

**Katharina SÖPPER\***

## **GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE – A NEW APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURES OF COLLABORATION**

**Abstract.** The paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of structures of collaboration and their underlying logic by combining theories on Governance and (Planning) Culture. By the introduction of an integrative approach, called the ‘The Culture-Based Governance Analysis’, aspects of both discourses are combined. Factors from the Governance discourse, providing analysis on the frameworks of collaboration, were integrated with factors from the Culture discourse, providing analysis of the underlying reasons for people collaborating or not. This novel approach provides a way to analyze and understand how existing collaborations have developed and the basis on which they operate. As a further step, it enables planners to use this knowledge for the establishment of future collaborations between already active as well as not yet involved actors, for example, in urban redevelopment processes.

**Key words:** governance, (planning) culture, collaboration, urban redevelopment, structures, values, stakeholder.

### **1. INTRODUCTION: WHY TO COMBINE GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE**

At first glance, the approaches of Governance and (Planning) Culture belong to different fields of study. Governance has developed from the economics field, but is understood in various ways nowadays and examines the varying structures of collaboration used to steer public policies. In contrast, cultural approaches explain the underlying mindsets and historical roots of current decisions and situations. The reason for combining elements of both approaches becomes clear when studying the motives for and quality of stakeholders’ collaborations. For example,

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\* Katharina SÖPPER, Vienna University of Technology (VUT), Department of Spatial Development, Infrastructure & Environmental Planning, Paniglgasse 16, 1040 Vienna, Austria, e-mail: [katharina.soepfer@gmx.de](mailto:katharina.soepfer@gmx.de)

in the field of urban planning, participative instruments and projects in neighbourhood redevelopment including different stakeholders can only be fully characterized by using both theoretical approaches in combination. Using one or the other in isolation would lead to only a partial understanding, and omit or misinterpret certain aspects of the collaborative process.

The key research question is: ‘What is the best way to understand and/or examine collaboration structures between stakeholders (in planning processes)?’ Understanding how collaborations have developed and on what basis they are grounded enables planners to establish more effective collaborations for already involved, as well as new actors. This is highly relevant because of the increasing level of activities which involve participation, activation, and mobilization processes, as well as the growing number of Private-Public-Partnerships (for example, in redevelopment processes). Both the Governance and (Planning) Culture approaches can be used during such studies, but each only partially analyses aspects of collaborations. Currently, no combined approach seems to exist, yet. The Governance approach analyzes the existing stakeholder structures and their quality and intensity in collaboration; the Culture approach is useful for comparative research examining the underlying mindsets and ideas of actors involved in planning. A full understanding of the situation therefore requires a combination of results from both fields, in particular a two-step process. First, the Governance approach describes the kind of existing collaborations: why people collaborate in general and in that particular way. The cultural dimension can then be added to understand the underlying motives to that collaboration, and perhaps why it takes a particular form. Therefore, the question is how a combination of Governance and Culture approaches can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder collaboration in urban planning processes.

Urban redevelopment strategies can be used as practical example to illustrate the useful combination of Governance and Culture. The instrument is based on collaborations between different stakeholders at the neighbourhood level. For the enhancement process to be successful, it is crucial to understand structures and motivations underlying stakeholder collaborations. The paper will explain how the newly developed approach serves this task.

The paper continues with an introduction of Governance in section 2, and theories on (Planning) Culture in section 3. Answering the shortcomings of both approaches, a combined approach is established in section 4. The conclusion outlines the novel combined approach in detail and includes some practical recommendations for its use.

## 2. GOVERNANCE

The Governance approach is used in many different disciplines today, mainly focusing on collective modes of regulating and steering (Antalovsky, Dangschat and Parkinson, 2005; Frey, Hamedinger and Dangschat, 2008). Policies, which used to be duties of the state, can now be organized and provided by a growing number of stakeholders. The declining engagement of the state is the central theme of recent publications on the Governance approach. They study the new networks that are being established between newly connected actors (Benz, 2004; Fürst, Lahner and Zimmermann, 2004).

These shifts thus require the establishment of formerly unknown combinations of actors in cities (for example, due to substantial cutbacks in governmental programs like the ‘Soziale Stadt’ in Germany) (Hirth and Schneider, 2011). Therefore, relationships and networks between actors need to be studied in detail to understand existing and potential future stakeholder structures in urban planning and redevelopment processes. Therefore, the study of roles and structures of collaborations has become more necessary. Governance can be used as an analytical approach for this task, since it analyzes existing regulations and relationships between the government, economy, and civil society, including rules, institutions, and patterns of interaction.

Due to the wide use of Governance in various disciplines, besides the above-mentioned general understanding, no common definition of the term exists: Governance has its own understanding and meaning in the context of different disciplines. Although this imprecision can be criticized, it can also be advantageous, as the approach is consequently not limited to one particular theory (Benz, 2004).

However, no distinguishable common definition of Governance covering all disciplines exists; there are commonly three main lines of understanding: analytical understanding, descriptive understanding, and the normative perspective (Hamedinger and Peer, 2011). The analytical approach is mainly used in political sciences, and focuses on the collaborative elements between hierarchy, power, and political networks. This way of understanding Governance is static, without examining the development of steering structures over time. It prioritizes the understanding of methods of political and social cooperation and networks. Structural changes in political steering are mainly understood descriptively. Considering a shift from ‘Government to Governance’, the descriptive approach focuses on the development of political and social networks over a longer period of time. A normative perspective on Governance involves a determined conception of how Governance should be constituted and how it should work. In particular, the term ‘Good Governance’ represents normative ideas of quality, which should be included in political processes of steering and coordination (Holtkamp, 2007).

Given that this paper is investigating different forms of stakeholder collaborations, using an analytical approach. The following sections examine the analyti-

cal Governance approach in more detail and in particular the aspects relevant to examining collaboration structures.

## 2.1. Governance as an Analysis Tool for Collaboration

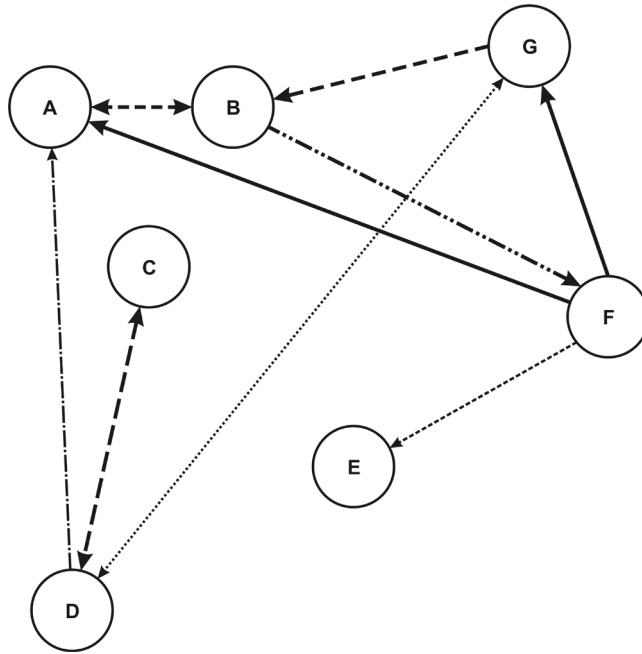
Using the analytical understanding allows a view that takes all relevant stakeholders (civil society, private actors, and state officials) into account. As Pierre (2005, p. 452, in Holtkamp, 2007, p. 367) puts it, the Governance perspective makes it possible ‘to search for processes and mechanisms through which significant and resource-full actors coordinate their actions and resources’. Existing institutional regulators are, for example, the state, market, and social networks as well as associations, which collaborate in various combinations. Important elements used in these collaborations are hierarchy, competition, and negotiation. In contrast to unilateral decisions based on governmental regulations, Governance collaborations are based on cooperative decisions (Benz, 2004). Despite Governance’s diverse usages in many different institutional, political, and personal contexts during steering and coordination processes, four characteristics of the core can be distinguished, describing the general core of Governance. Benz (2004, p. 25) distinguishes the following four characteristics in this regard:

- Governance means steering and coordinating related to governing, focused on the management of interdependencies between (collective) stakeholders;
- Steering and coordination are based on institutionalized regulating systems which guide the stakeholders’ actions. However, no single regulating system exists; instead, there are combinations of a diverse range of systems: market, hierarchy, majority law, negotiation etc.;
- Ways of interaction and collective action within institutional settings are also part of Governance (networks, coalitions, contractual relationships etc.);
- Steering and coordinating processes go beyond organizational structures (defined as for example, state or civil) that arise when collaborations are built.

This paper makes use of Governance as a way of understanding steering and coordination process: examining common actions, different ways of interaction, which follow distinct rules and evolve from different fundamental and institutional backgrounds (Fürst, Rudolph and Zimmermann, 2003). The approach aims at clarifying the coordination of common activities, their methods and mechanisms of operation (e.g. hierarchy, competition, negotiation), the involvement of all stakeholders in their institutional settings and impacts on interrelationships which develop as a result of the collaboration (Hamedinger and Peer, 2011).

Figure 1 displays the collaboration structures between stakeholders (A, B, C etc.), as studied by the analytical Governance approach. The existing structures between different actors, which are embedded in institutional settings, are analyzed to ex-

plain the overall network structure. This is accomplished by exploring the character of the existing collaborations; here, character means the type of connection that exists between stakeholders. In addition, the regulating systems and the mode of operation are of particular importance.



**Structures of collaboration between stakeholders** – seen through *Governance* approach (analysis by structures), → Explanation by character of existing collaborations

Fig. 1. Structures of collaboration between stakeholders – Governance  
Source: authors' elaboration

The static nature of that diagram reiterates that there are difficulties and omissions in the Governance approach regarding how structures have developed, in particular the underlying reasons which have influenced the current structures of, for example, hierarchy, competition and negotiation rules. Governance analysis leads to the understanding of the institutional settings, in which the actors are embedded, explaining the mode of operation – at which point the scope of Governance analysis is complete. Using Governance alone, cannot sufficiently explain why actors collaborate and the rationale for networks.

However, examining the connections between stakeholders and the institutional structures is a good and necessary starting point for an analysis of collaboration. It is useful to understand this static picture, but to deepen the understanding of the collaboration, more detailed information is necessary: in particular, why

people from different institutions collaborate in this specific manner needs to be analyzed. This is where the Culture approach enters the analysis.

### 3. CULTURE AND PLANNING CULTURE

Culture can be defined as ‘the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another’ (Hofstede, 2001, p. 9). It is an approach which is used not only to study peoples’ actions but also to analyze the underlying reasoning for particular behaviours, including invisible values, meanings, and intentions (Harris, 1999, p. 25, in Othengrafen, 2010, p. 76). The study of collaboration structures has to take existing backgrounds and mindsets into account, and thus Culture is fundamental to understanding collaborations. Regarding the paper, Culture will be used to gain insight into the values and assumptions that lie beneath the surface of collaborations. Its role in the combined approach advocated here is to elucidate and illuminate reasons, motives, values and meanings which are inherent in interactions, and to illustrate the impact of these factors on realized actions and behaviors (Harris, 1999, p. 25, in Othengrafen, 2010, p. 76).

Planning Culture, in particular, should be part of the research process in the planning field. The recognition of existing planning styles and of differences and similarities between planning behaviours makes the research well-grounded. Planning activities are always embedded in the Culture of their surroundings, which means that a country’s Planning Culture is greatly affected by the Culture of the country itself. In addition, although planning is still a governmental task, a wide range of civil actors are also involved and important in the process. Besides the strong ties with history, Planning Culture is also strongly influenced by the political culture of the country (Friedmann, 2011, pp. 167–168).

According to Knieling and Othengrafen (2009), Planning Culture consists of:

- methods of formal and informal planning practices;
- methods of handling different planning tasks; existing problems, planning rules, processes, and methods (including citizen participation);
- shared attitudes, values, rules, standards, and beliefs of the involved stakeholders;
- the societies’ (formal) constitutional and legal framework and (informal) traditions, habits, and customs.

A small number of theoretical approaches attempt to distinguish between Planning Cultures, beginning with research in Europe in 1990s (Keller, Koch and Selle, 1993). This section compares two recent approaches using a systematic model to compare planning systems while including their cultural background: (i) ‘The Culturized Planning Model’ (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009; Othengrafen, 2012); and (ii) the institutional settings approach proposed by Friedmann (2011).

Knieling and Othengrafen were looking for a model for comparative research in planning, which includes the cultural aspects of planning. Their special interest lies in the hidden aspects of planning, i.e. the culture of planning. The generated model aims on the one hand at providing researchers the possibility to identify the role of culture in planning and to find out whether there are common or different understandings of culture in the observed countries. On the other hand, the model operationalizes the culture for planning to use knowledge about culture in planning processes and in comparative work (Knieling, Othengrafen, 2009, pp. 54–55). According to Knieling and Othengrafen (2009), there are three main aspects to the ‘Culturized Planning Model’: Planning Artifacts, Planning Environment, and Societal Environment. Planning Artifacts are the ‘visible planning products, structures, and processes’ (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009, p. 57) – e.g. urban plans, development concepts, planning institutions, planning instruments (Othengrafen, 2010). The Planning Environment is less easy to observe from the outside, consisting of ‘shared assumptions, values, and cognitive frames that are taken for granted by members of the planning profession’ (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009, p. 57) – e.g. principles of planning, norms and rules influencing planning, as well as political, administrative, economic and organizational structures. Societal Environment has a wider scope, encompassing ‘underlying and unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings which are affecting planning’ (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009, p. 57), including the (self-)perception of planning, people’s acceptance of planning and the general understandings that lie behind planning.

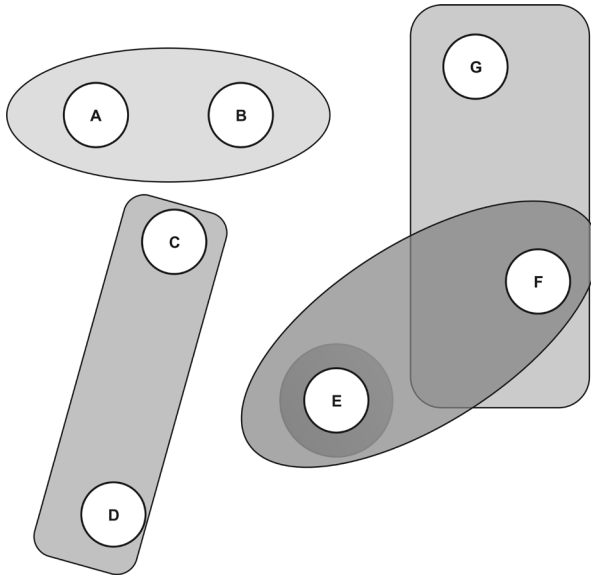
By contrast, Friedmann (2011) notes the importance of the institutional settings in different countries as important framework for Planning Culture, characterizing them as: form of government, level of economic development, differences in political culture, and different roles of civil society. The form of government (e.g. unitary states, federal states etc.) provides the overlying structure of every decision, including planning decisions of the different countries. Planning also has to react to very different situations, depending on the level of economic development: lower-income nations, for instance, face different challenges to economically strong countries (Friedmann, 2011, pp. 195–196). Friedmann also identifies political culture as distinguishing element of planning and Planning Culture. Political culture refers to how active civil society is in decisions: for example, there can be political processes dominated by one (mostly political) player, open processes guided by various actors, or media-ruled processes (Friedmann, 2011, p. 196).

Due to this more comprehensive methodology, the institutional settings approach of Friedmann will be used for this paper, as it very clearly illustrates distinctions between the backgrounds which constitute Culture, and the underlying values of the actors’ behaviours.

### 3.1. Culture as an Analysis Tool for Collaboration

The Culture approach analyzes the invisible values that are frequently taken for granted and assumptions which guide actions and behaviour of stakeholders, including those in existing collaborations; therefore, the study of the cultural backgrounds of planning contributes to the understanding of existing networks. Examining the form of government, level of economic development, political culture, and the role actors play in the planning system provides reasons for preferences or the non-existence of collaborations with specific other actors, whose actions may in turn be based on different underlying values and beliefs.

As displayed in figure 2, each participating actor in a planning process network has underlying values and beliefs derived from the culture he is embedded in. Some are consistent with the beliefs of other stakeholders, which makes collaboration more likely to occur. Different cultural backgrounds (for example, very different economic backgrounds) most probably hinder the establishment of connections between actors.



**Structures of collaboration between stakeholders** – displaying *cultural* aspects (analysis by backgrounds), → Explanation by underlying reasons for existing collaborations

Fig. 2. Structures of collaboration between stakeholders – (Planning) Culture

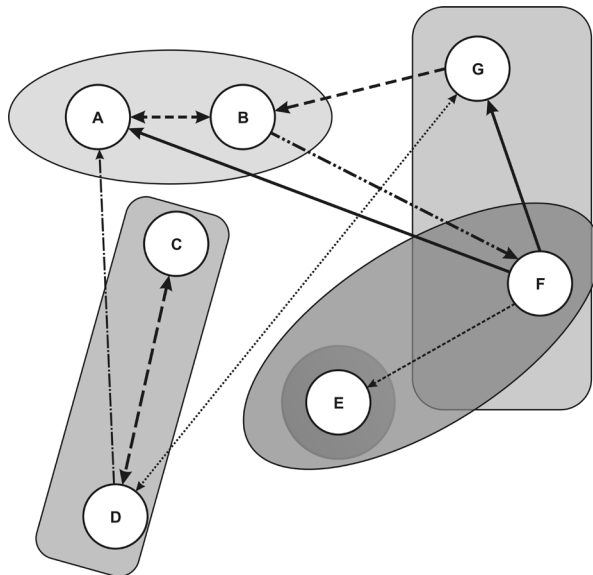
Source: authors' elaboration



#### 4. GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE COMBINED

The question remains of how the analysis of underlying mindsets can be combined with the Governance approach and thereby contributes to a better understanding of network structures in planning processes. Using the Governance approach to study collaborations between stakeholders, for example in planning processes, provides insight into the structure and quality of their collaborations, but this approach cannot provide knowledge on the reasons for setting up their collaboration. Collaborative projects might take place due to shared values and beliefs, but cultural analysis does not provide information on the way of working together. Sharing the same cultural background does not always lead to a successful interaction and working climate between different stakeholders. Therefore, understanding the likelihood of collaborating due to shared cultural values does not necessarily predict collaborations and their outcome. The cultural approach omits the possibility of examining the qualities of collaborations.

Thus, the approaches of Governance and (Planning) Culture can be combined into a new approach, which can be referred to as ‘The Culture-Based Governance Analysis’, displayed in figure 3.



**Structures of collaboration between stakeholders** – seen through *Governance* approach (analysis by structures), complemented by *cultural* aspects (analysis by backgrounds),  
 → Explanation by character of as well as reasons for existing collaborations

Fig. 3. ‘The Culture-Based Governance Analysis’

Source: authors’ elaboration

Figure 3 is a combination of figures 1 (Governance) and 2 ((Planning) Culture) and illustrates the advantages of the new approach. Research on stakeholder networks can take place in a two-step fashion. First, stakeholder connections are studied based on Governance parameters such as regulating systems and mode of operation. Being clear about the obvious structural connections, the next step provides knowledge on why the connections have developed that way. This second step brings the individual into focus, introducing his/her underlying values and mindsets to the explanation of the existing collaboration structures. Only the comprehension of the particular reasons of every stakeholder of the different groups will allow full understanding of the network structure discovered by the Governance approach. As result of the analysis with the newly developed approach, a comprehensive understanding of collaboration structures can be gained.

This knowledge can be used not only for explanation of the status quo, but can also support the establishment of new and different stakeholder collaborations, since the researcher now understands why these and other stakeholders do or do not work together in a particular way. Changing and expanding collaborations is possible by altering the parameters which guide the decisions of stakeholders, in terms of both Governance structures and Culture backgrounds.

## **5. A NEW APPROACH AND ITS FUTURE PROSPECTS (IN PRACTICE)**

This paper has provided an answer to the research question: ‘What is the best way to understand and/or examine collaboration structures between stakeholders (in planning processes)?’ By the introduction of an integrative approach, ‘The Culture-Based Governance Analysis’, the structures of analysis of the Governance and the Planning Culture approach were combined into a single analysis. This approach helps to understand how existing collaborations, for example at the neighbourhood level, have developed, and the basis on which their mission operates, e.g. enhancement of the area. As a next step, it enables planners to use this knowledge for the establishment of further collaborations between already active local and non-local, governmental and non-governmental etc. actors as well as those not yet involved in collaboration. Governance thereby analyzes the existing structures in the neighbourhood including their quality and intensity, while Culture is used to analyze the underlying mindsets and ideas of involved stakeholders.

This is highly relevant, as – particularly in the planning field – the understanding of different connections and collaborations between stakeholders is gaining in importance, creating the increased need to understand not only the structure of collaborations, but also the underlying reasons for their existence. The following paragraph looks at how this approach might be applied in practice, for example in urban redevelopment.

The enhancement of local neighbourhoods has gained importance during the last decades. Various redevelopment measures were initiated around the world. Most instruments focus on the establishment of strong local collaboration structures between different stakeholders. Various actors (government, citizens, nonprofits, businesses etc.) can and should be involved in the improvement of the neighbourhood. Understanding and analyzing existing structures as well as supporting the establishment of new structures needs a clear understanding of the way stakeholders collaborate. For that reason, the newly developed approach will be useful.

Governance analyzes stakeholder connections in terms of coordinating and steering interactions. Of particular importance is the inclusion of all relevant redevelopment stakeholders, the underlying institutionalized regulating systems of the country, as well as existing structures of collaborations in the neighbourhood and their modes of operation in common projects. Collaborations take place between all organizational structures. The Governance analysis can therefore be seen as the initially important level of analysis that reveals the status quo of connections between redevelopment actors. However, it has to be accompanied by the investigation of the cultural background of the actors, using the Planning Cultural approach, which provides the necessary information on stakeholders involved in collaboration structures on the neighbourhood level. This background consists of the form of government (local, state, federal), level of economic development (mostly local), political culture (all levels), and the planning system of the country that shapes and influences the stakeholders in the neighbourhood, who are embedded in their system(s). The cultural background of the actors also guides their decisions on how to collaborate and – of particular importance – with whom to collaborate in the neighbourhood.

Using the newly developed approach allows a thorough understanding of local collaboration structures. All stakeholders active in the redevelopment process can be analyzed regarding the quality of their collaborations (Governance). Moreover, the underlying values, which not only bring collaborations to life but can also hinder such common projects can be observed and explained. Since the success of neighbourhood enhancement processes depends mostly on successful collaboration between stakeholders, this theoretical approach promises to be crucial to the understanding of existing and establishing future collaborations. This will contribute to an enhanced neighbourhood improvement process.

In addition, the novel approach of ‘The Culture-Based Governance Analysis’ could prove particularly helpful in comparative studies. Analyzing different stakeholder constellations in different surroundings often requires in-depth knowledge on underlying mindsets. The cultural aspect of the analysis becomes even more important when conducting international research, such as studying collaboration structures in different countries. In conclusion, the new integrated approach represents a useful tool for analysis and understanding of complex collaborations

between stakeholders, and – with a few adaptations – might not be limited to the planning and redevelopment field.

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