

Background

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THEME: TOOLS FOR INTER- ACTION IN URBAN PLANNING

The background to the theme "Tools for Interaction in Urban Planning" was the conference "Communication in Urban Planning" that took place in October 1999 in Göteborg, Sweden. The conference gathered researchers involved in both the development of the theoretical framework of communicative planning, and in finding relevant forms and methods for communicative situations in urban planning. The aim of the conference was to connect green issues to the communicative experiences in urban planning. The conference served as an inspiring kick-off for an new European research project called GREENSCOM (Communicating Urban Growth and Green). The GREENSCOM project will be concluded in 2003 with recommen-

dations on useful policy instruments and tools based on case studies in seven European cities. A key objective is to find tools for interactions in planning that can enlighten the green aspects in urban development.

The theme was introduced in nr 3, 2001 by Björn Malbert. Under the heading "Introducing approaches towards sustainable urban development concerning urban growth and green issues" he pictured the theoretical framework often used as a reference to the communicative turn in planning. Some of the referred concepts have motivated experiments to broaden the communicative situations in urban planning. A way of looking at the different approaches of such experiments was suggested in the article. Three approaches were labelled: the process-oriented substantive approach, the process-oriented procedural approach and the local action approach. Although departing from different scientific disciplines and perspectives, and focusing on different questions, common to all three approaches is the search for improving communication and learning.

In the following number – nr 4, 2001 – one example of each of the three approaches was presented. The authors – von Eijk et al, Knut Strömberg and Lisbeth Birgersson –

present both possibilities and limitations connected to each approach. They all reflect on their own practice to find new directions. Also in common is a move towards a more reflexive practice. Such practice may be characterised by looking at learning and knowledge building as being relational, and not based just on cognitive reflection, but also on shared and situated practice. No single actor, or his/her practice, can control the whole process. Thus, the communication situations involved have to find modes of exchange, or interfaces, that can support and co-ordinate shared actions.

In order to find platforms for new experiments some concepts and approaches have to be taken for granted. Reflecting in turn on these experiments, the 'frozen' concepts and approaches have to be discussed again. Thus, as an ending for this theme we have chosen two articles questioning some of the platforms taken for granted in the earlier articles.

Gunilla Lindholm reflects around the concept of "green structure" introduced in Sweden in the 1990s to promote the green issues in urban planning. She gives examples of how this term is understood and used in different ways. Is such a term possible to use in a communicative planning process? Or is it the opposite?

Kimmo Lapintie questions some of the key issues mentioned in the earlier articles. The idea is not to reject them, but to build a more consistent view for assessing different practical options. Lapintie's basic philosophy is there are no more common objectives or strategies in urban planning, only common space. The issue is how to live differently without dis-empowering other people in a shared space. This platform demands further scrutinisation of our common assumptions in planning, and especially in the demanding concept of communicative planning.

We hope the readers will find there is a lot more to be said within the framework of this theme and continue the discussion.

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