



Replacing Place in Planning History

Lineu CASTELLO, Professor
Universidade Federal Do Rio Grande Do Sul (UFRGS), Brazil
lincastello@terra.com.br

Variations are due to happen in the course of Planning History, though there has been an unusual outburst of changes in recent times. Two factors seem to be at the outset of these changes: the crucial growth of global urbanization; and the actual tendency for cities presenting a complex of 'place' centralities. Undoubtedly, central to alterations in Planning History are the special conditions of contemporary society, with almost 80% of whose members living in urbanized environments. But next to it comes the extraordinary increase in the production of newly invented 'places' under the most diverse forms: entertainment places, themed malls, revamping of historical settings, and so on. This pervading tendency led to changes in planning attitudes, seen as historical in face of their global claims. However, many of the innovative theoretical issues now linked to the concept of place have not been thoroughly examined in the Planning area so far. Additionally, the concept is now engrossing the research interests of other disciplines, which results in important contributions being introduced to its foundational aspects, hence, establishing a transdisciplinary condition to its essence. In fact, planning theory seems now ripe to 'replace' its prevalent understanding of place. This paper intends to suggest some of the directions to follow in such an attempt. Methodologically, it will pursue the directions set by three types of conflicts generated by the variations: controversies, contrasts, and challenges. To approach the variations in terms of the **CONTROVERSIES** implies to realize the duality in the roles places can perform in today's societal behaviors: a functional as well as an existential one. Indeed, for some scholars, the new **INVENTED PLACES** of today are appropriated as new **PLACES OF URBANITY**, leading to think that we are on the brink of a situation where the **PERCEPTION OF PLACE** can influence the **PERCEPTION OF 'URBANITY'** - that is, that unique quality forwarded by cities to their citizens in terms of communication and sociability - ultimately entailing new ways of enjoying the urbanity cities have to offer. **CONTRASTS** associated to the variations bring to light a duality present in the Planning discipline itself. Previously, the discipline had that the sense of place would derive exclusively from society's practices, emerging from them as a **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION**, whereas today, besides being a social construction, place is also regarded as an **ECONOMIC CONSTRUCTION**. This is a condition that sometimes exacerbates inherent social contrasts, producing cities dotted with fragments of exception believed to act upon the urban structure as disintegrative factors evidencing latent differences. Finally, to approach the variations in terms of their **CHALLENGES** will direct the focus towards the planning decisions city's administrators are faced to take when settling to embark on the **PLACEMAKING + PLACEMARKETING GAME** - or not - a challenge city increasingly are compelled to adhere to, often at the risk of engaging on demanding competitive practices.

Accompanying the discussions on each type of conflict, the paper will bring examples of world cities to illustrate their manifestation.

KEY WORDS: Place theory, urbanity, planning history, environmental perception.