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CULTURES OF IMAGE CONSTRUCTION
APPROACHING PLANNING CULTURES
AS A FACTOR IN URBAN IMAGE PRODUCTION

Abstract. Why do the same planning approaches cause different results around the world? Because, even in times of globalization, there is obviously more than one way of planning. These different modes are an expression of distinct local planning cultures. Hence, we need to take a closer look at the influence of planning cultures on outcomes of urban development processes. This paper joins debates on the nature of planning culture with culture-led image production as one specific process of urban development, and asks to what degree a local planning culture might influence the production of cultural image. The paper provides a first step in building an analytical framework for analyzing image production and its interplay with local planning cultures, and gives hints on critical points in the so-called 'cultures of image construction'.

Key words: planning culture, urban culture, image construction, cultural planning, contested space.

1. INTRODUCTION

In our everyday involvement with planning processes we can find that similar challenges are approached differently around the globe. It would be too narrow to put this down to random contextual variations. Rather this owes to distinct local planning cultures (Friedmann, 2005, 2011).

The recognition of such specific planning cultures extends the spectrum of questions to be approached in planning research (Sanyal, 2005). Their influence on various planning activities is a major topic, which seems to be only implicitly analyzed sometimes, but rarely as a research objective itself. Hence, planning culture's relation to actual planning interventions remains widely uncharted terrain.

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Whether it be mega-projects or local regeneration processes, physical or neighbourhood planning, cultural or environmental interventions – all have to be considered as being affected by the specificities of local planning cultures. Thus, how local particularities affect different planning activities is a key question. Analyzing the substantial factors that support or hinder the respective planning practice consequently becomes an important point in planning research.

In this paper I elaborate on the relation between planning culture and culture-led image creation to make a first step in building an analytical framework on the influence planning cultures have on planning endeavours. I choose culture-led image creation, as in times of culturalization of all urban life (Scott, 1997), investigating culture-led initiatives in planning offers a seemingly infinite range of worldwide examples. And, the prevalent entrepreneurial, outward-oriented politics of planning (Hall and Hubbard, 1996) suggest to take a closer look at the production of urban images as a central instrument in this context.

This focus is of even greater interest in relation to planning cultures, as thematic diversity and image success vary heavily among recent projects (Evans, 2001, 2003; Miles, 2007). Consequently, the presumption is that realization and image-related accomplishments of anything from museums, theatres and cultural quarters to music festivals, sports events and capitals of culture are massively influenced by the local contexts of planning.

Thus, this paper discusses culture-led planning in short, extending it to the strongly related urban marketing activities, which explains why the focus of debate should be on culture-led *image* planning instead of separate investigations of culture *or* image. I join culture-led image planning with the concept of planning culture to find some of the important issues in researching the 'cultures of image creation'. Hence, I conclude with proposing central research questions to analyze the influence of planning cultures on image planning processes effectively. Yet, as a starting point, I introduce and delineate the concept of planning cultures for the purpose of this paper.

2. PLANNING AND CULTURE. PLANNING AS CULTURE

The first well-known involvements with theorizing about planning date back to the 1950s and 1960s, when planning practice was determined by the concept of scientific rationality. Although being children of their time, these efforts already contained a valuable shade of critique towards the rational-comprehensive approach to planning (Lindblom, 1959; Davidoff, 1965). Thereby, they initiated an intense and still ongoing discourse, which critically reflects the manifold ways of planning, introduces new rationales, and provides an indispensable overview of how the profession and its approaches changed over time.

Within this discourse on planning theory another strand was examined to shed light on how planning is organized. It dealt with the so far invisible values and beliefs that accompany planning, and tried to find out about the structures of actors and resulting relations in planning (Faludi, 2005). But only in the 1990s the debate around different ways of planning was consequently put in relation to local contexts. It appeared that specific political and administrative systems in which planning is embedded, the inherent principles and values of planners, and the history *of*, or traditions *in* planning might play an important role in understanding why similar challenges are actually carried out differently around the globe (Getimis, 2012). Eventually, planning cultures became an important issue of planning theoretical research, particularly in comparative studies (Sanyal, 2005; Friedmann, 2005, 2011; Steinhauer, 2011).

But what is characteristic of 'a planning culture'? Knieling and Othengrafen (2009) emphasize the importance of (local) socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts as major influencing factors of planning processes. These are an expression of a distinct culture, or are at least shaped by local cultural particularities. Consequently, the same is true for local, regional, or national planning, which are all embedded in and emerged from these cultural contexts. They further specify that '[…] each national or regional planning context is characterized by particularities of history, beliefs and values, political and legal traditions, different socio-economic patterns and concepts of justice, interpretations of planning tasks and responsibilities, as well as different structures of governance' (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009, p. 301)

This approach accentuates the 'culturization' of planning (Young, 2008) and brings us close to the concept of planning cultures. Screening recent literature reveals a great pile of work on the characteristics of planning culture – a helpful foundation in defining the term. Although Young (2008) and Steinhauer (2011) rightly refuse a definite delineation as it would hinder an adaptation to other, different questions or contexts, a clear and stable understanding is needed as a framework for the purpose of this paper. I consider the following structure a useful basis of my further elaborations (see figure 1).

Three levels of analysis are distinguished in this conceptualization. The total of all cultural, historical, geographic, economic, and political contexts, in which a territory is embedded, is considered to be an important influencing factor of any planning cultural specificity, and hence a decisive foundation of a planning culture concept. These contexts form the preconditions of planning interventions and urban development in general. Therefore, it subsumes both the surrounding situation and influences from a non-local level, as well as the very local structures of the urban environment, in which planning typically intervenes. Besides geographic location, this implies a territory's embedding in border-crossing political and economic networks and any other cross-regional linkages, which co-determine the

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│   │   │  │              PLANNING CONTEXT                   │  │
│   │ I │  │ Global & (supra-)national framing               │  │
│   │ N │  │ - Geography                                      │  │
│   │ S │  │ - Global politics, structural and functional ties│ │
│   │ T │  │ - National regulations                           │  │
│   │ I │  │ - Determination of territorial system            │  │
│   │ T │  │   e.g. hierarchies and modes of allocation       │  │
│   │ U │  │                                                  │  │
│   │ T │  │ Local structures                                 │  │
│   │ I │  │ - Urban structure, environment, landscape, built environment│
│   │ O │  │ - Densities, accessibilities, centres/peripheries, ...│ │
│   │ N │  │ ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐ │  │
│   │ S │  │ │           PLANNING SYSTEM                     │ │  │
│   └───┘  │ │ Material components                          │ │  │
│          │ │ - Planning laws, regulations, instruments    │ │  │
│          │ │ - Institutions and institutional structures  │ │  │
│          │ │                                              │ │  │
│          │ │ Discursive components                        │ │  │
│          │ │ - Societal role of planning, acceptance, legitimacy│ │
│          │ │ - Institutional embededness                  │ │  │
│          │ │ - Decision-making processes                  │ │  │
│   ┌───┐  │ │ ┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐ │ │  │
│   │ P │  │ │ │         PLANNING PRINCIPLES               │ │ │  │
│   │ R │  │ │ │ Planning traditions                      │ │ │  │
│   │ A │  │ │ │ - 'History' of local planning            │ │ │  │
│   │ C │  │ │ │ - Emergence of different forms of planning│ │ │  │
│   │ T │  │ │ │   e.g. physical, functional, institutional planning│ │
│   │ I │  │ │ │ - Relation of formal and informal planning│ │ │  │
│   │ C │  │ │ │                                          │ │ │  │
│   │ E │  │ │ │ Planning attitudes                       │ │ │  │
│   │ S │  │ │ │ - General objectives                     │ │ │  │
│   └───┘  │ │ │ - Positionality, planner's value systems and visions│ │
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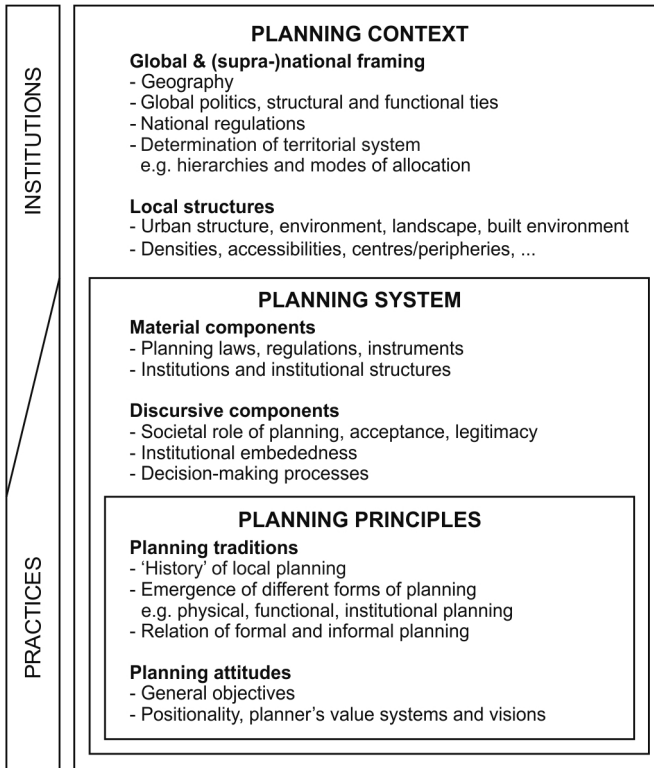
Fig. 1. Delineating local planning cultures. An analytical framework

Source: author's elaboration after Salet and Faludi (2000), Stevenson (2001), Faludi (2005), Friedmann (2005, 2011); Sanyal (2005), Young (2008), Knieling and Othengrafen (2009), Steinhauer (2011), Getimis (2012), Reimer and Blotevogel (2012)

local planning situation. National regulations are as well considered as influencing factors of a local planning culture, for instance by determining certain modes of allocating subsidies among regions. And, the planning context involves the local structures as both, point of departure for and outcome of actual planning within the respective territory. Of course, global, national and local contexts and structures cannot be strictly separated, as today we are aware of the tight interrelations between these different scales (Massey, 2006). Still though, the planning context is meant to represent the locally constructed framework, in which a local planning culture can exist and develop (Getimis, 2012; Reimer and Blotevogel, 2012).

Embedded in these planning contexts lies the planning system. According to Reimer and Blotevogel (2012), the planning system comprises of formal institutions and the legislated regulations of planning. Yet, this is only part of what I propose to be subsumed here. While all formal instruments, the regulative framework

of local development, and all further legally drawn-up structures can be considered to be 'visible' fragments of the planning system, the 'invisible' factors characterizing it are hardly ever discussed. I speak of decision-making processes, the discursively produced role of planning in society, its acceptance and legitimacy as a forming force in local development, as well as of its embeddedness in the variety of authorities, administrations, chambers, and the like. Even though it is acknowledged that it is here that actor constellations exercise power to influence the material institutional structures (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Getimis, 2012), they sometimes seem to be of subordinate importance in discussions about planning systems. It is this layer, where institutions and practices of the local planning culture collide and most intensely interfere. Hence, the analysis of the planning system not only shows the processes and ways of formal planning, it also gives hints about powerful actors and their networks, who potentially influence planning processes and the planning system as such. Thus, the transitions between material and discursive components of the planning system are to be taken serious within the analysis of power in planning and investigations of a transforming planning culture.

Finally, the planning principles are completing the scheme of local planning cultures. By principles is meant the 'history' of local planning – the traditions of how to plan, when, where, and what to plan and by what means. These traditions are strongly linked to planning attitudes, which typically arise from a local planning tradition, but might as well be influenced by contextual changes and the planning system's condition (Young, 2008). The attitudes address the implicit values of planners, the definition of what 'good' planning means, the positionality, and the different visions arising from these principles. Of course, these principles of planning are applied in the discursive components of the planning system, massively affecting its constitution and how it impinges on the material planning system. Yet, it shall be distinguished from the planning system in analytical terms to signify the potentially different actor constellation influencing particularly the visions and value systems that serve as arguments for this or that planning. Relatedly, this level of analysis might help revealing who contributes these arguments, respectively which actors are engaging heavily in the making and re-making of general development objectives and visions for a city or region. Thus, investigating the planning principles might allow for seeing why certain development paths are taken, certain projects are realized, and planning processes initiated, and others are not.

As can be seen, the conception tries to adopt a definition of planning culture, which makes a division between separate analytical levels of local planning cultures. Although the scheme seems to ignore the transitions between context, system, and principles at the very first glance, it is well aware of the mutual influence of institutions and practices, and the interference of material and discursive factors of a planning culture. Imagine, for instance, a region finding itself embedded in

a global urban network of competing agglomerations. Of course, this context will – as soon as it is being recognized – influence future institutional and regulatory conditions. It might even bring about differently motivated planning attitudes and shake up underlying value systems within the discipline. *Vice versa*, actors might stress the need for a system's adaptation to see their planning principles realized. Even more, they might be influencing the discourses about global contexts of planning to force any local material changes. Hence, this delineation – although simplifying the local conditions of planning – can be seen as a useful basis for analyzing local planning cultures and the processes inherent in it. But for tackling the 'cultures of image creation', culture-led image planning needs to be introduced first.

3. FROM CULTURE-LED PLANNING TO CULTURE-LED IMAGE PLANNING

Culture received lots of attention in the past decades as a main influencing factor of urban development, particularly in urban regeneration. Approaches to culture and planning have therefore been intensely discussed since the 1990s, resulting in a whole lot of knowledge on the meaning of culture *for* planning and the various roles of culture *in* planning (Bianchini, 1993; Zukin, 1995; Evans, 2001; García, 2004; Benneworth and Hospers, 2006; Miles, 2007).

Reasons for the intensified linkage between culture and the city are manifold. While some see culture and creativity as the adequate answer to transforming economies (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002), others recognize a cultural turn in today's societies and an overarching culturalization of the world (Scott, 1997; Berndt and Pütz, 2007; Young, 2008). While a narrow conception of culture as the arts or creativity is celebrated literally everywhere through mega-infrastructures and spectacular events, a more comprehensive understanding, which derives mainly from sociology and cultural anthropology, only recently receives greater attention. Here, culture includes the wide-ranging variety of everyday practices and ways-of-life, which are of particular interest in an urban context (Eade and Mele, 2002; Young, 2008; Eckardt and Nyström, 2009).

The manifold scientific discourses on relations between culture and the city can be subsumed under four strands that are of specific importance from an urban planning view. First, culture is believed to be a unifying, while at the same time distinguishing element between local challenges and global impacts. In times of fragmented societies and ever new contextual shifts, culture becomes the promising factor of resistance, local difference, democracy, and identity (Harvey, 1989; Fohrbeck and Wiesand, 1989; Miles, Hall and Borden, 2000; Young, 2008). It is here that heritage and traditions are cherished in urban spectacle as the signifiers of a distinct cultural identity (Gotham, 2005). Second, economic restructur-

ing and de-industrialization have brought about an intensified involvement of culture as a factor in urban economies (Young, 2008; Benneworth and Hospers, 2009). The 'culture industry' seems to hold the potential for regenerating urban economic growth and prosperity, bringing 'creativity' to the fore and making it a must-have buzz-word in urban strategies of the past decade. Anything from installing creative industry quarters to promoting policies that attract a high-skilled creative class seems possible in this respect (cf. Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002). Third, culture often forms the pillar of urban renewal processes. As fragmentation, segregation, repression, and exclusion are widespread challenges in today's cities, planning is tempted to apply culture to its interventions to attribute new meaning to places and build common values on the shoulders of cultural expression. In this respect, culture can be both, artistic work and specific ways-of-life – in each case directed at regenerating parts of the city that have suffered from recent processes of urban change (Evans, 2001; Miles, 2007; Springer, 2007). And fourth, culture is heavily employed in strategies towards global competition. Such models of planning strongly emphasize big projects, particularly those, which promise visibility on the global scene, where contest over resources and attention resides. Here the famous examples of cultural planning emerged: museums like the Guggenheim in Bilbao and events like EXPOs or the European Capital of Culture each culture city needs to inhabit (Scott, 1997; Evans, 2001; García, 2004; Miles, 2007).

Yet, what needs to be emphasized is that all these different approaches of utilizing culture in planning have one thing in common. They are central to the images that sell the city to the world (Ward, 1998; Göschel and Kirchberg, 1998; Madgin, 2009). The image of cities as such has recently received massive attention as a decisive factor in global urban competition (Helbrecht, 1994; Evans, 2003; Kavaratzis, 2004). And culture with its attached values is considered not only a generator of attention on global business and tourism markets, but also an appropriate means of global distinction and local identification (Evans, 2001; Miles, 2007). Hence, it is a reasonable thematic base of urban images. This view reflects the notion that ultimately it is the image of a place that is affected by planning interventions, which is particularly true for cultural interventions with their immense symbolic character (Zukin, 1995; Evans, 2001, 2003).

If we consider the image itself as an objective of planning action, the original project or planning initiative becomes a means to another end. In a field of planning, where immaterial factors like attention, values and symbols play such a significant role, the realization of the culture-based project is not a goal in itself, but has to be seen as a step in a strategy towards constructing an urban image based upon culture. Hence, instead of discussing culture-led and image planning as separated strands, we should emphasize the symbolic layer of such planning interventions by focusing on the process of 'culture-led image construction'.

Vienna's *Museumsquartier* is one such example of re-shaping an urban culture-led image upon the shoulders of a big cultural project. Opened in 2001, the Museumsquartier hosts a number of museums with national significance and other creative industry-related institutions in a central location of the city. In the first years of its existence, its marketing was already primarily dedicated to celebrating contemporary architectural design and the overall incredible size of the project – an indication of the city's urge to step up on the international stage of culturally competing cities. More recently, the Museumsquartier became the symbol of a new cultural image of Vienna. Now it has joined the traditional sites of Vienna's imperial culture in global advertisements and tourism strategies, constructing the picture of a young urban lifestyle and contemporary culture (de Frantz, 2005; Suitner, 2010).

Of course, in the context of such culture-led image creation, the aspect of power in planning and related questions of competing culture*s* become urgent. Sharon Zukin (1995) first expressed that defining and re-defining urban cultures is a process of negotiation that is strongly contested – a fact, which is true also for culture-led image production. Constructing images can be considered a communicative process in the sense of planning through debate (Healey, 1992; Helbrecht, 1994), which is also determined by the negotiation over divergent goals. These goals are shaped by the underlying perceptions and implicit values that comprehend each individual's understanding of the city and its image. Understandably, these sometimes opposing goals and visions make the process of culture-led image construction a contested one. This contest over culture and the succeeding image is even more intense, if we not only consider the multi-actor character of urban image construction, but also the conflict between locally-based, bottom-up cultural initiatives and top-down imposed cultural images (de Frantz, 2005; Gotham, 2005; Suitner, 2010).

Considering the relation between such contested processes of culture-led image construction and planning culture now, brings a number of questions to the fore, which shall be discussed in the following section.

4. PLANNING CULTURE AND THE URBAN IMAGE: APPROACHING CULTURES OF IMAGE CONSTRUCTION

All three levels of the conceptualized local planning culture potentially hold answers for the different cultures of image construction. The planning contexts already reveal useful insight into the role and position of the city. In line with Kelly (1999), the local discourses about these contexts determine the directions the city wants to take in its development or can take at all. Imagine, for instance, a city

embedded in a functionally integrated transnational network of urban agglomerations. This city's cultural imaging strategy will look different if mediatic and political discourses construct the picture of intense competition with cities aiming at similar target groups, or if they highlight historic cultural commonalities as an argument for cooperation in marketing for tourism and the construction of a cross-regional cultural identity. Thus, the specific local echoing of a surrounding national and supra-national context, and the sensitivity to certain local conditions is a first influencing factor of the cultures of image construction.

While the environing planning context is an indispensable knowledge base for understanding the framework for a local planning culture to develop, the planning system and principles are important explanatory factors of how planning interventions are constituted and implemented. Both material and discursive layers of the planning system might give decisive hints on tight or loose networks that are an indication of powerful coalitions in planning activities. Discursive components presumably reveal important information about certain coalitions and, consequently, power relations in constructing a culture-led image. Reviewing the political and mediatic discourses that construct the relation of culture and a city or region will thus foster depicting *who* has power to construct meaning (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Torfing, 1999) – power to re-shape a culture-led image. Comparative analysis on this part will support carving out one of the decisive planning cultural differences: actor constellations and planning-political elites who are envisioning a cultural future of a territory.

Considering image construction as a communicative action causes a strong bias when approaching it analytically. How are decisions made? Who is allowed to decide formally? How are communicative processes structured and embedded in the planning system at all? These are questions that are highly dependent on the constitution of the local planning culture and must be approached as a precondition to analyzing processes of culture-led image construction. Here, the implicit values and embodied visions of actors in planning processes can be assumed to be of crucial importance. The imagined futures we consider apposite for a city are a combination of images we have in mind about the places where we live, the perception of what makes our cities special and livable, and the guiding values, by which we act and plan (Huyssen, 2008; Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009). As there is no formal act of planning images, it is even more important to reveal the different and often contesting visions, which are negotiated on other, informal channels. Hence, in the cultures of image construction we need to search for the underlying attitudes of these conflictive visions to understand why some finally win over others. It might be that the history of local planning favours the opinion of an expert planner in decision-making. Likewise, media discourses or interest groups might be the pivotal influencing factor in envisioning this or that cultural image. Anyhow, this can only be found out by reviewing the respective planning

and decision-making processes and the related institutional landscape and legal regulations framing these processes. Here lies another planning cultural difference, framing also the cultures of image construction. Presumably, market-oriented planning systems will rather foster an entrepreneurial marketing-perspective in the process of constructing an urban image, while state-minded planning might be more interested in image planning as a bottom-up, communicative measure (cf. Helbrecht, 1993, 1994).

Furthermore, experience has shown that bottom-up cultural initiatives can be generators of an urban culture-led image of whole cities (Evans, 2001; Suitner, 2010). Following, the construction of a culture-led image is not a sheer top-down determined action, but a mutual process of top-down and bottom-up initiatives, which ideally complement each other. This asks for looking at the planning principles more closely. What is the relation between formal and informal planning interventions? How are informal planning actions handled? Are there significant connections between actors embedded in the planning system and those engaging in informal interventions? Which state- and non-state actors are involved here and there? These are the questions that need to be analyzed here.

Thus, what can be distilled from these elaborations is that the conceptualization allows for distinguishing analytical levels, which help answering critical questions on power in planning, exclusions from decision-making and the processes of local planning. And, acknowledging the variations between different planning cultures holds significant information about different outcomes of similar planning endeavours.

5. CONCLUSIONS

If today we consider planning a task shaped not by universal laws but by ever specific socio-cultural contexts, a concept is needed that takes this shift into account appropriately. This concept is that of planning cultures. It is the long sought answer to the question why similar challenges are approached differently in planning (Sanyal, 2005).

Although manifold ideas on what constitutes a planning culture exist, there cannot be a definite delineation. Instead, the concept has to be fuzzy to be adaptable to variations (Young, 2008; Steinhauer, 2011). Anyhow, a stable definition is needed to understand how planning cultures influence specific planning endeavours. In the presented conceptualization three levels of analysis are distinguished: the environing planning context, the local planning system with all its legally drawn-up and informal ways of planning, and the underlying planning principles

– subsuming the approaches *to* and understanding *of* planning of involved actors. These levels can only in theory be separated as they naturally influence each other. But the analytical distinction allows for an investigation of influences of planning cultures on culture-based image construction. Looking at these 'cultures of image construction' reveals a variety of crucial points, which need to be highlighted when analyzing planning culture's influence on culture-led image planning:

   – The local planning culture provides a valuable framework of what can reasonably be done or achieved in planning. The question, 'What can be planned at all, and what can't?', is strongly dependent on how a local planning culture is constituted. It seems that planning traditions and the local discourses about planning contexts play a decisive role in this concern. For the cultures of image construction this means to ask whether a culture-led image can be a matter of negotiation at all, or whether it is an unplanned thing – an incident of random processes.

   – Planning attitudes and traditions strongly influence the planning system and how it is constituted. What is visible and what *vice versa* happens on informal channels has once been determined and is constantly re-determined by underlying principles. The controversy over the materialization of values and visions in space is a process of negotiation that is hardly ever legally drawn-up. So, whether image planning is an established planning act or an informal, contested process, depends heavily upon the constitution of the planning system and the underlying principles that co-produce it.

   – Analyzing the planning system with its institutional structures and formal decision-making processes reveals not only actor's networks, but also certain relations of power. Searching for the tight and loose relations in the planning system – particularly at the boundary line between material and discursive components – might give hints on potential coalitions, or be an indication of certain hegemonic powers that construct the culture-led image.

   While the construction of urban images is only one specific strand of urban planning interventions in contemporary cities, approaching it through the concept of local planning cultures has shown that planning culture provides a useful framework for answering questions about the *Why* and *How* of any planning action. Furthermore, with this concept and its underlying ideas and understandings of planning culture in mind we might be able to sketch the limits to planning in the ever specific local contexts better than before. The local planning cultures discussed highlight the boundary lines between formal and informal planning, powerful actors and institutions and those that are largely excluded from decision-making and potential oppositions in planning thought. Therefore it can be deemed a framework of general usefulness in studying planning cultures. Still, it needs to be reconsidered each time the researched variables are changed to ensure a suitable foundation for exploring the influence of local planning cultures on specific ways of planning.

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