
Throughout the twentieth century, the methods employed by planners have moved from that of a rational and systematic model to a new communicative action model; thus a move from focusing on “analysis” and processed knowledge to that of interactive and local knowledge. While the move from a distanced to a more interactive approach became necessary in order “to best serve the public interest;” the current focus on local knowledge continues to overlook other representational forms such as photography, film and personal experience.

This thesis seeks to answer the question: what forms of representation do local planners use to portray neighborhood change and how do they negotiate among them? I am interested in the difference, if any, between how a local planner understands a neighborhood and then how they present that neighborhood in a professional document/report, and how can we best negotiate between the differences between the forms of representations. Using interviews and a filmed site visit, I explored how select city planners in Detroit came to understood city neighborhoods, beyond the simple numerical analysis provided in typical, government issued planning reports.