



Arts and Culture in Urban or Regional Planning: A Review and Research Agenda

Publicat per [Interacció](#) [1] el 15/04/2013 - 13:45 | Última modificació: 12/05/2017 - 14:20

Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa | Journal of Planning Education and Research, 29 (3), 379-391, January 2010

The authors of this article argue that, despite increasing attention to creative cities and cultural planning, “knowledge about what works at various urban and regional scales is sorely lacking”. The authors highlight the relative lack of research “evaluating the efficacy of specific cultural strategies” designed to improve local cultural development.

In particular, they indicate that better information about designated cultural districts and cultural tourism would be useful. Important questions regarding cultural district designations include:

- Is a clustered group of cultural venues better or worse than a “decentralized mosaic of cultural activities” in different neighbourhoods?
- Does a concentrated cultural district attract more tourists than dispersed cultural venues and activities?
- Are designated cultural districts attached to (or detached from) “the fabric of neighborhoods and residences”?

The authors suggest that “adequate research for policy making and planning would evaluate before and after outcomes across a large number of cases and cities and incorporate other non-cultural interventions in the model”.

For cultural tourism, the authors question whether “local and regional residents may be more important cultural policy targets than visitors”. They also wonder whether improving the quality of life for local residents (and potential residents) might be a more significant goal than attempting to attract more tourists. In this regard, the authors argue that “comparative studies of outcomes across a large set of cities ... would help cultural planners make good decisions”.

The researchers also mention the need for research and evaluation of a range of other local cultural planning issues:

- Incentives for the cultural industries.
- Support for artists and cultural workers.
- Operating and project support for arts and cultural organizations.
- Capital support for and public operation of arts and cultural facilities
- Planning regulations that affect the cultural sector, including zoning and historic preservation.

The authors conclude with a four-point research plan. “First, researchers should unpack, critique, and evaluate cultural planning outcomes according to implicit and explicit norms and goals.” Second, the link between cultural initiatives and economic development needs to be further explored and vetted by researchers. Third, there is a need to know “which local institutional and funding structures are most effective and at what geographic scales”. Finally, researchers should explore “the merits and weaknesses of specific alternative cultural strategies”.

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