

Chapter 19

Smart City, Integrated Planning, and Multilevel Governance: A Conceptual Framework for E-Planning in Europe

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ABSTRACT

The interdependent concepts of smart city, integrated planning and multilevel governance greatly determine the current discussion on planning theory and practice in Europe. Each of them presents new challenges for e-planning, pushing it into a priority position in performing planning tasks on various levels of administration. Thus e-planning is not just a way of describing current tools for governing space anymore, but becomes a new philosophy of public decision-making. The paper gives a discourse analysis of the key EU policy and research directions, defines the core attributes and values of contemporary planning concepts (such as governance, sustainability, communication, participation, responsiveness, innovation and coordination) and draws a “conceptual patchwork” situating e-planning on the intersection of smart city, integrated planning and multilevel governance.

INTRODUCTION

Just like sustainable development, communicative planning, strategic policy-making and good urban governance attracted planners’ attention in the 1990’s and early 2000’s, new ideas are entering the conceptual framework of planning today. Smart city (SC), integrated planning (IP) and multilevel governance (MLG) become influential labels shaping the contemporary urban theory and challenge the to-date planners’ knowledge, their day-to-day practice and urban planning systems in general.

The diffusion of new planning concepts is particularly interesting in the European Union where all the levels of the member states’ public administration (not only national but also regional and local governments) have to comply with the current EU territorial policies. It is the question how the European

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policy documents, directions and research are influenced by those new planning concepts and how are they implemented in planning and e-planning practice.

All of the three terms: SC, IP and MLG are multilayer and interdependent. Their complexity is often confusing for urban planning practitioners and theoreticians. It also rises important questions: *what are the links and relations between them? What are their key characteristics and distinguishers? What are their core values?*

In this paper I will try to synthesise those approaches and link them with the most important characteristics of e-planning (EP). Hence if we want EP to be not just a theoretical, abstract idea describing current progress in research, but a useful tool for planning practice, we need to develop a conceptual framework that would link it with current planning paradigms, ideas and “buzz-words”. The general thesis of this theoretical study is that e-planning lies on the intersection of the fundamental concepts of contemporary planning in Europe, i.e. smart city, integrated planning and multilevel governance, and that it can play an integrating role for all them.

RESEARCH MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

As a methodological approach, this research adopts discourse analysis. The term ‘discourse’ clearly means different things to different researchers, varying from strictly linguistic approaches to approaches that embrace ideas and actions as integral to discourse (Sharp & Richardson, 2001). Here the concept of discourse reflects the general idea that language is structured according to particular patterns and meanings that people follow when they take part in social life. No discourse is a closed entity: it is constantly being transformed through contact with other discourses. Moreover, it plays an active role in constructing the social world (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Discourse and urban planning have a lot in common. As Albrechts (2003) observes, planning forms knowledge and produces discourse, it builds networks and institutions that act as a catalyst for change (and sometimes not only change, but also continuity). Planning discourse analysis (in particular drawn on poststructural theory – see Foucault, 1980) is part of a process through which things and identities get constructed, as discourses create their own ‘regimes of truth’, they formulate problems and solutions to those problems (Lees, 2004).

In this paper I will take a closer look at the discourse of the territorial planning policy in Europe. Usually discourse studies of political text and talk deal with the enactment, reproduction and legitimization of power. They also describe so called “discourse networks” – the networks of people, institutionally stabilized and held together by stable patterns of ideas, pointing the primary policy directions and finally the political communication and rhetoric (Van Dijk, 2001; Low, 2005).

It is difficult to describe discourse analysis in terms of method. It is a craft skill, something like bike riding, which is not easy to render or describe in an explicit manner. When undertaking discourse analysis, researchers seek to highlight two things: first, the interpretative context, that is the social setting in which the discourse is located; second, the rhetorical organization of the discourse, that is the argumentative schema that organize a text and establish its authority (Lees, 2004).

Discourse analysis is not just one approach, but a series of interdisciplinary approaches that can be used to explore many different social domains in many different types of studies. Fairclough (1992)

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