/anthropology/Urban-anthropology>

URBAN HISTORY.

The Journal of Urban History is mentioned to highlight the fact that urban history has a professional basis. Scholarly articles are being published. A professional association exists, Urban History Association. This to say that the history of cities is more than historic preservation. An understanding of the foundation for today’s society is relevant to comprehensively planning the future of the city. The issues of segregation, poverty, social housing and the others listed below flavor contemporary attitudes that portend the future. Invite an historian to the planning team.

From *The Journal of Urban History*...

“Journal Description: For over thirty years, the *Journal of Urban History* has provided scholars and professionals with the latest research, analyses, and discussion on the history of cities and urban societies throughout the world.

“Sponsorship: The *Journal of Urban History* is now sponsored by the Urban History Association, with a discounted print subscription of \$40.50 available exclusively to UHA members.

“Comprehensive: The *Journal of Urban History* presents original research by distinguished authors from the variety of fields concerned with urban history. Each insightful issue offers the latest scholarship on such topics as:

- Public Housing
- Migration
- Urban Growth
- School Reform
- City Planning History
- Racial Segregation
- Urban Culture
- Urban Politics

“In addition to incisive articles, the *Journal of Urban History* regularly publishes Review Essays, which provide a tremendous resource for research, study, and applications of new interpretations and developments in urban history.

LINK: <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/juh>

URBAN PSYCHOLOGY.

Urban psychology is a topic your researcher did not expect to find full of discussion; wrong. The following article excerpt from **CitiesToday** and the **APA Report** that follows present a strong case for the importance of including the psychological aspects of society when planning the future of the city.



How urban psychology could radically transform city living

8th August 2017



By **Chris Murray** and **Charles Landry***

“Why when over 50 percent of the planet lives in a city and rising, do we know so little about their emotional impacts? It is astonishing that psychology, the discipline that deals most closely with human emotions, is almost absent from urban policy.

“Jan Gehl noted acerbically: “It is ironic that we know more about the habitat of mountain gorillas than we do about the habitat of people”. We have programmes for smart cities, green cities, healthy cities, cities of culture but people are rarely centre-stage.

“Cities are too often seen mechanistically, as inanimate clumps of buildings and technology. This misses their essential human nature. We should look again.

“With this in mind, we embarked on a two-year research programme engaging 11 cities internationally: Ghent, Antwerp, Berlin, Lisbon, Adelaide, Minneapolis, Milton Keynes, Krakow, Bilbao, Oslo and Plymouth.”

The authors conclude...

“How we imagine our cities, how we envision their goals and values and enhance their beauty defines the self of each person in that city, for the city is the solid exhibition of the communal soul. This means that you find yourself by entering the crowd to improve yourself you improve your city.”

“Ultimately, the most successful cities will be those that can build psychological resilience, to adapt, to deal with adversity and complexity, to bounce back and continue to function, providing the conditions where inhabitants can achieve their larger aims. By setting out some big ideas and challenges we hope to spark a debate, as well as take pragmatic steps that will help this to happen.

**Psychology & the City: The Hidden Dimension* by Charles Landry and Chris Murray is published by Comedia and available post-free from: www.bookdepository.com/Psychology-City-Charles-Landry/9781908777072

READ THE FULL ARTICLE AT: <https://cities-today.com/the-city-in-mind-how-urban-psychology-could-radically-transform-city-living/>

Report of the American Planning Association [APA] Task Force on Urban Psychology, *Toward an Urban Psychology: Research, Action, and Policy.*

The APA report presents the case for considering the psychology of a community while planning its future and protecting its past. The contents of the chapter **“Psychology and Urban Institutions”** is reproduced below to show the range of issues considered. The link below provides access to the full report.

Contents from the chapter entitled:

Psychology and Urban Institutions	30
Families and Neighborhoods	30
Neighborhood Influences on Youth Development	31
Parenting Practices and Urban Context	31
Resilience of Urban Families	32
Interventions to Support Families	32
Urban Education	33
Characteristics of Urban Students	33
Characteristics of Urban Schools	34
External Contexts of Urban Schools	34
Urban Educational Assets	35
Urban School Reform	36
Challenges for the Future of Urban Schools	38
Unemployment for Urban Residents	38
Social Strengths and Community Development in Urban Communities	42
Voluntary Associations	43
Faith-Based Institutions	43

From the Forward of the APA Report...

“This report seeks to raise professional consciousness of an “urban psychology” as a viable and appropriate framework for helping psychologists effectively and collaboratively work on issues that have relevance to the residents of urban areas, as well as those local and national policymakers who make decisions that affect urban environments. As a framework, urban psychology proposes that the mix of people and places that make up the urban setting affects psychological functioning and development in these settings. By adopting an ecological orientation to understanding person-environment transactions, urban psychology draws together the progress psychologists have made and raises further questions for research and practice. Such a perspective must engage other disciplines in addition to psychology in order to gain a deeper understanding of how existing urban ecologies affect the psychological well-being of urban residents and communities, and how urban problems can be effectively addressed.”

LINK: Not dated...

[Report of the Task Force on Urban Psychology - American ...](#)

[www.apa.org › ses › resources › publications › urban-t...](#)

CONCLUSIONS.

A Full Team. Comprehensive planning requires active participation by professionals in all aspects of city planning. In the spirit of sustainable urbanism, the planning teams should include:

- Urban and regional planners and the city building professionals including civil engineers, landscape architects, architects and urban designers.
- Urban economics including market analysts, economic development specialists and public finance professionals versed in municipal finance as well as the financial systems of special districts.
- Urban sociologists including anthropologists, historians and psychologists.
- Urban ecologists representing biology and the related fields.
- Public administrators and legal experts knowledgeable on systems of governance including general municipal government, special districts, non-governmental organizations and partnership agreements.

The City Planner as Team Manager. Project management becomes the critical skill needed to assemble, organize and lead a strong team of experts. A city planner with expertise and experience is the logical choice to lead the team, synthesize its efforts, project the results over the planning period and incorporate the results into the comprehensive plan.



