International Knowledge Transfer - Analysis of Planning Cultures

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1 INTRODUCTION

Spatial planning in nation states is significantly influenced by globalisation processes. In particular Europeanisation leads to various assimilations in structures and politics, also affecting planning systems. Against the backdrop of international cooperation, having knowledge of numerous planning systems becomes essential for planners nowadays. But due to different languages and traditions, not only planning structures also interpretations and ideals vary among nations, often leading to misunderstandings and issues.

In order to adequately adapt to intercultural challenges in planning, planning methods and processes of various countries need to be analysed through the lenses of planning cultures. As this concept is a rather new topic in planning theory, not much methodoligical research on thre analysis of planning cultures exists. Therefore, an analytical framework for the analysis of (national) planning cultures, based on the culturised planning model (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009) will be discussed. By evolving and applying that approach, so far existing difficulties of comparative research methods of planning systems and practices can be compensated and generally advanced. Therewith, existing underlying knowledge of planning is compiled, contributing to ensure sustainable development of cities and regions.

To sum up, this paper sheds some light on the underlying theoretical facade behind everyday planning pursuing to better deal with spatial development processes of cities and regions.

The structure of the paper is as follows. At the beginning, comparative research methods in general will be described (chapter 2), followed by a description of planning cultures including its definition and state of research (chapter 3). In chapter 4 an analytical framework for the analysis of planning cultures will be discussed, whereas final conclusions will be drawn in chapter 5.

2 COMPARATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

When it comes to international planning aspects, cross-border comparisons become essential. In order to adequately analyse these comparisons in a structured and comparable manner, adequate methods of investigation are required. But the hitherto undertaken research generally neither is much nor very comparative (Kantor and Savitch, 2005). Although studies are often labelled as comparative research, in reality, they "usually turn out to be a compendium of monographs, rather than tightly integrated, systematic comparisons" (Kantor and Savitch, 2005, 135). This is understandable against the backdrop that to find an adequate approach to comparative studies is challenging, as there are numerous obstacles to face.

2.1 Obstacles of comparative research

Booth gets to the heart of comparative research and its pitfalls by stating "comparative study, for all its charm, is something of a minefield" (2011, 26).Why this statement is dead on the target is described in the following. There are several obstacles to systematic comparative research, whereas lack of comparative structures and frameworks in different case studies being most important. Regardless whether if to study different concepts, cities, regions or even nations, the structural and administrative structures in general differ, making systematic and comparative investigations a rather difficult and ambitious endeavour.

According to Kantor and Savitch (2005), these obstacles can be divided into theoretical and methodological problems. Theoretical obstacles comprise the aspect that theories do not embrace all administrative levels within and among different nations making replications more problematic. Besides this, also methodological obstacles are to be found hampering proper comparative research. In general, data and sources are not unique and hence, often cannot be surmounted coming from various jurisdictions. Additionally, conceptual tools need to be provided being able to adress the same problem in different contexts and places. But the most crucial obstacle is the fact that comparative methodology has to deal with different national aspects and therewith also different cultural settings. Hence, comparative research has to take into account different contextual meanings, strongly influencing planning processes and results. The variations in context are due to various geographic and demographic patterns, to institutional and administrative systems and to historical

and cultural settings. Therefore, comparative research makes a systematic research framework essential, which, nevertheless, needs to be flexible, as regions and cultures are not static, but dynamic and are in a continous flux.

2.2 Systematic comparative research

Systematic comparative research is understood as research implying that "(1) an explicit framework should govern the analysis, providing testable and deductivle propositions for comparative examination; (2) comparisons should be made through the use of common categories, concepts or variable that can be measured; and (3) comparisons should steadily run throughout the work" (Kantor and Savitch, 2005, 136).

Having the already mentioned diversity of cultures in mind, in particular problems of context are urging to deal with. Consequently, a systematic and adequate comparative framework should be able to address issues that draw useful and, in particular, general conclusions. Therefore, a requirement is that the issues have similar meanings not only within one, but a broad variety of different contexts.

Differences can be managed in various ways. While variations of use can be solved by specifying its context and structures, other difficulties persist. Here, individual circumstances and relational patterns within a particular case study subsist and vary among different studies and cultures. These circumstances do not only include visible aspects, such as administrative or political systems, but also underlying aspects such as traditions, norms and language. As this matter of fact is the essence of the concept of planning cultures, it can be seen as a step forward to a more systematic comparative research.

3   PLANNING CULTURES

The so-called concept of planning cultures takes into account that spatial planning and spatial development at different administrative levels (national, regional, local) are interlinked and influenced by particular characteristics, such as political structures, legislation and traditional values. These rather cultural issues and their influence within planning have so far not adequately been taken into account within research. Planning cultures admit that planning systems are characterised not only by their organisational and institutional structures, but also and in particular, by so-called cultural aspects. Hence, institutions, history, social values and traditions play a crucial role in everyday's practice of spatial planning. (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009)

In literature, there is disagreement about when exactly the term planning culture as such was introduced first. According to Friedmann, it was in 1993 when European planners tried to analyse the planning cultures of Switzerland, Germany, France and Italy[1] (Friedmann, 2005). From this starting point on, different studies on the topic have internationally been undertaken, among others initiated by Sanyal (2005). But although a lot of research has been done and is still done, clear definitions of what the authors consider as planning culture differ a lot (Friedmann, 2005; Fürst, 2009).

As the term planning culture is rather controversial, the choice of words needs to be critically analysed and questioned if the labelling is appropriate. Both terms planning and culture as such are already difficult to define due to their complex and rather abstract character. This makes it difficult to specify and operationalise the multifaceted concept to an operational level for practical application. Selle agrees on this and calls the phenomenon of combining the two fuzzy terms planning and culture within one concept as "Unschärfe[2]" (fuzziness[2]). According to him, the wording planning culture is not appropriate for the scientific discourse (Selle, 2007). Fürst shares this point of view as "planning culture is not a scientific term; it is rather ill defined, addresses a diffuse research are and is not bound to a specific body of theories" (Fürst, 2009, 23). On the contrary, other experts argue for the introduction of culture into the scientific context, for instance Young, when referring to its approach of culturalisation. He justifies "the use of the new term [culturalisation] as a concept that has good potential to ground the implications of the cultural turn for professional and popular usage" (2008, 9).

From the author's point of view, the use of the term planning culture is justified and not such a "risky activity" (Fürst, 2009, 24). The introduction of culture into the planning discourse allows a more systematic discussion about planning processes and practices with regard to different cultural contexts. Moreover, the term could contribute to a higher expansion and significance of culture and cultural values within planning

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[1] For further information see Keller et al. (1993).

processes. Although many fields and professions, mainly media and development planning, have recognised the significance of culture, planning still neglects cultural values (Young, 2008).

3.1 Definition of planning culture

One might argue that there is no need to analyse different planning cultures because planning is simply planning independently from the executing country. In consequence, planning practice is often perceived to be more or less the same, regardless where and from whom it is practiced. Due to its own professional habitus, it seems to be devoid of any social, political or cultural context. This might be true for other more technical professions like civil and mechanical engineering, but not for planning, as this is more likely to be a political profession instead (Friedmann, 2005). International investigations reflected that major differences exist in the ways that planning is institutionalised, carried out and how it is conceived. Independent of the growing global cooperation and communication, planners in Germany think, talk and act different from planners in China, Australia or Mexico (Sanyal, 2008). To put it simple, "our cultures are affected, but not determined by, where we come from and what we do for a living" (Davoudi, 2007, 34). Consequently, planning systems are shaped and influenced via various ways. A major influence is the institutional context of planning that varies widely among nations due to differences in history, attitudes and values, and in political and legal tradition. Also the interpretation of planning tasks and governance structures differ (Knieling, 2007). However, planning systems are not only shaped by institutional aspects, but are partly also an expression of fundamental values in a society related to the rights of citizens, the use of land or the legitimate scope of the government (Nadin and Stead, 2008). Hence, planning and planning processes cannot be understood independently from their cultural contexts. This finding was already well reflected by studies in the Arab and Islamic world, deductiving that every built environment consists of distinctive features, among others relating to social and cultural parameters (Al-Hokail, 2004).

Before defining the term planning culture, the term culture as such needs to be clarified as it is "subtle and complex in nature" (Young, 2008, 5). As the essential core of culture the aspects: traditions, ideologies and values are identified (Othengrafen, 2010). There are many different definitions given on culture, but the following is mostly in line with the previous mentioned ideas: "*Culture is the world conception and the values, moral norms and actual behaviour – and the material, immaterial and symbols results thereof – which people (…) take over from a preceding 'generation' (…) and which in one way or another make them different from people belonging to other cultures.*" (Gullestrup, 2006, 57)

By bringing now together "the parallel universes of planning and culture" (Young, 2008, 6), the values of culture and planning could contribute to a deeper understanding of planning processes. Furthermore, the concept of planning cultures brings together the "micro level (experiences of planners) and the macro level (institutional and social context)" (Othengrafen, 2010, 88).

One of the first theoretical approaches to systematically combine planning and its cultural and social context was developed by Friedmann already in 1967 (Othengrafen, 2010). In his conceptual model for the analysis of planning behaviour he emphasises the importance of contexts in which or through which planning decisions are taken (Friedmann, 1967).

Friedmann defines planning culture as:

"*The ways, both formal and informal, that spatial planning in a given multi-national region, country or city is conceived, institutionalized, and enacted.*" (2005, 184)

The definition implies that planning primarily is the responsibility of the state although other actors of the society contribute to planning processes. Therefore, planning is deeply embedded in the political system and in the culture of a nation being historically grounded.

According to Sanyal, planning culture comprises:

"*The collective ethos and dominant attitudes of planners regarding the appropriate role of the state, market forces, and civil society in influencing social outcomes.*" (2005, xxi)

This definition also points out the role of the state but mainly emphasises the impact of attitudes of planners themselves. According to Sanyal, the planners' understandings of the legal and administrative frameworks are essential for influencing planning culture. She hopes that comparative analyses of planning cultures will generate "thick descriptions" (Sanyal, 2005, xxi) of planning processes in different countries. The

descriptions might demonstrate whether there are core cultural traits, or according to Ricoeure, the "cultural nucleus" (ibid.) differentiating planning processes in different countries.

Knieling and Othengrafen define planning culture as a broad field involving numerous fields, purposes and research approaches of planning:

"*Planning culture might be understood as the way in which a society possesses institutionalised or shared planning practices. It refers to the interpretation of planning tasks, the way of recognising and addressing problems, the handling and use of certain rules, procedures and instruments, or ways and methods of public participation. It emerges as the result of the accumulated attitudes, values, rules, standards and beliefs shared by the group of people involved. This includes formal aspects (traditions, habits and customs) as well as formal aspects (constitutional and legal framework).*" (2009, 43)

This definition combines the previously mentioned definitions from Friedmann and Sanyal by adding new aspects to it. Besides the importance of stately regulated institutions and other formal aspects, also attitudes and interpretations of planners' themselves are identified as being important. The definition is in so far broadened as that underlying aspects such as national habits and customs are considered as well. All in all, these different definitions reflect the respective zeitgeist that can be traced back to meta theories of planning theory (Pallagst, 2007), as illustrated in the following table.

Researchers	Definition of planning culture	Allocation within planning theory
Friedmann (1967)	Mainly formal aspects, role of the state	Action-oriented planning (= rational planning)
Sanyal (2005)	Attitudes of planners	Collaborative planning (= communicative planning)
Knieling and Othengrafen (2009)	Formal aspects of the state Attitudes of planners National characteristics (values, etc.)	Postmodern planning (= idealistic planning, also including uncertain aspects, such as the role of power, cultural influences etc.)

Table 1: Different interpretations of planning culture and their allocation within planning theory

But as planning systems are not only influenced by endogenous aspects but also shaped by exogenous factors, culture is not an independent variable. Instead, it reacts and adapts to changes both within and outside the nation-states (Sanyal, 2005). Due to these exogenous factors, political and planning systems are influenced by various factors resulting in ongoing changes over time. In particular, globalisation and Europeanisation processes have brought major changes to institutional structures and processes of planning. The adaptations also influenced the scope of interest in planning and the way of governing (Friedmann, 2005). This aspect illustrates a specific feature of culture, its dynamic. Hence, cultures are not fixed given but evolve "as we make and re-make them through our efforts to make sense of ourselves and the world around us" (Healey, 1997). In consequence, a neat and ideal definition of planning cultures is impossible to give. Instead, an adequate definition needs to be rather loose and flexible, being able to adapt to changes and to accommodate inconsistencies, both being very probable to exist.

Besides the vagueness of planning cultures, Healey further argues that "the language of the modern period relegated culture to a sector of social life, rather than recognising the cultural embedding of all social life" (1997, 65). But some researchers recognised the cultural embedding of planning as described in the following chapter.

3.2 Current state of research

The role of culture in planning has been analysed in different studies during the last years. But according to Othengrafen (2010), in the field of comparative planning studies no real systematic conceptual framework exists. Young supports this statement but states that although successful approaches exist, they are "geographically scattered and exist mainly in the form of ad hoc or piecemeal innovations" (2008, 6). Fürst even labels planning culture as "the neglected dimension in international comparative studies on planning systems" (2009, 27). But although there is a need and desire to compare planning cultures more systematically, recent research illustrated that the focus of interest lies more on single fragments of the whole concept of planning culture. Whereas Newman and Thornley (1996) and the EU compendium (CEC, 1997) focus on structures of planning systems, other researchers analyse the perception of planning (Keller et al.,

1993; Sanyal, 2005) (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009). This observation is not surprising against the backdrop that comparative research in general has to deal with numerous problems and challenges (see chapter 2.1).

Hence, research on planning cultures is still in the offering and this at different scales. At global level, Sanyal (2005) initiated a series of case studies in a number of advanced developing countries and industrialised countries. Additionally, Pallagst (2010) analyses planning cultures in the context of shrinking cities in the US and Europe. At European level, one of the first comparative studies on spatial planning in Europe was done by Keller et al. (1993), who undertook a journey into the planning cultures of Germany, Switzerland, France and Italy. A few years later, in 1997, the EU initiated the analysis and comparison of planning terms and planning systems of their member countries (CEC, 1997). This research aimed at a better understanding among the member states and contributed to the development of the ESDP. Another field of interest regarding planning cultures is their influence on cooperation in INTERREG III projects. Between 2005 and 2007, the European project CULTPLAN explored these aspects in order to improve the management and implementation of transnational projects (Cultplan, 2007). As part of CULTPLAN, an international symposium on the topic "Planning Cultures in Europe – Exploring Cultural Differences as Resources and Restrictions for Interregional Cooperation" was organised in June 2007 in order to analyse cultural influences on planning processes and practices. In the field of national comparisons, in Europe a lot of research is done on the particular planning cultures of England and the Netherlands (see Friedmann, 2005; Faludi, 2005; Nadin and Stead, 2008). In Germany, the Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development (ILS) started a series of workshops on planning cultures in autumn 2004. The focus of the (still ongoing) research lies on an empirical research approach in order to compare different planning cultures. Besides, the Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL) established the European working group "Comparative Spatial Planning Research" focusing on the comparison of planning systems and planning cultures at European level. A more theoretical reflection of planning cultures took place from 2007 to 2008, when Selle and Danielzyk conducted an online-survey among planning professionals. The aim was to clarify and better understand what is meant by planning culture and to figure out which issues would be of particular interest being analysed in the context of planning cultures (PND, 2007).

To sum up, a lot of studies already exists dealing with communication and interactions within planning processes at transnational and national level. But their comparison with each other is rather difficult due to different reasons. The studies have been conducted at different times, so that the contexts vary greatly. Moreover, different contexts have been taken into account within the studies. Also the range of methods used for international comparison differs. While Keller et al. and Sanyal made use of expert discourses as dominant methods for the comparison; Friedmann adopts the method of participating observations and expert experiences. In contrast to this, the EU project CULTPLAN applied case studies (Fürst, 2010).

These findings illustrate that there is not only a lack of international comparisons but also a lack of a systematic framework to conduct analyses of planning cultures. Therefore, the following chapter deals with the development of an analytical framework to analyse planning cultures.

4 ANALYSIS OF PLANNING CULTURES

Although different research on planning cultures has already been done and is still ongoing, a systematic conceptual framework does not yet exist in the field of comparative planning studies (Othengrafen, 2010). Instead, the existing approaches mostly focus on formal governance structures and on legal and administrative patterns in order to explain differences between planning systems. Due to the fact that legal style provides the basis framework for the operating planning system, formal structural settings are indeed important. But there is a risk to overemphasise them, as planning reality is mostly characterised by its operational practice (Nadin and Stead, 2008).

Different approaches regarding the analysis of planning systems exist (see inter alia Newmann and Thornley, 1996; CEC, 1997; Larsson, 2006) but rather seldom concerning planning cultures. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the terms culture and planning culture are rather abstract making it difficult to clearly define and analyse planning cultures. However, the culturised planning model from Knieling and Othengrafen (2009) is identified as relevant for a systematic discussion of the influence of planning cultures. In contrast to previous analyses, such as the EU Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems and Policies (CEC, 1997), the culturised planning model does not only deal with administrative and institutional structures within planning. Instead, it

specifically focuses on the impact of culture on daily planning processes and practices. Consequently, it offers various inspirations and can be seen as an adequate element for more systematic comparative research methods.

4.1 Discussion of an existing model

The culturised planning model deals with the impact of culture on spatial planning practices. The aim is "to decode cultural impacts of spatial planning" (Othengrafen, 2010, 90). The model is based on Schein's understanding of culture implying that cultures are "phenoma that are below the surface" (Schein, 2004, 8). According to him, culture is a product of: (1) visible artefacts; (2) espoused beliefs, values, rules and behavioural norms; and (3) tacit, taken-for-granted, basic underlying assumptions (ibid.).

Corresponding to this understanding of culture, the culturised planning model consists of three dimensions as illustrated in the following figure.

Fig. 1: The three dimensions of the culturised planning model. Source: Author's own design based on Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009, 57

The dimensions are (1) planning artefacts, (2) planning environment, and (3) societal environment aiming at a systematic analysis of the cultural context within planning. All dimensions are interrelated with each other and have different influences on planning culture. The greatest influence has the societal environment in which the other two dimensions are embedded.

A more detailed and descriptive overview on the structure and understanding of the model is given in the following figure.
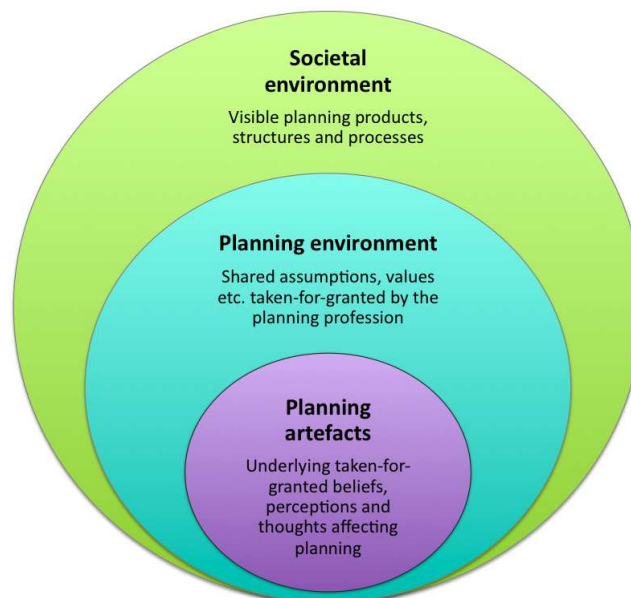

Fig. 2: The culturised planning model. Source: Author's own design based on Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009, 57

It illustrates the different weightings of the three dimensions. The core of the model is supposed to be the simplest part of the analysis as the dimension planning artefacts deals with easily recognisable aspects, such as formal instruments, institutions and decision-making structures. In contrast to this, the other two dimensions illustrate more invisible parts of planning culture which are hard to identify and analyse. They deal with assumptions, traditions, values and underlying perceptions. While the dimension planning environment focuses on values and assumptions relevant for planning, the dimension societal environment

deals with perceptions and beliefs from the society in general. These two dimensions are difficult to detect but have a significant influence on planning.

How these three dimensions have been specified in more detail (see figure 3). By looking at these specifications, it becomes obvious that the culturised planning model was inspired by previous approaches to analyse planning systems. Especially with regard to the dimensions planning artefacts and planning environment, parallels to the EU compendium and its criteria are noticeable (CEC, 1997).

Planning artefacts	Planning environment	Societal environment
• Urban design and structures; • Urban plans; • Urban and regional development strategies; • Statistical data; • Planning institutions; • Planning law; • Decision making processes; • Communication and participation; • Planning instruments and procedures; etc.	• Planning semiotics and semantics; • Instruments and procedures; • Content of planning; • Objectives and principles planning is aiming at; • Traditions and history of spatial planning; • Scope and range of spatial planning; • Formalised layers of norms and rules; • Political, administrative, economic, and organisational structures; etc.	• Self-conception of planning; • People's respect for and acceptance of plans; • Significance of planning: social justice, social efficiency, or moral responsibility; • Consideration of nature; • Socio-economic or socio-political societal models; • Concepts of justice: egalitarianism; utiliarianism or communitarism; • Fundamental philosophy of life; etc.

Fig. 3: Specification of the three dimensions of the culturised planning model. Source: Author's own design based on Othengrafen, 2010, 93

Here first criticism at the culturised planning model evolves. As the EU compendium deals with specific planning structures, similar criteria are expected to be solely grouped to the dimension planning artefacts which is supposed to deal with visible planning structures and processes. Instead, also the dimension planning environment, defined to deal with rather invisible assumptions, implies structural criteria, such as the political and administrative structures.

Hence, from the author's point of view, the assignment of criteria to the three dimensions is not strictly consistent. Another example is the allocation of the rather fuzzy and invisible criteria "communication" and "decision-making processes" to the dimension planning artefacts. Additionally, the borders between the three dimensions are not clear but overlapping, as some criteria are grouped to different dimensions. An example is the criterion "instruments and procedures" being allocated to the dimensions planning artefacts and planning environment. Due to the fact that no definitions or further explanations to these aspects are given, it remains unclear which instruments and procedures need to be grouped to which dimension, as both dimensions deal with planning aspects. Instead, the interpretation of the model is up to the reader, and in consequence, differs from person to person. Additionally, the purpose of the culturised planning model was to provide a first theoretical basis and conceptual framework for the study of planning cultures (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009). Therefore, the concept cannot be seen as a thorough model for the analysis and does consequently not allow systematic comparative analyses.

To sum up, the culturised planning model is a basic approach aiming to analyse planning cultures. Through its division into different dimensions, it offers good ideas for a more structured and comparative analysis of planning cultures. But due to rather critical aspects, in particular regarding its vagueness and inconsistence, this model can also be seen as a starting point for an enhanced analytical framework for the analysis of planning cultures.

4.2 Enhanced analytical framework for the analysis of planning cultures

In order to develop a more suitable analytical framework for the analysis of planning cultures, the before mentioned culturised planning model is taken into account as a conceptual framework, complemented with the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984). The following analytical framework deals with the analysis of planning cultures at national level but can be applied to other studies at different administrative levels.

In general, the author agrees on the distinction of planning cultures into three dimensions, whereas their focus and labelling need to be changed. There is a need for one overall dimension dealing with rather general aspects of a country, while the other two dimensions focus on the planning system in more detail. Despite the

fact that the author principally agrees with the interpretation of the dimension societal environment, particularly the two dimensions planning artefacts and planning environment and their relation to each other need to be adjusted. Based on these aspects, the new structure and labellings are introduced in the following.

The dimension social environment will be changed into a more general dimension in order to stress the importance of external framework conditions of planning in a particular country. Contrary to the culturised planning model, no aspects dealing in particular with planning, such as the self-conception of planning, will be considered. Instead, the focus of interest lies on external conditions beyond any specific planning aspects, such as geographical conditions. In contrast to this, the dimensions planning artefacts and planning environment need to be restructured in order to create clear borders between them. Inspiration comes from the definition of planning culture as a mixture of formal and informal aspects. Hence, besides formal structures, also individual interpretations and attitudes of planners have to be considered.

Here, the "theory of structuration" from the British sociologist Anthony Giddens comes into play helping to set out a clear structure for the analytical framework. The theory was developed in 1984 and deals with the relation between institutionalised structures and independant individual choices, the so-called "structure or agency" discussion. Agency refers to the individual choices of individuals while structure stands for norms, both in material (institutions) and in cultural way (customs, traditions, ideologies) influencing the individual choices and opportunities. Giddens (1984) claims that social life consists of more than only random individual choices because they are also influenced by structural forces. Hence, structure and agency are interrelated. But not only structures influence individual behaviour, also individuals influence and reproduce social structures, for instance by ignoring established traditions or by changing the ways of doing things. All in all, Giddens does not see structure as a given or external form, as it only gives form and shape to social life without being a form as such. According to him, structure evolves only through activities of human agents. The theory stresses the importance of actors due to two reasons. They are on the one hand interpreting and implementing structural conditions and on the other hand, they influence other actors what in turn could transform the given structures in a long run.

Being inspired by this dualism of structure, the other two dimensions of the analytical framework will be labelled planning structure (Giddens: structure) and planning practice (Giddens: agency). According to Giddens, routinised actions are not merely conditioned by existing cultural structures but also recreated through the enactment process. In other words, the consideration of only structures is not enough, as they are strongly interrelated to how they are perceived and enacted by people.

An overview on the analytical framework for the analysis of planning culture is illustrated in the following figure.
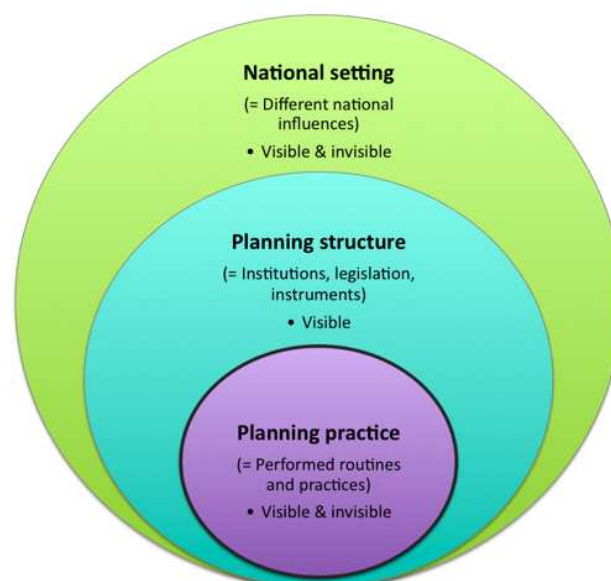

Fig. 4: Enhanced analytical framework for the analysis of (national) planning cultures. Source: Author's own design

The basic structure of the analytical framework consists of the following three dimensions: national setting, planning structure, and planning practice (emphasis of the model).

The dimension national setting deals with different national background information comprising various aspects that are typical for a particular country. It includes the geographical characteristics of a country comprising its settlement structure and accessibility. Other important features are the political, administrative and institutional settings. All in all, the dimension deals with visible facts that can be gathered through literature and policy studies. The author is aware of the fact that there are many other aspects important as well. In general, national settings also comprise a number of other relevant aspects, for instance the historical development of the country or underlying perceptions, such as social norms and values shared by many people of the country. An example would be the role of nature. But due to the fact that information on these aspects is hard to gather and the focus of the analysis lies on the planning practice, the main structural aspects are most important.

The dimension planning structure deals with formally institutionalised aspects within the planning system of a country. It focuses on the constitutional and administrative framework of a planning system, the planning legislation and formal planning instruments. Also relevant policies and sectors are identified. Information on these aspects can be gathered via literature reviews and policy studies, mainly based on already existing investigations of spatial planning systems (e.g. CEC, 1997; Larsson, 2006).

The dimension planning practice is of most interest for the author as the emphasis of the analytical framework lies on the daily planning practice. It deals with the daily routines and performed ways of planning in a country. In contrast to the other two dimensions, it does not deal with formal and institutionalised aspects rather with informal and mostly invisible procedures in planning processes. The dimension includes the operational practice of planning. It investigates how planning is conducted in reality apart from the formal legislation, for instance when it comes to decision-making processes. Also the perception of planning tasks and the definition of spatial planning are of particular interest. Information on these aspects cannot be found in literature and therefore, will be gathered via empirical research. Hence, a number of different expert interviews among planning practitioners should be conducted.

5 CONCLUSION

The analysis of planning cultures gains importance nowadays due to the fact that transnational learning processes generally obtain more and more value; for instance regarding so-called best practices that are worked out in nearly every field of business. Additionally, also the labour market for planners becomes more international making special competencies essential, such as intercultural knowledge and different language skills. But although planning cultures are recognised as important, they still hamper a proper and systematic analysis. This is due to the fact that comparative analyses in general are difficult to conduct in an adequate and systematic manner because of various pitfalls and obstacles. Supplementary, the rather fuzzy character of the term planning culture makes an analysis even more difficult.

Nevertheless, planning cultures are of high relevance and are paid more and more attention to in academic research nowadays. But although many different publications on this topic already exist (inter alia CEC, 1997; Sanyal, 2005; Larsson, 2006; Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009), the literature is basically descriptive. Moreover, most of the carried out research focuses on governance structures by analysing the institutional and administrative factors. In contrast to this, empirical research on performed planning practices and planning processes is underrepresented so far. Therefore, the development of the enhanced analytical framework, based on the culturised planning model, does not only contribute to a more systematic understanding and analysis of national planning cultures, but also offers the possibility for increased empirical research.

But the analysis of planning cultures does not only offer chances and challenges, it also has to face a great many dangers. Due to the fact that both planning and culture are rather fuzzy terms, they cannot be neatly assigned to a static and universal system with exclusive categories. In consequence, both the definition of planning cultures and its analytical framework need to be rather loose and open for flexibility. Hence, they need to provide loose fit and overlapping borders in order to pick up irreconcilable differences and overlaps, for instance when it comes to multi-cultural societies. Moreover, the definition and analytical framework cannot be static either, as regions and cultures are in a steady flux, resulting in changing objectives which in turn change the planning strategies which in turn requires changes in the analytical framework. According to Booth, "this is certainly messy research, but is likely to yield richer results" (2011, 26).

All in all, comparative research, in particular regarding planning challenges, is challenging but due to its promises and chances, "the wheel of cross-cultural methodology keeps on being reinvented" (Scheuch, 1989, 147). Although the approach of planning cultures does not solve all obstacles of comparative research in spatial planning, it assists to diminish them by simultaneously extending the chances for systematic analyses. This, in turn, improves the possibility of planners and planning systems to better adapt to any changes of the planning framework, such as changes of social ideals.

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