

multiple ecological interrelationships among plant and animal species and their territories. When we commodify forested land by subdividing it into discrete parcels with discrete rights to their use, each put up for purchase and sale by owners who make self-interested land use decisions mediated only by the market's price fluctuations, we risk subverting the many hydrological, botanical, and wildlife interrelationships that cross parcel boundaries. Humanity (family, body, community, morality) and its environment, including the built environment, cannot be efficiently traded through a pure market, except by degrading them. The attempt to turn a natural region into land units or a human being into labor units, each traded with a view to private property rights, degrades a larger whole of which it is a part. The very process of commodification undermines that environmental or human realm's *integrity* (Sternberg, 1996).

Fragmented among private owners, and divided among functional bureaucracies (whether governmental or private), urban land, too, has undergone such commodification. The resulting trade in land and buildings can have important economic benefits. But it also undermines the human experience of urban built form. As one moves across urban land, the beholder's experience resists this commodification, seeking coherence, understandability, security, and comfort. It is in creating, protecting, and restoring cohesive experiences of built form that urban design acquires its distinctive social role.

Polanyi sometimes referred to his brand of economics as "substantive" economics, in contrast to "formal" economics conventionally taught in academic departments of economics (Dalton, 1968). Building on the concept of noncommodifiability, we can formulate a planning theory that is "substantive" in two senses, as contrasted to "procedural" in procedural planning theory, and also as contrasted to "formal" in formal microeconomics. Applied to urban design, this theory would seek out the integrative principles underlying the human experience of built form across property boundaries.

The organicists and the economists

Though the idea of noncommodifiability may seem unfamiliar, it has important precedents in planning thought in the concept of the "organic," which pervaded the work of early 20th-century writers on planning, most notably Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford. The organicists observed that modern

society (especially its central dynamic mechanism, the market) atomized community, nature, and city. Inspired by biological metaphors and philosophical concepts of vitalism, the organicists set out to reassert the natural growth and wholeness that a "mechanical" market society would tend to undermine. In keeping with the sentimental and unrigorous traditions of the 19th-century Romantic movement, the organicists promoted ideas that were nebulous and all encompassing. It sometimes seemed in their work as if everything was part of an organic whole, making it quite difficult to distinguish those realms in which planning was justified from those in which market-based allocation would be effective while public planning would be irrelevant or harmful. Oblivious to the 20th century's raging debates about economic systems and democracy, Geddes and Mumford also failed to situate their ideas in the prevalent streams of economic and social thought (and, hence, were widely dismissed as eccentrics). Specifically, even though the urban and regional phenomena they studied were driven by market forces, such as those of the real estate market, the organicists failed to explain how their ideas related to those of orthodox economics.

At the opposite intellectual pole, those influenced by conventional microeconomics would, if they were to pay any attention to organicist ideas, likely dismiss or reject them. Given economic assumptions, conventionally trained economists would have to take the view that market-led real estate transactions in themselves generate good urban form, and that the planner's role is simply that of developing the rules of the game that fix market imperfections (Moore, 1978). According to this reasoning, a property owner's decision to build a building can have effects on neighbors and passers-by, effects to which these external parties did not agree in any market transaction. According to this *market-failure* concept, the urban features that onlookers enjoy or dislike are *spillovers* (effects spilling across the bounds of private property) or, what is more or less the same, *externalities* (effects external to market transactions). This market-failure theory lets us recognize garbage-strewn lots and dilapidated buildings as nuisances (negative externalities) displeasing to neighbors, and well tended gardens and fine architecture as benefits (positive externalities) for which passers-by did not pay. This conventional economic thinking does offer a limited rationale for public interventions in the real estate market, typically through tax incentives, side payments between individuals, government incentives, voting procedures,