**Epistemic and Relational Conflicts in Planning**

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Using and justifying knowledge claims in planning is becoming more challenging, as the discipline gets more interdisciplinary. Architects, planners, civil engineers, geographers, social scientists and ecologists, among others, naturally have their own field-specific criteria of justification, but they also have different understanding of the relevance of different fields of knowledge. Since there are no self-evident criteria of relevance, the epistemology of planning can be supposed to be largely determined historically and politically as the result of the conflicts and coalitions between the respective disciplines and political regimes. The rational ideal of planning as a process where all necessary knowledge is gathered and used thus seems to miss some essential elements of planning epistemology. This view does not necessarily entail relativism, however, since the field-specific criteria of justification may still be defended as different approaches to a ‘common’ understanding of the planning contexts and the implications of plans.

On the other hand, planning is also dependent on the tacit dimension of the knowledge of different professionals (Polanyi 2009). Unlike is often assumed in organization science, this original coined coined by Polanyi does not allow externalising or transforming all knowledge into explicit arguments. The personal element is thus necessarily present, which makes it even more challenging to create conditions for dialogue in the planning practice. One of the fields of expertise where this becomes particularly evident is urban design. Practitioners from the non-design fields of planning often emphasize that physical solutions to planning problems are not enough, but that they should be based on scientific evidence. The situation seems to be more complicated, however, since there is no way to translate scientific knowledge into design solutions that, on the other hand, are necessary elements of place making.

In this paper, the psychological dichotomy between epistemic and relational conflicts is used as a conceptual framework to address this problem. According to Darnon, Buchs and Butera (2002), in cooperative learning, confrontations of divergent propositions can be solved either in an epistemic way (by focusing on the task) or in a relational way (focusing on the social comparison of competences). The latter can be shown to be detrimental to learning. Epistemic conflicts can also result in more positive perceived relationships and thus long-term trust. What is interesting in this context is that the former type of conflict is typical of situations where the participants have complementary information that can be shared, whereas relational conflicts arise from identical information.

We may also assume that relational conflicts can occur in situations where the borderlines between different areas of expertise are blurred, or where there is clear overlapping. Instead of ‘no man’s land’ that the participants could explore together, we may end up in border conflicts between different power/knowledge regimes. Empirically, the applicability of this theoretical framework is tested in the context of the Finnish planning profession and its difficulties in expanding its knowledge base as well as developing cooperative learning in the planning process. The historical roots of the profession as well as the political culture that it is embedded in are discussed through a series of highlights and case studies of the state-of-the-art in the context of recent urbanization.

The borderlines between the different professions are then analysed more in-depth through a recent comprehensive plan of the city of Helsinki, Finland. This planning process is useful as a case study, first since in the Finnish context there is no unique planning profession, but planning is done by several traditional professions, such as architecture, landscape architecture, and civil engineering, as well as academic disciplines such as ecology, sociology, and geography. The analytic tools used in the case study are informed by argumentation analysis and critical discourse analysis.

Damon, C. & Buchs, C. & Butera, F. (2002). Epistemic and Relational Conflicts in Sharing Identical vs. Complementary Information during Cooperative Learning. *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, vol. 61 (3), 139-151.

Polanyi, M. (2009). *The Tacit Dimension*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.