Chapter Nine

Conclusion: the Survival of New Urbanism

Ideas about urbanism in America overlap, complement, or conflict. They overlap in their adherence to the essential qualities of urbanism – diversity, connectivity, public space, equity, place. The articulations of urbanist principles at different levels of intensity, and with different ideas about order, present alternative cultures of urbanism.

Depending on the approach, the principles of urbanism are attended to in different ways. Each culture has its own expression of diversity, for example. In low-order culture, diversity may be more a matter of recognition and tolerance. For high-order, it is a matter of using planning and design to facilitate diversity within some system of order. In high-intensity cultures, there might have been less need to pay attention to the connectivity and mix requirements of urbanism, or at least this was the case initially. In low-intensity culture, the requirements tended to be thought of more deliberately. For every aspect of what it takes to create good urbanism, there is a corresponding proposal fashioned according to the specific orientation of each culture.

There are specific types of overlap. Regionalism is connected to incrementalism in that both tried to accomplish change through the actions of individuals (in the case of regionalism, strong government was also required). Plan-making and planned communities overlap in their belief in the power of the visual image and the clarity of the plan. Conflicts were most likely to occur on the diagonals of the conceptual grid. Plan-makers and regionalists struggle over the issue of structural vs. practical change, and incrementalists and planned community proponents debate the notions of diversity and order. This is represented in figure 9.1.

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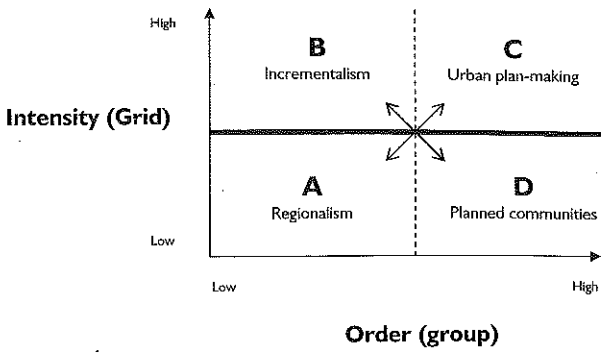

Figure 9.1. The main sources of urbanist culture conflict: order vs. diversity and structure vs. pragmatic change.

From the review of successes and failures, the case could be made that all cultures, if they are to address their deficiencies, need to give something up, add something, or submit to being reconceptualized. This has already happened, although rather than being recognized as evolutionary, it is more often deemed as evidence of incompleteness and failure. For example, planned communities had to evolve to become something that does not seek every facet of living (e.g. industry) within walking distance, and few communities are surrounded by a greenbelt. Regionalism had to give up its requirement for complete and radical change to existing, highly entrenched political and economic systems. Incrementalism remained safe within the confines of small adjustments, but its response to social inequity became weaker. Plan-makers had to give up their master plans and focus instead on process and methods of public engagement.

Against these transformations, cultures need to ensure they are not deteriorating into anti-urbanism. Planned communities have to guard against exclusivity; regionalism against intra-urban neglect; incrementalism against the dismissal of civic purpose; plan-makers against an over-reliance on efficiency and scientific method. The way to accomplish this, as I have argued, is to look to other cultures: high-intensity to low-intensity, high-order to low-order, and, *vice versa*. That this recognition will strengthen each culture individually becomes the primary reason for integrating cultures in the first place.

That there are things 'missing' from each culture does not necessarily mean that each culture will need to absorb elements currently external to them. It means instead that each culture has to look to other cultures for completeness. Each by itself is an incomplete notion of American urbansim. The question I posed in this book was whether these cultures could be reconciled by bringing them into an organized, but pluralist framework of American urbanism. Are ideals about

American urbanism, expressed in four different ways, merely a matter of historical artefact, or could there be some underlying logic to their existence?

The fact that New Urbanism was organized with only minimal recognition of the urbanist cultures that preceded it shows that this logic may in fact exist. In assessing New Urbanism, planned community culture may look dominant, but in fact it is always overlain with elements of the other cultures. There is always a discussion of regionalism in terms not unlike MacKaye, of the importance of small-scale diversity and incremental change precisely as Jacobs wanted things, and of the critical importance of the civic realm in the manner of Hegemann and Peets. The City Beautiful may look hopelessly outdated, but in fact the central idea – that of the importance of public vision and the heightened, physical expression of civic pride – has not gone away.

In the profession of city planning, the lack of conscious connection of so many overlapping causes and historical trajectories is unfortunate. Many in the American city planning fraternity have dismissed the past ideals of urbanism and forged ahead with a clean slate of concepts, technological devices, and more nuanced public participation methods. What is missing is a sense that urbanist idealism has moved forward, that there is a body of work that is beginning to gel and could potentially enable a more powerful effect on settlement form. Instead, there is a sense that no clear notions of good and bad urbanism exist, that the past experiences of city planners amount to nothing more than an interesting backdrop. There is little sense of, to use Lewis Mumford's phrase, a 'usable past'.

I think that many people in the city design professions are unwilling to accept the idea that progress in urbanism is possible. This outlook makes them uncomfortable with the optimism of New Urbanism. They do not see it within the realm of possibilities that certain ideas put forth over the past century could be moving in a certain positive direction. This dismissal can be interpreted as a generalized failure to see any possibility of the development of an American urbanism consisting of overlapping and complementary streams.

It is not difficult to see where this attitude comes from. There have been many mis-steps, and these were brought out in my analysis. Incrementalism began with problems of moral heavy-handedness and ends with a type of relativism that seems unrelated to the other approaches to urbanism; plan-makers and planned community advocates suffered from crude notions of order; regionalists lacked connection to existing cities and the processes that created them. Yet recognition of their liabilities should not result in their dismissal. On the contrary, understanding their limitations should open the way to their continued refinement and strengthening by promoting inter-connections.

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In light of the inter-relationships that exist it is legitimate to ask why there is so much violation of urbanistic principles. Is American urbanism really so ineffective, so lacking in actual power? Or, more hopefully, is it simply the failure to see the possibility of a combined and complimentary effort? Failure to produce a more consolidated approach against the problems of sprawl, inner-city and environmental degradation, and a host of other injustices requires a more united front from the planning, environmental and design communities. These are issues that fall under their collective jurisdiction.

City planners and urban designers are now an inclusive group devoted to public process and making sure that all voices are heard. In light of the planning profession's preoccupation with being disinterested, standing back and objectively letting people know how alternative courses of action score on a range of measurable indicators, it is not difficult to form an impression that planners cannot tell good urbanism from bad. No doubt many are not willing to concede that such a distinction can be made. This attitude is clearly at odds with American urbanism as I have defined it, and as it has evolved and culminated in New Urbanism.

The inability to pull something together out of the rich history of American urbanism has been damaging to a profession like city planning which would seem to gain the most from accomplishing it. Partly it is a matter of having thrown the baby out with the bathwater. Civic improvements are disdained as trite or inconsequential, the City Beautiful as oppressive, the City Efficient as narrowly technocratic. These may be fair criticisms in part, but they are too blanketed. Each of these efforts to find the right approach to urbanism contained some good, and some not good. The tendency of American planners to discard them like old shoes has created a situation in which the definition of American urbanism, for them, remains unrefined.

This is partly a result of the loss of connection to the material aspects of urbanism. The transformation of planning from its traditional focus on the physical order of the city to an enterprise concerned with administration, facilitation, and process is certainly something most planners support. In contrast, the connection between the urbanists at the beginning of the twentieth century and the New Urbanists at the end has to do with the mutual emphasis on *physical* planning. Both groups recognized that, while there are many processes involved in procuring physical goals for the city, the physical world and how it is arranged holds meaning because it provides the critical supporting framework for a range of social, cultural and economic functions. Correspondingly, there is a lot of importance attached to the particulars of spatial arrangement and material form.

It is important to understand the degree to which American city planning in

general has diverged from physical ideals and suffered a loss of connection to the historical cultures of urbanism. In 1967, the American Institute of Planners amended its charter and deleted all references to physical planning, a reversal of its previous policy to limit membership to those interested in the physical development of cities. Now, there is some evidence of a renewed emphasis on reinstating physical design matters in the profession.[1] This is likely to require, at some point, reconnection with the cultures of urbanism I have described.

One of the recurrent themes of this book has been the failure to maintain a set of ideals during the implementation of those ideals 'on the ground'. Ideas get watered down, subjected to financial realities, and inappropriately applied. This was the main theme of Peter Hall's history of urban planning, in which he showed how the transference of ideas between times and places could, and usually did, spell disaster (Hall, 2002). New Urbanists are trying a different course by attempting to be more flexible and nurturing of ideas – to move them along both theoretically and practically. But they are also open to the possibility that ideas and programmes are failing not because they are flawed intrinsically, but because they are under-developed. Seeing this requires a keen understanding of when and where a given approach should be applied. I think this understanding is something New Urbanists are trying hard to work through.

My analysis leaves open the possibility that many ideas about urban reform have the possibility of coalescing into a new outlook towards urbanism in America. The difficulty is that this outlook requires a certain degree of acceptance of proposals for urban order, and of the utility of normative planning. This runs counter to the main thrust of planning scholarship, which tends to focus on explanation and prediction of city form, not the purposeful guiding of it. There is constant pursuit of collective and analytical approaches to planning, but also a denial of utopian ideals and spatial models in favour of temporal, non-spatial ideals. Aside from New Urbanism, American planning in general is weak on physical, utopian models, but exploding with ideas about how to facilitate communication and analyze urban phenomena. This reflects the elevation of conversations and processes over the substance of vision and order.

The aversion to vision and order is understandable if one focuses only on the issue of overt control that occurred historically. Yet, the problem of over-control was mostly a matter of singularity of vision. What if plural notions of good urbanism could be combined in order to accommodate a plurality of approaches, and thereby mitigate the problem of control? For example, would it be possible to accommodate the idea that streets are social spaces (incrementalists), or the idea that streets are visual, aesthetic elements (the City Beautiful), or that streets promote order,

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According to the New Urbanists, the same sequence over the response to disorder that occurred in the nineteenth century is occurring now, except that the chaos of urban disorder is sprawl rather than the industrial megalopolis. But the normative response is fashioned from similar urbanist ideals, this time in less monolithic and more context-sensitive terms. This time around, it is possible that rather than letting administrative process and programmatic function wash out the strength of the normative proposal, the proposal will be better integrated with the administrative and legalistic response, thereby blocking the watering down (and misconstruing) of ideals. This time it may be possible to employ multiple strategies that, a century ago, seemed incompatible: code reform, new communities, and an appreciation of urban complexity.

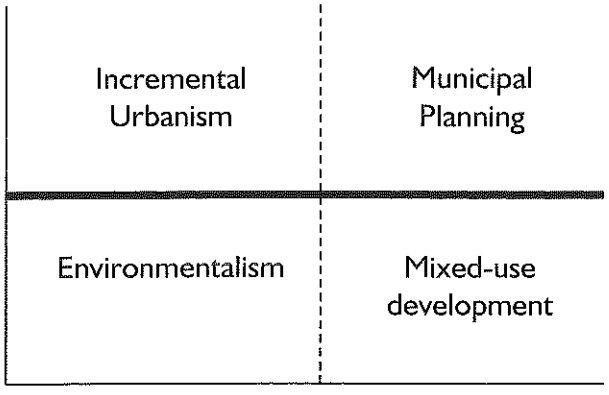
The analysis of planning cultures revealed the importance of maintaining flexibility and the ability to change, grow, and evolve. The inability to do so made a given approach irrelevant. Thus the fate of many of the planning blueprints of the plan-makers was not dissimilar from the fate of CIAM and its inability to continue a discourse because of its position as the only, unchanging and infallible approach. In direct contrast, creating good urbanism in America may be a matter of flexibility, cross-culture recognition, and adaptation. Small-scale ideas may need to adapt to larger-scale scaled ones, low-intensity to high-intensity, high-order to low-order, and *vice versa*. This also means that the implementation devices that a given culture relies on may need to change.

Integrating more than one approach to urbanism also requires ideological tolerance, and New Urbanists have at least attempted to exist apart from any particular political party, religion, cosmology, or other ideological position. It is a strategic recognition that 'urban ideologies', as Fishman (1977) recounts them, have gone down in history as untenable and failed. The city planning of totalitarian dictators like Stalin and Mussolini or even the General Motors 'autopia' of the 1939 World's Fair can be distinguished as ideologies in the sense of Karl Mannheim (1936), ideas intended to advance the interests of one particular class. Sometimes these ideologies are difficult to shed, as in the case of the planned community, but as I argued in Chapter 6, this should not preclude the usefulness of urbanist innovations.

Whether shedding past ideologies is accomplishable or not, there is the constant, urgent need to stick to basic principles of urbanism. There can be flexibility of approach within this, but the goals of urbanism have to be held constant. Failure of an urbanistic ideal like diversity should motivate urbanists from any perspective to

work harder to find ways to achieve it within their own particular approach. This requires a connection to recurrent ideals that should be gathering strength rather than diminishing in stature (and requiring reinvention). A proposal historically conceived may not be outdated, but instead may need refinement; instead of abandonment, it may need reworking. This way of thinking essentially means that if we stick to our guns, learn from the past, hold on to certain values, we can refine our success at urbanism. It could also mean that the demise of some urbanistic ideals was premature, and what was needed rather than abandonment was a renewed focus.

There has been an ongoing process of adaptation in the history of American urbanism, changes formed on the basis of where the culture fits in the order/intensity grid. One interpretation of the current status of the four urbanist cultures is shown in figure 9.2. Incrementalism has retained its core focus on small-scale, bottom-up change and is still highly regarded as an approach. It consists of the efforts of neighbourhood activists, everyday urbanists, Alexander and Jacobs followers, and anyone concerned with being as removed from top-down master planning schemes as possible. Plan-making culture is mostly a matter of municipal planning, consisting of bureaucratized planning, the regulations it imposes, the plans of various sorts it continually creates, and the public-private partnerships it seeks in order to secure funding for large-scale civic projects. Planned communities are mostly about private enterprise or public-private partnerships that seek to provide mixed-use development in various forms: residential developments with embedded retail and services, town centres, or transit-oriented developments, for example. Regionalism as originally defined could be broadly cast as simply environmentalism, a category that includes a range of related ways of thinking



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There is significant overlap but there is also division. Municipal planners support mixed-use development and think of themselves as environmentally minded. Environmentally-oriented planners support compact urban patterns in the form of mixed-use developments of various kinds, and likewise, mixed-use developers see themselves as promoting of environmental objectives. But both mixed-use promoters and environmentalists (in general) are likely to view municipal regulation in the form of zoning and subdivision regulation – a main substance of municipal planning – as grossly insufficient for and even obstructive of good urbanism. In addition, environmentalists may also regard mixed-use development as too land consumptive and not environmentally sound. Incrementalists have few connections with any of the other cultures, and in particular distrust municipal planning as being too insensitive to the needs of poor and minority populations. They have little tolerance for mixed-use development in the form of town centres and planned communities that they see as being mostly for the more affluent.

New Urbanists see that all four cultures have value and need to be incorporated in the promotion of urbanism in America. The regulatory aspects of municipal planning are something to change, but their widespread acceptance and strength is also something to capitalize on – i.e., change in a way that promotes urbanism and its endorsement of diversity rather than promoting of anti-urbanism and its endorsement of separation. They value the broader objectives of environmental planning, and they are at the forefront of promoting mixed-use development within a regional context. All of these are valued at the same time that small-scale urban diversity, incrementalism, is the most revered approach of all.

The Integration Hypothesis

I have argued that the weaknesses of each culture could be addressed to some degree by a better integration of approaches – exactly what the New Urbanists are attempting. This section relates the idea of integrating cultures to the theoretical framework I posed at the beginning.

An analogy between cultural theory and urbanist culture has been used to help contrast, differentiate and compare four different perspectives on urbanism. In the attempt to think more broadly about the relationships among these cultures, there is another important use of Grid/Group theory that can be considered: the idea of pluralism as the basis for an improved approach to urbanism in America. Cultural theorists that use the typology created by grid and group dimensions have

postulated that the linkages between the four dimensions are not only necessary but are the basis of each culture's internal vitality and coherence. Each culture is dependent on all other cultures. Despite their conflicting perspectives, there is a need for interconnectedness in order for each culture to be sustained as viable.

This idea can be transferred to the four urbanist cultures as well, and I have argued that urbanism needs to be thought of in these integrative terms. But why should this be the case? On the surface, it seems common sense to say that urbanism in America must be implemented according to varying contexts and norms, corresponding to varying intensities and levels of order. While recognizing that they have at times been complementary and at other times combative, why should urbanism in America require the integration of more than one approach? Is pluralism necessary for maintaining the viability and legitimacy of each cultural type?

It is possible to return to cultural theory for some clues. The analogy with Grid/Group can obviously only be carried so far since the main topic of interest with Douglas' theoretical construct was sociality, a phenomenon with its own unique set of interactions and conflicts. But there are some potentially useful analogies. In a chapter entitled 'Instability of the Parts, Coherence of the Whole' in the book *Cultural Theory* (1990), Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky discuss the way in which the idea of mutual co-dependence among cultures is necessary for the maintenance of each culture. Further, the 'cohesive clumps' that humans have organized themselves into are in a constant state of 'permanent dynamic imbalance'. There is an ebb and flow to cultural dynamics, where cultures are continually changing their positions and their shape in a way that is neither unilinear nor unidirectional. In the human system, individuals within self-formed cultures move away from one cultural type whenever the failures of that particular culture, or way of life, start to mount. When that happens, individuals within one group start to form alliances with groups outside of it. They sever their allegiance to one group and form bonds with another, and in this way cultures rise and fall in stature.

Cultures 'fail' when they are unable to connect to, or reach out toward, other cultures. For example, hierarchical culture (strong grid, strong group) fails when it does not accommodate the need for individualism and egalitarianism, and its authority goes unchallenged. But cultures can also be prompted to 'reach out for cultural allies who can compensate for their weaknesses'. What is ultimately realized is that each way of life needs the other, not as a matter of consensus, but as a matter of definition and utility: 'adherents of each way of life need the rival ways, either to ally with, define themselves in opposition against, or exploit'. Where there is an attempt to be unicultural, to deny dependent relations, and to define only one way of life, there is failure. Most importantly, the whole remains as such because

each way of life needs every other way of life (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky, 1990, pp. 88, 96).

Why this should be true is not difficult to conceptualize. Where a society has multiple ways to respond to a given situation – events or shifts in which there are interferences with a particular culture's way of life – the society as a whole will have its best chance of survival. The analogy with urbanism is that, where American society has been able to balance competing urbanist proposals, it stands the best chance of contributing to urbanism. Where balance among cultures occurs, there is less vulnerability to new events and unforeseen changes because there are more options to draw from. There will be less blundering, less tendency to apply the wrong solution in the wrong place. It is a matter of being able to draw from the strengths of each culture, which is not possible where only monolithic cultures are presented as options. Where cultures refuse to see the value in each cultural bias, they 'lose the wisdom attached to that bias, and thus inevitably pile up trouble for themselves' (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky, 1990, p. 96). The best systems – in this case, systems of human settlement – are the ones that are open to a diversity of approaches to creating urbanism.

The argument could be made that it is not really true that we need all four cultures to create good urbanism in America. We can never return to a City Beautiful notion of urbanism, for example. However, the case could also be made that all four cultures of urbanism are currently operational in some form, whether we want them to be or not. Mega projects – large civic structures with public significance – are still a part of urbanism in America and probably always will be. And, just like the City Beautiful, it is when proponents fail to understand the requirements of other dimensions of urbanism that they are the least successful overall.

My main hypothesis is that the success or failure of any given culture is linked to its ability to think about its relationship to other cultures, the ability to avoid the 'either/or' propositions of urbanism. The American urbanist experience can be conceptualized as a situation in which planning cultures have tended to be severed, where one culture has doggedly held on to its way of doing things and refused to venture into other approaches to urbanism. This is more pronounced in the U.S than anywhere else. The joining together of the three cultures of plan-making, the planned community, and regionalism occurred in Britain, but the situation in the U.S. has tended to be more divisive (Hall, 2000).

The divisions widened over the course of the twentieth century. Earlier planners were much more integrative, in part a result of common roots. One example is the loss of connection between incrementalist and planned community cultures, which were once more mutually supportive, as seen for example in the connection between

the settlement house movement and garden cities development. There was also a loss of connection between the regionalists and planned community advocates. By mid-century, urbanists had largely abandoned the prospect of the planned community in the region. The planned community was subsequently watered down and suburbanized, and failed to keep either condition – the ecological region or the planned urban community – uncompromised and intact.

This is not to say that urbanists of different cultural types have not been aware of the need to be more ecumenical, to look to the possibility of forging alliances that span seemingly disparate ideologies, political philosophies, and religious contexts. Lewis Mumford (1968), for example, advocated both ordered plans for entirely new areas and small-scale opportunities that could work incrementally over the years. The New Urbanists, as I have argued, have been trying for over a decade to promote their integrative notion of urbanism, one that tries to negotiate order that is both incremental and visionary, that is code implemented but allows individual expression, that is sequential but also subjected to master planning. The hope of New Urbanism is that codes and plans (urban plan-making) can be implemented in such a way that they encourage rather than stifle diversity (incrementalism). There is a recognition that focusing on one particular strategy is inadequate.

The integration of urbanist cultures improves the ability to generalize, and urbanists have long recognized the importance of integrative, generalist thinking over and above specialist thinking. Mumford wrote 'the housing problem, the industries problem, the transportation problem, and the land problem cannot be solved one at a time by isolated experts, thinking and acting in a civic vacuum' (Sussman, 1976, p. 13). This has been a recurrent cry in planning – the need to think, plan and act in a way that considers the interconnections of things. But it has also been a largely unachievable goal.

The failure to think integratively, to build on the idea of a pluralist conception of American urbanism, to develop an approach that draws from multiple perspectives about achieving urbanism in America, can be encapsulated in two overriding issues: the linkage of order and diversity, and the linkage of structural and pragmatic change. Each will be discussed in turn.

Order vs. Diversity

The right side of the intensity/order framework was conceptualized as 'high order', or as an approach to urbanism that entails the making of ordered plans. The tension between order and what is seen as its antithesis, diversity, represents one of the most notable divisions in the history of American conceptualizations of urbanism.

The essential problem has been a failure on one culture's part to acknowledge the legitimacy and necessity of the other. This is not about order of the FHA or Euclidean zoning variety, but order as a legitimate element of urbanism.

The idea of ordering the city has become objectionable, and it is now fashionable in city planning to denounce any attempt purposefully to order the city. Planners have become conditioned to believe that attempts at ordering the city, whether based on ideas about nature, value, art, beauty, or social organization, are mostly untenable. The quest to order the city physically is not only foolhardy, but it is a quest to thwart the democratic process, subvert minority interests, overpower the less educated, and inflict social control. As a result, planners get nervous when the discussion of city planning turns to notions of beauty, art, optimal urban form – all of which are related to the notion of order. Their sense is that such notions are entirely subjective, or, at the very least, should either be proven with hard data beforehand or publicly determined through consensus-building processes.

It could be argued that the twentieth-century American urbanist's experience with order has been largely negative and disappointing. Either the attempt at order has resulted in destruction of low-income housing, or it has serviced elite interests at the expense of poor people. There have also been problems with piecemeal implementation. Even more common is the situation in which the original, well-intentioned purpose of order has gone badly. Where, for example, the idea of organizing the city into neighbourhood units transforms into a rationale for isolating the poor, or the attempt to order a chaotic land-use pattern becomes a highly segregated and ultimately dysfunctional single use zoning scheme. The disdain for order, in light of this experience, seems justified.

Another basis of critique is that the imposition of order on the city can not be justified pragmatically. Order is an abstract notion and does not reflect, or integrate with, the true nature of cities. The attempt to impose physical order is utopian but not in a good sense; it is utopian in the sense of being an incongruous idea, a delusion of urbanists that it is even possible to give the city an order. Cities are complex and fine-grained and elude imposed order at every turn.

The person most associated with this critique is Jane Jacobs, and in her essay 'Visual order: its limitations and possibilities', she lays out her argument. She summarizes, 'to approach a city, or even a city neighborhood, as if it were a larger architectural problem, capable of being given order by converting it into a disciplined work of art, is to make the mistake of attempting to substitute art for life' (Jacobs, 1961, p. 373). Jacobs is arguing that the order of life is a very different kind of order from the order of art, and that this confusion has been the problem with planning from the beginning. The agenda of both garden city and City Beautiful

schemes – in fact any attempt at imposed town or neighbourhood order – is futile.

This division has been discussed in different contexts throughout. Architecturally, it surfaced as a tension between vernacular and classical architecture. In urbanism, it was evidenced in particular in the disdain of later incrementalists like Jane Jacobs for ordered visions of either the plan-making or the planned community cultures. The tension between incrementalists and the planned community seemed highest, and this tension remains so. This is particularly intriguing since the roots of these two cultures are so connected, both coming out the voluntaristic, communally-minded progressive spirit. But by the post-war period of urban renewal, systems of order had digressed to extremes. What Jacobs and others saw in plan-making and planned communities was the extreme elevation of order over diversity.

Yet complete reversion to diversity without any attention to order may not be the answer for American urbanism. One postulation of success in urbanism is the ability to consider both ordered urbanism and the need for small-scale incrementalism at the same time. It may be useful to cultivate an organic appreciation of intricacy and smallness, as well as an ordered sense of urbanism that allows smallness and diversity to come through and be recognized. Formalism based on conscious plan-making can, sometimes, be seen as a necessary and positive framework for incrementalism. This is not the same as the merging of the picturesque and the formal that was seen in Unwin and Parker's plans, and that allowed them to rise above the contentious debate between the American City Beautiful and the European picturesque rationalized by Sitte.[2] But it does encompass the debate over the degree of planned versus spontaneous organicism, the city of the Grand Manner versus the intricate medieval city, often interpreted as the difference between top-down and bottom-up urbanism, between rigid control and organic, spontaneous diversity.[3]

In the American context, these distinctions have not been very helpful. The failure to recognize the interconnectedness of both ways of approaching urbanism has led us down some dead ends. One reason may be that American society lacks the emergent qualities that other cultures might have in order to make sense of individualized efforts. For example, in Islamic culture, the absence of rules about order in urbanism did not produce an unhealthy, disorganized complexity but rather sustained an organized complexity that was manageable. This, Spiro Kostof (1991) argues, was a result of the strong cultural morays that Islamic society maintained, and that therefore instituted certain overriding principles of urban form that everyone adhered to. There was a shared vision about what urbanism was supposed to look and function like. The absence of top-down governmental control was subsumed by an overarching, ingrained sense of urban-building behaviour.

In the absence of this conformity, and in the presence of the pluralistic nature of urbanism in America, it is arguable that some larger, more formal parameters of urbanism are required.

But in addition, it could be argued that small-scale organic urbanism is dependent on large-scale plan-making, and *vice versa*. Certain strategies of urbanism are scale-dependent, for example a regional light-rail system with designated areas for transit-oriented development is not created through thousands of small local acts. What New Urbanists have in mind is an integration of urbanism that would be the conceptual meeting place of the City Beautiful and the 'voluntary vernacular' described by Spain (2001). It would find commonality between Burnham's 'big plans' and the 'army of builders' needed in the creation of redemptive places. Spain likens the City Beautiful and the voluntary vernacular to the foreground and the background, respectively, of urban physical improvement. Burnham's big plans contributed to beautification of the city in large-scale ways, but the grand plans lacked attention to details. These 'details' included the basic social services needed to sustain a diverse urbanism.

The inability to get it right, to merge large-scale public projects successfully with the incremental processes of urban diversity, has been a continued source of urbanistic failure. How is it possible to build diversity from singular plans conceived at one point in time? The failings of urban renewal, as large urban projects with little connection or acknowledgement of the fundamental diversity of urbanism, can be seen in related terms. The sense of order of the planned community is equally unable to accommodate incremental and small-scale diversity when it is manifested as a peripheral, exclusive suburban enclave. Under these two manifestations of order – urban renewal and suburbanization – it is little wonder that Jane Jacobs and other incrementalists repudiated the idea of order in either format.

Rejection of order might also be interpreted as the rejection of collective notions of shared space in urban places. As a practical matter, collective urban spaces, by definition, virtually require some form of ordering. Most public monuments and spaces did not just happen to occur, they required forethought. This is in some ways a simple affirmation of the importance of planning for the elements of urbanism in the first place, the importance of a human cultural activity that purposefully considers settlement needs in advance. But it also contrasts with the idea that individual, incremental decisions can always self-organize into something that resembles collective space.

While urbanist cultures have recognized that both order and complexity are needed, the problem has been in giving one or the other dimension enough import. This may be a matter of recognizing when one or the other needs to take precedence

in a given place and time. For a new planned community, order may be needed at the level of the plan and the implementing code, while small-scale incrementalism may be needed to fill in and fill out the ordered framework. For the revitalization of an already complex and diverse urban place like the inner city, order may be a matter of clarification. This latter tactic was Jane Jacobs' strategy, who said that the task of the urbanist (planner) was to look for ways to clarify underlying order within an existing pattern of diversity.

Structural vs. Pragmatic Change

How far do plans, visions, and proposals for a better American urbanism have to go before they can be said to have succeeded? Is it, as Lewis Mumford believed, that plans would be useless unless positioned within the context of institutional and social change? How deep, in other words, do proposals for urbanism have to go?

The tension between change that gets at the underlying structure of social and economic processes and change that considers only the relatively pragmatic goals of urbanism in physical form is the second major dimension of inter-cultural conflict. What can often be seen in the evolution of urbanist ideals is a gradual wearing away of initial social, economic and political idealism undergirding a particular urbanistic proposal. For example, the anarchist roots of regionalism are now barely perceptible, but the content of the urbanism is still focused on compact, non-sprawling urban form organized within a regional landscape. And while planned communities in America did not show a penchant for communal ownership of property, a social and political ideal, the physical form of the garden city as first conceived by Unwin and Parker is still admired and emulated. The question then is whether the disassociation between physical form and underlying principles like anarchism and social communalism is what ultimately leads to failure.

Some urbanists believe they are moulding a new reality, and that the weakness of the physical planners is their complacency – an approach that, relatively speaking, is merely a superficial adjustment. The contrast was epitomized by the tension between the RPAA and the RPA (discussed throughout this book but particularly in chapters 5 and 7), an obvious case of two cultures colliding. The first question to ask is whether it is necessary, or even possible, to integrate the urbanism of Burnham and Adams (and the commercial focus they had), with the urbanism of Geddes, Mumford and MacKaye, and the more sweeping and radical urbanism they advanced. At the very least, it will require a reinterpretation of what it means to be 'radical' in promoting urbanistic change. American urbanism as a multi-dimensional concept seems unlikely to stake its claim on anti-corporatism, but

neither is it about working within the established trajectory of conventional urban development. It is not striking out against the existing political and institutional institutions of urban change, but neither is it surrendering to the forces of urban degeneration.

Resolving the tension between practical change and change to the underlying system is not likely to be easily negotiated. It will involve questioning the stability of the processes that have led to our current predicament. For the more radical urbanist, phenomena like 'just-in-time' inventorying, globalized capital, and large volume retailing based on razor-thin profit margins are not in themselves unchanging. These economic processes have caused great change in the urban landscape, but that is not interpreted as a sign of some innate immutability. In critiquing urban studies that emphasize technological change, Lewis Mumford (1968, p. 113) denounced their underlying assumption that 'the very processes of change now under observation are themselves seen as unchanging; that is, that they may be neither retarded, halted, nor redirected nor brought within a more complex pattern that would reflect more central human needs'.

Had this way of thinking been better received, the RPA might not have made the concessions it made. In the end, the approach to urbanism advocated by plan-makers like Adams amounted to the weakening of ideals – suburbanization of the areas surrounding the core as an ineffective strategy to relieve congestion at the centre. The urbanistic vision became 'purely pragmatic', as one biographer noted, seen clearly in their 'Diagrammatic Scheme for Regional Highway Routes'. Adams' quip that 'there is nothing to be gained by conceiving the impossible' reflected the ultimate triumph of a plan-making culture devoid of serious consideration of the urbanist cultures on the bottom half of the intensity/order grid (Thomas, 1994, pp. 266–267).

One way to assess whether structural changes are required is to analyze why urbanism without these changes failed. Is it possible to detect whether the implementation failed because the structural basis – the political, economic, and social requirements for change – were not altered or alterable? We could consider, as a start, a list of impediments to the implementation of urbanism more generally. The following list is adapted from a statement by Andres Duany[5] on the impediments to walkable, compact and mixed-use communities: environmental regulations like mandatory greenways that thwart urban connectivity; zoning that precludes mixed use and mandates poor spatial definition through mechanisms like setbacks and parking requirements; a public that generally likes to avoid network connectivity, mixed use, density and affordable housing; secondary mortgage markets that only accept standard suburban typologies; marketing that caters to anti-urban biases

through its promotion of gated communities and privatized civic amenities; an architectural establishment that accentuates frontage articulation, quantity over quality, and the internalization of urban amenities; civil engineering standards that ignore context, over-engineer infrastructure, and discount transit.

It could be argued that all of these blockages could be changed, and will only be changed, under a different political and socio-economic regime. It could be argued that a different economic reality is needed to change secondary mortgage market requirements, that a different environmental and architectural ethos is needed, that catering to the automobile is an outgrowth of hard political realities that have to do with favouring private consumption and corporate wealth above all else. But it could also be argued that the innate appeal of an emerging American urbanism will ultimately find the power to turn things around.

Notes

1. See, for example, the essays in Rodwin and Sanyal, 2000.
2. In England, it has been argued that Hampstead Garden Suburb fails in its merger of Sittesque informality and heavy-handed, City Beautiful formalism, resulting in parts that are 'curiously dead'; see Hall, 2002, p. 108.
3. See also Kelbaugh, 2002 on this point, especially chapter 3.
4. Michael Mehaffy, personal communication, October, 2001. Mehaffey references the writings of Whitehead and Wittgenstein in his discussion of the progression of human consciousness.
5. Communication sent by Andres Duany and posted on the 'Practice of New Urbanism' (Pro-Urb) listserve on October 4, 2002.