

Moving forward Comparative Planning Studies: Beyond Planning Cultures and Institutionalism

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Abstract

From the onset of the millennium comparative planning studies have entered a new phase. Inspired by a dissatisfaction with existing work, various perspectives have branched out beyond researching the formal aspects of planning systems into the cultural dimensions of planning practice. The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the literature on these 'cultural comparative planning studies' that has appeared in the English-speaking world over the past fifteen years. Two strands can be identified in this body of work. On the one hand there is a perspective that views planning as a fundamentally cultural activity represented by the work under the heading of planning cultures. On the other side various authors point out the insufficiencies of this approach for research and propose institutional perspectives for researching planning practice. By discussing their fundamental assumptions the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches are discussed. The paper concludes by formulating a way of moving forward in comparative planning studies by fusing both perspectives.

Keywords: planning cultures; institutionalism; comparative research; culturised planning model;

Biographical note

Clemens de Olde is PhD researcher at the department of Sociology at the University of Antwerp and part of the research group OASeS. His research focuses on the transformation of planning cultures in Flanders and The Netherlands at the turn of the millennium. He also teaches urban sociology at his department and supervises a bachelor thesis project titled *Making Cities*.