The role of policy-making and planning cultures for sustainable transport?

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Abstract

This article explores the potential role of culture in relation to policy-making and planning activities, exemplified through a discussion on how it may influence sustainable transport policy and planning. It is recognised that discourses and institutions play an essential part in framing problems and solutions, however an improved understanding of barriers and potentials in policy and planning deliberation is likely to be reached if underlying layers of values and perceptions are considered and illuminated more explicitly. Culture is also changeable, which means that it becomes relevant for policy-making and planning to search for opportunities to strategically identify and bring into play cultural resources. The article debates political-administrative cultures and broader social or local cultures, as well as the circumstances that might influence them, in order to search for transformative potentials and barriers. In conclusion, a culture focus recognises diversity inside and outside normal policy and planning settings and procedures and attempts to bring different cultures to interact and to learn from each other. A transport policy-making and planning process based in a culture approach may illuminate a so-called ‘value-action gap’ concerning the possibility of more sustainable transportation. A closer cultural interaction may point out some of the divides between professionals on how to deal with transport-environment issues. Moreover, a more culturally oriented deliberation would provide room for underlying sets of values and norms to enter the policy process more freely and explicitly. However, do we then have the cultures and moral force to build effective sustainable transport policies and plans? The article therefore also looks into a range of overlapping approaches that may potentially aid in rethinking and rebuilding transport policy-making and planning processes in terms of cultural learning processes. Finally, the role of the planner as a ‘cultural entrepreneur’ and ‘cultural story-teller’ is presented as potential tool to push through new agendas or ideas, such as more sustainable transport solutions.

Keywords: Culture; Policy; Planning; Deliberation; Discourse; Institution; Sustainable transport.

1. Introduction

When presented with the challenge of writing an article for this special issue, the initial idea was to delve into political discourses, deliberation and transport policies in

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