

PART I

DEBATING PLANNING CULTURES: AUSTRIAN RESEARCHERS IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHN FRIEDMANN

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INTRODUCTION

Thousands of tourists visit Austria every year because of its rich culture: the recent World Economic Forum Tourism Competitiveness Report ranked Austria in the top 3 out of 140 tourism destinations worldwide. What is less known is that Austria is the home of one of Europe's biggest planning departments: around 100 people are currently active in research and teaching at the Department of Spatial Planning of the Vienna University of Technology (VUT). Also the student numbers tell a clear story: in autumn 2013, 295 students started the VUT planning course, and 1,150 students are currently enrolled in the study of planning. One of the Spatial Planning Department's key objectives is cooperation with other universities, public administrative bodies and private sector organizations within and beyond Austria both in research and education. These networks have proved to be of fundamental importance in bringing well-established researchers to Vienna for guest lectures.

However Austria's history also reveals a dark side: in the 1930s and 1940s many people were expelled from Vienna and Austria and forced into exile and later became perpetual travellers. A good example is John Friedmann, who after leaving Austria lived in 9 different countries around the world, of which none became his 'true home'. Nonetheless, or maybe because of this extraordinary situation, he has had a remarkable career dedicated to planning research and development, making significant contributions to debates about planning theories (cf. Friedmann, 2011), urban and regional planning (cf. Friedmann, 2002; Friedmann and Wolff, 1982) and development theories (e.g. Friedmann, 1965). What is noticeable

about his work is that in his endeavours to understand spatial development and planning he has succeeded in combining a scientific-analytical perspective with a clear ethical and value-laden position, always aiming at the goal of a 'good society' (cf. Friedmann, 1979) and empowering economically and socially disadvantaged communities (cf. Friedmann, 1992). He was one of the first planning theorists to point to the role of communication and dialogue, and to propose the link between knowledge and action in planning (cf. Friedmann, 1973, 1987). Friedmann clearly presaged both the famous 'communicative turn' in planning theory and the 'interactive research' approach in social sciences. So Healey (2011, p. xi) is definitely right when she points out that 'Friedmann has been there before them', in the sense of that he often brought topics to the planning debate long before they entered popular discourse. These scientific contributions comprise only a few selected examples of the comprehensive theoretical and empirical knowledge base he created throughout his career over the years. They are by no means a complete overview of Friedmann's life achievements, but are mentioned here only to highlight his differentiated and inspirational ways of thinking.

John Friedmann has inspired generations of researchers and practitioners and continues to do so not only through his publications but also through continuing discussions and debates with students and researchers globally. The guest-editors of this section therefore invited John Friedmann to come to Vienna for a lecture which he entitled: 'Austria-in-the-world: Debates and Conversations about Planning and Development'. Although originally intended to be exclusively for students, following many requests from Austrian researchers and practitioners, it became a public lecture. More than 150 researchers, practitioners and students attended Friedmann's talk, followed by a lively discussion on February 23, 2012. The lecture culminated a three-day seminar that was organized with sixteen Ph.D. students selected from four different universities in Austria to exchange their ideas with him. Both the public lecture and the Ph.D seminar were made possible with the financial support of the Vienna University of Technology, the City of Vienna and the Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft.

The topic of 'planning cultures' quickly established itself within the seminar as an essential bridging element between the very different research interests of the participants. This was driven in particular by participants' multi-cultural ethnic backgrounds (Argentina, Austria, Kosovo, Turkey) as well as the Ph.D. students' interdisciplinary scientific backgrounds (spatial planners, geographers, architects, landscape planners). This diverse composition equipped participants to grasp the necessity and importance of clarifying their underlying values as well as the planning approaches of their countries, regions and cities prior to presenting their research outcomes. In discussions, students actively reflected upon how planning cultures shape spatial development and planning practice, but also attitudes and interpretations of planning in both education and as a profession at different uni-

versities globally. According to Friedmann, planning cultures need to be addressed to enable the processes of mutual learning. Across cultures, he argues, we must be conscious of how planning is perceived, conceived and implemented in different countries and even in cities, so as ‘to move forward’ in our common endeavours (Friedmann, 2011, p. 9). Friedmann defines planning cultures as ‘the ways, both formal and informal, that spatial planning in a given multi-national region, country or city is conceived, institutionalized, and enacted’ (Friedmann, 2011, p. 168). Planning cultures consist of the relationships between the state and the civil society, particularly the role of civil society in planning, the structure of the party system, the openness of political institutions, the role of the media, the application of principles such as hierarchy and subsidiarity, legal traditions, and the relative autonomy of local governments (Friedmann, 2011, p. 196). Thus, Friedmann conceptualizes planning cultures as a set of structures, procedures, actors and institutions in the planning domain, some being visible (e.g. planning procedures codified in law), others are less visible (e.g. relationships between the state and the civil society).

In his contribution to this guest-edited section of ESR&P, Friedmann tells us how various scholars whose intellectual roots were in Austria and the Habsburg monarchy have influenced his thinking about planning such as Martin Buber with regard to the link between knowledge and action or Karl Polanyi concerning the social and cultural embeddedness of economic development and planning. In regard to planning cultures, Friedmann seems to be arguing that their study can serve:

- as an approach to enrich our understanding of planning on a theoretical level,
- as an intellectual environment for developing new ideas and concepts in planning,
- as an analytical lens through which differences between spatial planning in different countries, cities and regions can be explained analytically, and
- as an ethical attitude, which respects cultural differences and fosters mutual learning on a global scale. Cities and regions are increasingly interconnected globally, as are urban and regional planning policies. Mutual learning, based on an understanding of how planning is performed institutionally in different settings, could be a way to make planning policies more effective and efficient.

The idea of the guest-edited section emerged from both the ongoing relevance of planning cultures in current debates as well as a desire to capture and follow-up the enriching discussions with John Friedmann from the Ph.D. seminar. Some seminar participants took up the challenge to examine some aspects of planning cultures that were revealed in their research. Their contributions provide valuable insights into the various facets of processes by which planning cultures influence planning research and developments. Mindful of the fact that for some of our authors this would be their first scientific publication, the guest-editors adopted the common practice of journals such as *Geoforum* and *Environment and Planning C* to work closely with authors towards improving their papers. The principal idea of

the ‘constructive review process’ is that the editors work closely with the authors to ensure that their contributions meet the required quality criteria. This working method proved highly successful, as all the contributions passed the subsequent double blind review process without any problem.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank our authors for their very hard work as well as the editorial team of the journal *European Spatial Research and Policy*, in particular Iwona Pielesiak and Tadeusz Marszał for their ongoing support and help in making the project ‘Debating Planning Cultures: Austrian Researchers in Conversation with John Friedmann’ possible.

The contributions to this guest-edited section:

John Friedmann launches this guest-edited section with an inspiring article about how Austrian scholars influenced his work on planning and development. He combines the ideas of Bertram Hoselitz, Friedrich Hayek, Joseph Schumpeter, Karl Mannheim, Martin Buber, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Karl Polanyi, Karl Popper and Paul Feyerabend with his own conceptualizations of planning and development. He explains the economic, social, political and cultural environment in which both their thinking and his own have unfolded over the years. This is a journey through history and space, beginning in Europe at the start of the 20th century and does not end, but finds its most recent localization in present-day Canada. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Friedmann concludes that planning theory should be considered as a part of a theory of wider socio-spatial including cultural change. In his discussion of the role of planning cultures in shaping planning practices, Friedmann also mentions that processes of globalization and the global flow of planning policies increasingly shape urban and regional policies creating conditions for their possible homogenization. Nevertheless, global processes are filtered through local practices, political cultures and other factors, which eventually leads to a still more variegated picture of how planning is conceived and institutionalized at local, regional or national levels. **Alexander Hamedinger** takes up this idea in his article and examines how concepts of the mobility of mobile urban and planning policies and planning cultures could best be combined in order to explain urban governance change. He examines different concepts for capturing the increasing circulation of policy ideas on supra-local scales (‘mobilities’), rooted in critical urban research. He asks how these different approaches theoretically envisage local or regional factors (‘fixities’), those resisting processes against homogenization of planning policies. In turn, he examines how recent approaches to defining planning cultures precisely conceptualize these ‘local or regional factors’, particularly the taken-for-granted values and belief systems of urban and regional planning, which may appear invisible, but could nevertheless prove to be obstacles for governance change. Hamedinger concludes by emphasising that understanding changes in planning policies requires a clear conceptual framework which integrates processes of social, economic and political re-struct-

turing unfolding on the supra-local level, attitudes, actions and perceptions of local policy actors and the characteristics of places in cultural terms.

Johannes Suitner explicitly discusses planning cultures as one factor which could explain the production of cultural images. Suitner focuses on culture-led image planning and asks how planning cultures influence processes of image planning, and how cultures of image construction could be analyzed empirically. For this purpose he develops an analytical framework consisting of the planning environment, the local planning system and the underlying planning principles applied in different locales.

In her contribution, **Katharina Söpper** looks at urban development, and more specifically at urban neighbourhood development processes. She regards planning cultures as having the potential to explain differences in neighbourhood development policies, whilst also explaining how processes of collaboration unfold at the neighbourhood level. More generally, she combines a theory of governance with an approach to planning cultures in order to better understand the development of existing collaborations. She concludes by proposing a new analytical framework – ‘culture-based governance analysis’ – that could potentially be useful in analysing different forms of collaboration in a comparative perspective.

In the final article of this guest-edited section, **Alois Humer** seeks to contribute to a better understanding of differences in the provision and organization of ‘social services of general interest’ across Europe. He excavates the details of one part of a wider planning culture, namely the systems of spatial planning. As far as social services are concerned, it is primarily the level of responsibility and the territorial organization which are the elements of the planning system, or planning cultures that make a difference. Humer contends that social welfare systems and spatial planning systems are highly interrelated, whereby social welfare systems can be seen as frameworks for spatial planning systems, which basically translate the principles of the welfare systems into the territory in three stages.

Differences in planning cultures matter for all contributors to this guest-edited section, most of whom are seeking to combine planning cultures with other meso-level theories such as governance in order to enhance its power to account changes in urban and regional development. Likewise, all contributors suggest some lines of future research for improving our theoretical understanding of planning cultures, for doing more theoretically well informed empirical research in planning and spatial development, and for searching for ways to link planning cultures with wider theories of urban change. It is this message that brings us back to what John Friedmann tells researchers in planning and spatial development in the concluding words of his contribution to this issue: ‘In any event, planning theory is for me part of a theory of socio-spatial change’.

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