II   Spatial planning and discourse

Previous to a description of the HST that assesses its social construction, factual development and reception through research, a theoretical framework is required for the understanding and interpretation of this basic information. It should equally clarify that a separation between "theory" and "method" — with the implicit assumption of a theory *defining* the method(s) — cannot be maintained, since these are mutually dependent aspects of study designed by the researcher.

This meta-theoretical perspective forms the starting point for the framework detailed in this chapter. In essence it is based on contributions from different academic disciplines that have elaborated and applied the concept of *discourse,* both as a (meta-) theory and as a method. The following paragraphs aim to explain the particular understanding of "discourse" adopted in this study, and to specify an approach for the analysis of the planning cases. They also provide a delimitation in respect to other valid interpretations of "discourse" and, therefore, a clear positioning within the ongoing debate about the role of discourse in planning theory and practice.

1   The concept of "discourse"

The theoretical basis for discourse analytical studies has been developed in several disciplines, namely in linguistics – from where it also originated in the 1960s – semiotics, social and political sciences, psychology and language philosophy.[1] Since the 1980s several attempts have been made to provide a coherent theoretical framework for the different approaches, none of which can yet be considered a true breakthrough in this respect.[2] The diversity of theories and epistemological interests still remains an essential characteristic of discourse studies, although mutual awareness and recognition have reinforced a trend of mediation.[3]

Against the backdrop of this diversity, the following brief introduction primarily concentrates on the adaptation of a discourse theoretical approach for the analysis and comparison of trans-national spatial planning processes. The emphasis will be on those references concerned with the relation between social knowledge systems, discursive practice and power, since they provide the most fruitful contributions for this purpose.

A number of more recent studies have identified the value of discourse analytical approaches for planning issues and have started to operationalise it for their respective purposes. However, there is not yet a

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[1] References are therefore abundant. The contributions of the following authors may serve for a basic orientation: F. Saussure (1974) in structuralist linguistics; R. Barthes (1957, 1967, 1977) in semiotics; M. Foucault (1966, 1968, 1975, 1976), J.Derrida (1967a, b) and J. Habermas (1981, 1985) in language philosophy; P. Bourdieu (1991, et al. 1965), A. Giddens (1991, 1996) and N. Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) in social studies; M.P. Smith (2001) and N. Fraser (1994) in cultural and gender studies; E. Laclau (1985), C. Mouffe (1988, 1993, 2001) and M. Hajer (1996, 2000) in political studies; M. Wetherell (1998) and J. Potter (1996, with Wetherell 1987, 1995) in social psychology; T.K. Richardson (2000) and M.Tewdwr-Jones (2002) in planning studies; T. van Dijk (1985, 1997) and R. Keller (2001) for synthesis approaches.

[2] cf. van Dijk 1985, 1997; Fairclough 1995; Jäger 1999

[3] cf. Keller et al. 2001, 13

broad body of theory that could form a common reference. Instead, each research undertaking in this direction will need to formulate its own theoretical framework in order to ensure it is rightly received, and to maintain transparency. Together, this could provide a complementary set of approaches that may enable the creation of a more coherent framework.

1.1 Rationality and power in spatial planning

Spatial planning is a complex process of communication and interaction between social actors dealing with the shaping of future structures of space and frameworks for its transformation. There are multiple actors involved in planning, both public and private, operating at different spatial and authoritative levels and across various policy sectors. Although their respective implication varies between topics (such as building a new infrastructure or the regulation of retailing), as well as between regions and countries, some form of interrelation is always established through the very space they attempt to transform.

In this multi-sectoral and global/ local planning context, actors arrive at decisions according to a certain *rationality* and distribution of *power*. Yet, both are not (and cannot be) made explicit by the actors themselves, but reside in the constitution of the very topic and its interweaving with other actors and topics. The key questions in planning theory therefore focus on what actually forms the basis of the rationality that guides decisions, and what constitutes the legitimation and power positions that support one option, while declining others.

Planning theory is moving on a largely political and contested terrain. The analysis of planning starts from the basic objective to bring about change, since (spatial) reality always presents manifold shortcomings. For the analyst it is therefore of crucial importance to try to develop a deep understanding of how planning actually works. By virtue, theoretical insight should aim to be as close as possible to "real life" in order to open prospects for the initiation of the desired change in social practice.

This aspiration to understand and influence planning processes and their inherent mechanisms has produced many different approaches in planning theory. Three basic theoretical orientations can be distinguished : To comprehend planning 1) by the *products* it generates, i.e. the results of planning intervention 2) by the *processes* it involves, i.e. the interaction between players involved, or 3) by the *way it is conceptualized* i.e. the theoretical interpretation of how planning works. Here, I will adopt the third perspective to illustrate some important limitations of the first two orientations, and to subsequently develop a conceptualization of planning as "discourse". The starting point of this perspective is that both rationality and power are socially constructed and therefore require an approach more sensitive for the "blue notes" of planning practice.

1.1.1 Focusing planning products: Instrumentalist approaches

A first common denominator of many analytical frameworks consists in paying particular attention to the outcomes of planning, following the desire to formulate practical advice for improving implementation. This is the background that has for instance inspired the "policy cycle" model, suggesting that policy making can be divided into a sequence of procedural steps towards implementation, including a "feedback" step through posterior evaluation and "learning".[4]

Analyses then focus either on the performance along all the steps in respect of the result, or on (one or several) sectoral components of the process, e.g. legal and institutional issues, financial and human resource distribution, economic and technological development, urban and geographical structures, or social and ecologic conditions, that influence the outcome. Possible motivations for the choice of the analyst might be her/his personal experiences, interests and ideological views, or simply the tools s/he dominates and that her/his respective discipline offers. Necessarily, the proposals derived will be conceived of in the categories that have been used for the analysis.

In these approaches, the implicit understanding of planning is basically causal and hierarchical. Its rationality appears to rely on the knowledge input provided by sectoral enquiry and the ability to learn of the institutions involved. In the same sense, the conception of power remains largely institutional. Power is understood as a quality attributed to actors involved by virtue of their legal and financial position, i.e. competency and budgets.[5] Underlying these approaches is the modernist hypothesis that improving the instruments will improve the outcome of planning practice. In actual fact, the outcome may be *different*, but the normative claims cannot be verified as the complexity of social practice escapes the patterns imposed by the analyst.

1.1.2 Focusing planning processes: The "communicative turn"

In the theoretical debate of the 1990s a different analytical focus has emerged and become an important current. It concentrates on the role and structuration of communication processes in planning, aiming to improve planning practice through reasonable argumentation and communicative rationality.[6] The planning process in this perspective requires an ideal pluralist (institutional) context, where knowledge becomes negotiated and orientating values are redefined through the participants. Most importantly, to enable such a rational debate and achieve compromises, the "ideal speech situation" (Habermas) needs to be kept free from a presumed oppressive use of power.[7]

This approach draws the attention to potential „distortions" (e.g. power acts) that influence the process in a negative way. Such distortions can be learnt from and avoided. It is thus a normative setting that is

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[4] Initiation > Estimation > Selection > Implementation > Evaluation > Learning; cf. Görlitz/ Burth 1998, 141-48

[5] This applies equally to more policy oriented system-theoretical approaches e.g. Luhmann (1971), Easton (1965), or Faludi (1973); See also: Görlitz/ Burth 1998, 101-08

[6] See for instance: Healey (1992, 1997), Fischer/ Forester (1993)

[7] J. Habermas is probably the most influential theorist in this respect with his idea of "communicative action" (Habermas 1981); See also: Richardson 2000, 9-17; Reuter 2000, 6-7

suggested, attempting to prescribe practices according to theoretical insight. However, it risks to depoliticise planning as it separates the use of power from the legitimation of actors, now merely based on rationality. At the same time, its inherent ideological orientation is not made explicit, although value orientations clearly form the basis for the definition of rules and the exclusion of power.[8]

Furthermore, language and communication appear here as the instruments of the actors involved since it is implicitly assumed that (institutional) actors are *autonomous social subjects,* formulating genuine ideas and objectives according to their particular interests. These interests, it is suggested, could then become negotiated in direct or mediated confrontation with other actors. However, what is not recognized here is the actual dependence of knowledge systems and arguments on the context they are used in, as well as their role in the modification of (power) positions through argumentation. Yet these are essential features of every-day planning practice and should therefore be addressed.

1.1.3 Focusing planning discourses: Communication and social practice

By contrast, the concept of "discourse" offers a fundamentally different understanding of the character of planning, as well as that of social change in general. It first requires us to take a closer look at how communication in these processes is structured and what interdependencies can be identified with the practices it is involved in.

From the outset, knowledge and its categories are not regarded as a reflection or derivation of reality. Instead, reality itself is seen to be constituted by the repetition and reproduction of conceptual and semiotic structures in discursive practices, which provide the bases of knowledge and understanding. Corresponding to this viewpoint, the vital role of *language* in social interaction is recognized, yet not as a means that actors can employ purposefully, but as a constitutive element of society in its own right.[9]

> "Social subjects give meaning to their lives through the networks of communication in which they are involved and through which they constitute themselves, their identities, and their relations to social structures. The structures in turn are thus constituted by social practices informed by intersubjective understandings" (Smith 2001, 9)

Therefore it is the reproduction of discourses that continuously provides social actors with particular "subject positions" in terms of conceptual orientation, legitimation and power.[10] Institutional frameworks, social "roles" or ritualised practices have to be considered in the light of the concepts and arguments exchanged between actors, but cannot represent the only starting point of analysis as "determining conditions". While institutional structures *do* influence social interaction both by enabling and constraining the actors involved, they depend at the same time on modifications or confirmations of their constitution through recurring communicative practice.[11] Consequently, also power itself relies not only on democratic legitimation or institutional competencies, but on the arguments exchanged and the coalitions created

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[8] For a criticism of the normative communicative approach see also: Reuter 2000, 6-7

[9] cf. Keller et al. 2001, 12 ; Kroger/ Wood 2000, 4, 28; Laclau/ Mouffe 1985, 107

[10] Laclau/ Mouffe 1985, 109

[11] cf. Mayntz/ Scharpf 1995, 39-60

through shared concepts and orientations. It is not confined to particular contexts, but appears to have an ubiquitous character that transcends administrative and institutional borders. Thus, communication and power have to be understood as interdependent factors that shape the *contingent rationality* of planning.

For instance, in the course of the 1970s the eventual disappearance of regional planning agencies in many European cities was strongly related to a changing perception and therefore *discursive reinterpretation* of both cybernetic planning approaches (system control) and market-oriented control mechanisms ("deregulation" and "liberalisation"). This circumstance can hardly be explained by institutional or political conflicts alone.[12]

Starting from this perspective, the crucial question is how the required concepts and arguments are created, and which actors contribute to their emergence and establishment? Discourses are informed by complex interdisciplinary knowledge, bringing together multiple sectoral fields of research and policy without ever being truly representative of the respective expert debates they invoke. In fact, in a complex problem like HST integration, the corresponding discourse will offer only limited information, emphasizing certain aspects while neglecting or ignoring others. However, expert knowledge serves as an important source for the production and adoption of new categories, e.g. by politicians, entrepreneurs, pressure groups, the media, the general public, etc. This illustrates how also analysts form part of the planning process s/he analyses, providing argumentative input for the next interventions.

Thus, *tracing back* a particular discourse can be a difficult task since the roots might be fairly ramified. Yet this constitutes an important component of the analysis as it reveals the contextual and semantic references of particular arguments or concepts accumulated over time. When turning to the present planning practice, discourses can then be recognized through the identification of argumentative *reproductions*: Social actors form part of a discourse by sharing the same argumentative and linguistic figures in respect to a particular topic. They can do so across national or administrative boundaries and without ever having addressed or met each other, but also within a mainly local setting of players working together on a common project.

> „... discourse is a complex medium which extends beyond communication to other social practices, within
> which a complex dynamic between power and knowledge occurs. Significantly, discourse is not confined to
> formal environments such as policy processes, but pervades society" (Richardson 2000, 18)

However, singular actors may have very *different reasons* for taking up argumentative patterns within a discourse and do not necessarily share the same beliefs.[13] On the contrary, conceptual correspondences may even appear if the respective actors defend truly diverging positions: For instance the concept of "territorial equilibration" can have very different implications if uttered by a national or a local actor, by an infrastructure provider or an environmental pressure group. It is a specific quality of discourses that they remain open to various interpretations while offering a common language basis.

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[12] cf. Heil 2000, 25-27

[13] Unlike the hypothesis of "advocacy coalitions" that assumes shared "belief-systems" as a condition; cf. Sabatier 1987, 678

This quality also implies that the diverse positions of actors cannot be said to appear in competing *separate discourses*, but rather as different ways of employing and relating arguments within *one and the same discourse*.[14] Such a "tactical polyvalence of discourses" (Foucault) indicates that planning is a struggle for the imposition of a particular definition of reality.[15]

> "Discourse is defined […] as a specific ensemble of concepts and categorizations that are produced,
> reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical
> and social realities" (Hajer 1995, 44)

Decisive for the "success" of a specific concept or argument is that it reduces the complexity of the topic and thus preserves or provides orientation. After all, actors tend to neglect the detailed implications if an argument is provided with sufficient persuasive power, i.e. it "sounds right", whereas it might not be truly convincing anymore when detailed analysis is applied. This quality situates discourses on a fuzzy line between the verbal expression employed and their multiple associative and contextual references. A discourse thus frames an intersubjective cognitive space without pretension of transparency, objectivity or completeness (although actors may contradict this), but orientating or even instructive for individual and collective action as it implicitly transports and transforms values.[16]

Perhaps one of the most fundamental examples in terms of HST are the attributed effects of road and air "transport substitution". This argumentation depends on oversimplified conditions and hypotheses because it excludes the effects of networking, cognitive-, spatial- and socio-economic patterns, over-compensation, as well as statutory conditions.[17] Taking into consideration this complexity, shifts from other transport modes to the HST are certain, but only *partial* and cannot be generalized.

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[14] See also 1.4 in this chapter

[15] As opposed to J. Habermas, M. Foucault has provided the most influential critical theory of discourse (cf. Foucault 1966, 1971, 1975)

[16] cf. Hajer 1995, 42-52

[17] See for instance: Whitelegg/ Holzapfel 1993; Monheim 1996, Apel/ Henckel 1995, Estevan/ Sanz 1996, Zängl 1993

1.2   Discourse parameters and functions

Seemingly, the mechanisms through which discourses influence a planning process are varied and subtle, but even so, quite effective. In order to understand the way these mechanisms function, three basic parameters have to be taken into account that together define the characteristics of a specific discourse: Structure, context and cognition.[18]

The *structure* of a discourse comprises the "raw material" of the communication process, i.e. the spoken and written utterances of the actors involved. This may include different communication modes such as speech and text, but also graphics and images. Furthermore, in order to identify potential reproductions or transformations of a discourse it can be important to consider the different levels of the structure: Semantics (meaning or proposition), rhetorical figures (metaphors, allegories), the style (language, story, expertise) as well as semiotic relationships (icon, index, symbol) may influence the result of the communication process. For example, to portray a city as a "motor of growth" may imply that the complexity of urban structure is formally reduced to its production component (semantics), that by adopting an economist jargon the concept appeals to the corresponding "stakeholders" (style), that a key technology of modernization figures as a symbol of social progress (semiotics), and that the city referred to appears as a dynamic and future oriented source of prosperity – thus worthwhile further investment (rhetoric). Discourse structures therefore convey multiple interpretations and functions simultaneously without making them explicit or obligatory – after all, none of this has actually been said.[19]

The second basic discourse parameter is the concrete *context* in which the communication process is taking place. The context encompasses the participating actors as well as the existing socio-economic, legal or political power relations between them. This concrete setting of discourse participants raises the questions of "who is referring to whom", and what is their interrelation as corporate actors (public institutions, private parties), but also as individuals (gender, age, education, social position, profession, etc.). A certain context may therefore entail an indexical use of language modes, e.g. in the form of law-text, instructions or petition as "higher" positions address "lower" ones and vice versa. Contexts, for this reason, always present a local level, which comprises the actors immediately concerned as well as a more global level involving those "mute" actors and institutional frameworks that do not intervene directly. For example, any mayor could occasionally provide his arguments with additional weight by referring to EC policies and programs, even though there might be no concrete interaction in the respective matter. To define a precise delimitation of a specific discourse context is therefore neither feasible nor reasonable.[20]

Furthermore, the context is a historically specific situation so that the chronological order and procedural positioning of a discursive contribution plays an important role. If certain elements in the setting of actors and their interrelations are modified over time, this may strongly influence the interpretation of discursive concepts. For instance, the privatization of a national company or institution can give a new meaning to

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[18] On the following see: van Dijk 1997, 6-24; Kroger/ Wood 2000, 4-13; Gee 1999, 1-8; Laclau/ Mouffe 1989, 105-14

[19] cf. Tomlin/ Forrest et al. 1997, 63-110; van Eemeren/ Grotendorst et al. 1997, 208-29

[20] cf. Gee 1999, 41-57

its arguments, even if they were simply being reproduced, while it may also change its discourse structure as the process goes on.

Finally, the cognitive dimension of discourses represents the third parameter. Both what is being said and what is actually understood is conditioned by *cognition*. Intention and strategy, but also comprehension and interpretation depend on multiple cognitive layers. These can be socio-cultural (the "motor of growth" may be seen more positively in Krakow than in Cologne, but at the same time it could also appear less credible), or individual (a young male person may identify more easily with the concept than an elderly woman), knowledge-based (however, if the woman is an engineer, she may support it rather than a suburban farmer, even though he is young and male), rely on ideology, belief and opinion (a member of Greenpeace will reject it more probably than one of a Chambers of Commerce and Industry), but also spring from unconscious reactions. Cognition appears to be the "trace" left by text and context over time, but it finally becomes a parameter in its own right as it influences discourses in a circular process that leads from passive reception to active discourse production.[21]

Ultimately a particular composition of structural, contextual and cognitive elements outlines a "discursive space" that the participating actors are moving in. Within this space, what is being said not only *reflects* the discursive position of the respective actors, it also *attributes* positions to other participants and the "speaker" himself. The basic parameters of a discourse are therefore mutually interdependent and should not be isolated from each other. It is crucial to recognize this interdependence as it also allows one to structure the practical analysis of discourses: Especially, to follow the trace of concepts and arguments throughout a planning process can be understood as a key to explore and interpret the cognitive structures, power positions, policies and measures that characterize this process.

Two basic constellations in the relationship among these three discourse components are of specific importance for the analysis. First, a *discourse coalition* can be formed by actors that share the same conceptual and argumentative patterns and relate to each other through corresponding institutional practices. Such a coalition does not require any formal agreements, it may vary in its cohesive influence on the actors, imply changing players and could also have an ephemeral character.[22] In spatial planning, the discourse coalition for "urban renewal" in Germany during the 80s may serve as an example in this sense. This also shows that the various normative urban development models that have been created and discussed extensively during the last two decades, e.g. "compact city", "decentralized concentration", "city of short routes", "sustainable city", "network city", etc. can be interpreted as structural elements of discourse coalitions with a different institutional range.

Second, if the influence of a discourse becomes particularly strong it can be considered as *hegemonic*. This is the case when it turns out to be fully institutionalised, i.e. formal institutional practices or even changes have been adopted for the reproduction of the discourse, and, in addition, if the credibility of the actors appears to depend on their reproduction of the discourse.[23] Here one might think of the discourse

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[21] cf. Graesser/ Gernsbacher/ Goldman 1997, 63-110

[22] cf. Hajer 1996, 65

[23] Hajer 1996, 61; van Dijk 1997, 19

coalitions that emerged between public authority levels, social and economic actors, scholars, journalists, etc. in consequence of a neo-liberal policy turn – e.g. in the UK in the 1980s or in Spain in the 1990s – which forwarded the discursive concepts of "deregulation", "privatisation" or "retreat of the state" and the corresponding institutional changes.

In sum it should be emphasized that discourse reproduction exerts influence on social interaction in many ways. It fulfils different *functions* that cannot be attributed to certain identifiable actors, only to the discourse itself. In reference to spatial planning a discourse can therefore:

- form the basis for the construction of an urban policy issue by providing formulas that outline a field of action, a problem or a solution (e.g. "urban competition"),
- change the normative content of an issue by conveying positive or negative connotations (e.g. "land consumption", "dying of forests"),
- supply actor legitimation and power, ensure political support, prepare consensus and coalitions, link and/or conceal particular interests (e.g. "sustainable development", "cohesion"),
- reduce complexity and provide the capacity to act (e.g. "territorial equilibration"),
- prepare institutional arrangements and change (e.g. "metropolitan space"),

and thereby:
- affect the distribution of financial and technical resources, and
- modify the content and implementation of policies, programs and measures.

Obviously discourses are not static frameworks but highly dynamic processes subject to continuous transformation. Actors, in order to achieve their particular objectives, may try to influence any or all of the presented components. Yet, as their own discursive position depends on these components it would be insufficient to consider this practice an instrumentalization since discourse is not a simple means, but a main *resource of power*.[24] It should not be misunderstood as the *only* resource since the existing context equally provides power means, but these can become modified through discourse. In this sense, the specific interest of the described concept of "discourse" lies in the potential to attain a transparency of actual manipulation, hegemony or mind control in social interaction in general, and spatial planning in particular.[25]

1.3   Comparative study and discourse analysis

So far, the adopted discourse analytical perspective has been justified from an epistemological point of view. It directly addresses the rationality of a planning approach for the integration of the HST by asking for the concepts and arguments employed, but also attends the actor positions and coalitions that support the programs and helps to filter the resulting development orientation.

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[24] van Dijk 1997, 20

[25] Nullmeier describes this approach as "dominance analysis" (Nullmeier 2001, 304).

Yet, the approach also presents practical advantages for the study of complex multi-level decision making processes in a comparative perspective, especially regarding case study regions located in various European countries. Typically, cross-national comparative (urban) studies have to cope with a number of methodological problems that tend to reduce their validity:

The first problem is a plain feasibility dilemma, i.e. the impossibility to consider the entire complexity of the different contexts studied, so that reductions of a more or less arbitrary kind have to be decided. In consequence, the understanding and interpretation of the planning processes may then lack important elements that have been previously cut out in order to ensure feasibility.

Second, analytical frameworks often start from established (normative) definitions of identities and social practices to structure their subject and obtain comparability.[26] However, these previous assumptions may well reflect the (national, ideological, etc.) context of the analyst, but are not necessarily suitable *somewhere else*. In this case, the limitations in understanding planning practice that spring from the exclusion of patterns other than their own will have to be accepted.[27]

A third difficulty consists in the multiple border-crossing practices that establish links between national or local conditions, be it on the political, social or economical level. These links do not only question an isolated examination of separate cases but also justify a dedicated analysis as they themselves form a *trans-national* meta-context of study.[28]

However, a discourse analytical approach helps to tackle these difficulties by using the argumentative utterances of actors as an important empirical basis. In this respect, the differences from other approaches reside in that:

- The focus on concepts and arguments allows a direct comparison of contexts largely differing in terms of physical, institutional, socio-economic and cultural conditions. At the same time the interpretation of the contexts remains open, depending on the identified discourse structure.
- The ways in which specific arguments are applied can be examined in respect to their effects on planning. Specific actor positions, resource distributions or project contents can thus be interpreted directly as discourse functions.
- The identification of discourse reproduction indicates the formation of coalitions, but also inherent conflicts, and reveals relationships between the different case study contexts. Coalitions and conflicts can thus be interpreted in a trans-national perspective regarding the limitations and/or fuzziness of the employed discursive concepts.

Therefore the use of discourse analysis results in being particularly appropriate for the comparative trans-national study of planning approaches as it also helps to diminish or evade the above-mentioned methodological difficulties.

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[26] See 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 in this chapter.

[27] cf. Mouffe 1988, 35

[28] Smith 2001, 70

1.4   Divergent understandings of "discourse"

The discourse theoretical view discussed above differs substantially from the often suggested understanding of "discourse" as a *form of communication* under ideal conditions, especially following the considerations of J. Habermas.[29] This perspective does not include the structural, cognitive and contextual dimensions as defined above, but interprets discourse as a rational exchange of "reasonable" arguments. Consequently the influences of real conditions such as power relations or conceptual polyvalences appear as separate phenomena that would require dedicated analysis and interpretation. The link between politics and morality aimed at is here achieved through a liberation of the discourse from its political roots. However, this open exclusion of both the irrational and the diversity of sources for political antagonisms (economic, moral, ethnic, religious, etc.) represent a major limitation of this approach.[30]

Another relevant scientific reading sees a "discourse" as a set of arguments brought forward against the opponents within a public debate. The epistemological interest of this approach is the politicisation of issues and the formation of social identities. It therefore associates certain actors with a certain discourse and distinguishes *different types* of discourses within the same political interaction process, e.g. oppositional- or expert-discourses.[31] However, this distinction separates conceptually what in fact appears intermingled and neglects the conditions and effects of argumentative reproductions in supposedly *different* discourses.

Instead, following the concept of discourse as developed above a clear-cut delimitation of discourses cannot be defined. Firstly, this is true because communication and social practice are sufficiently contingent not to allow drawing such border lines, and secondly because discourses show overlaps regarding their contents and the actors involved.

Nevertheless, actors and contents are the only possible identifiers of a common topic and will therefore have to form the basis for a differentiation *between* discourses. For instance, the discourses of "HST integration" and "economic structural change" appear to be closely related, but are obviously distinguishable from the discourse of "bio-engineering". Yet, all three of them could be seen to form part of the global discourse of "modernization", which illustrates the variety of possible interrelations.

2   Analyzing discourses in planning: A three-dimensional approach

The presented discourse theoretical conceptualisation of planning still requires an operationalization for the purpose of comparative study. All discourse components (structure, context and cognition) need to be identified and situated in the concrete cases through an appropriate research procedure, although their clear separation cannot be achieved. At the same time the analysis has to be presented in a way that allows one to easily understand the respective planning case. A practical strategy is thus required to assure reliability and soundness of the analysis, as well as transparency for the reader. This does not

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[29] Habermas 1973, 148

[30] cf. Mouffe 2001, 3-6

[31] cf. Donati 2001; Fraser 1994; Neidhard/ van den Daele 1996

mean that there would be only *one* possible and "true" interpretation, but accounts for veracity as a basic principle of scientific work, since otherwise any random choice would represent a valid interpretation.[32]

Based on these considerations I propose a "three-dimensional" approach for the study of planning discourses. Its starting point is the analysis of the spatial and institutional *context* as the first dimension, covering the essence of the contextual components. Second, the key *texts* that have marked the planning case such as reports and project documents are analyzed to identify the specific structure of the discourse, which in turn also reflects contextual and cognitive components. The third dimension analyzes the planning *process* that has led to the present situation. It can be seen as a reading of text and context over time, but equally addresses cognitive and structural aspects. Together, the analysis of these three dimensions explores the "discursive space" that characterizes the respective planning case (Fig.II.1). However, it should be noted that despite the seemingly "neat" presentation of the results in this study, the actual analysis has not been (and cannot be) carried out in a particular order, but instead it needed to follow the insight obtained with each step, constantly switching between the dimensions.

Fig.II. 1: Three dimensions of a "discursive planning space". Source: author
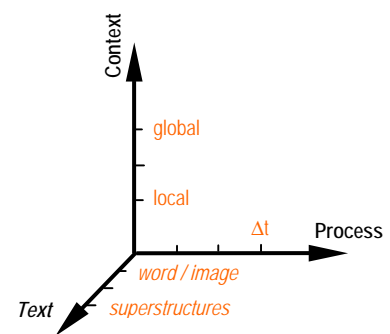
2.1 Context analysis

Two aspects are important for the understanding of the context. First, the space-functional structure of the city, its region and country need to be assessed. A brief overview of the key economic-, demographic- and spatial structures and dynamics gives a general idea of the urbanization process and the characteristics of the location. Second, the institutional framework forms the necessary background to understand power relations and the basic orientations it provides for the actors that form part of it. These have to be described, explaining their key competencies and interrelations in respect to planning and the HST. The results of this analysis form the introduction to each case, focusing on the features that are relevant for the identified discourse.

2.2 Process analysis

The planning process for the integration of the HST has to be described and ordered by the main process "stages". This is understood in the double sense of the term: *Temporal,* i.e. as phases of events and actions that deal with and complete a particular episode of the planning process (e.g. "track decision", "building development plan") - and *spatial,* i.e. as parallel events and actions under participation of a limited group of actors and focused on a particular topic, but fragmented in time (e.g. "national policy

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[32] cf. Kroger/ Wood 2000, 163-78; Gee 1999, 95

formulation", "elaboration of a strategic plan"). Both analytical perspectives are necessary, but at the same time separate elements that actually belong together. For the summary of the results, I have therefore chosen a combined solution by defining coherent "stages", oriented at the discourse identified through the analysis.

2.3   Text analysis

The principal question that emerges here is, what kind of sources and survey methods should be used for the study, and which criteria apply to select from a very large number of available sources. Furthermore, once a particular sample has been defined, the analysis also has to fall back on general principles and guidelines that help to structure the study. This concerns, in particular, the composition and discursive functions of text documents, and also the interpretation and reconstruction of the planning case as such.

2.3.1 Source types and survey methods

Albeit no delimitations can be derived here theoretically since any source referring to the discourse topic would be valid, four principal types have been employed:

a)   The initial basis and orientation needs to be formed by a literature survey, which filters the generally available knowledge about each case.

b)   Starting from this point, a focus on those ("official") planning documents that relate to the integration of the HST appears to be a plausible choice, as they represent a direct reflection of the topic by actors concerned. This will be further detailed below.

c)   In order to obtain an authentic presentation of the objectives, the weighing of alternatives and decisions, as well as the assessment in terms of risks, opportunities and conflicts of key-actors and experts involved, semi-structured interviews can be used. For this study a total of 54 interviews has been carried out and tape-recorded. The particular value of this source resides in the possibility of validating findings from the desktop study through the direct discussion with the actors involved.[33]

d)   Finally, other relevant sources like articles from newspapers or journals, internal notes or reports can also be equally used as far as they relate to the topic (Fig.II.2).

It should be emphasized that for this study the input from the interviews and additional sources has been employed mainly to guide the analysis and as a means for the "calibration" of findings. It has not been used for a "triangulation", i.e. attributing an equal weight to all source types, since here the risk of producing arbitrary results through an unbalanced sample appears to be too high.[34]

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[33] See interview guideline and list of interviewees in chapter VII.3

[34] cf. Kroger/ Wood 2000, 176

		Analysis of Context	Analysis of Text	Analysis of Process
a)	Literature survey	■■■	■	■■■
b)	Document study	■■	■■■	■■■
c)	Key-actor interviews	■	■■	■■■
d)	Additional sources	■	■	■

Fig.II. 2: Relevance of sources and survey methods for different analysis steps for the discourse dimensions; Source: author; Key: ■ low / ■■ medium / ■■■ high

2.3.2 Selection of documents

Referring to planning documents as a source, a selection has to be made in each case, on the one hand, in respect to the mere feasibility of the study. On the other hand it is also indicated regarding the representativeness and significance of the different documents according to the following considerations:

First of all, the *institutional context* differs from case to case, and with this also the reference of the sources. Hence, for each case the introductory analysis of the context (actors, competencies and interdependencies in respect of planning and the HST) also serves to highlight important differences that characterize particular actors in distinct national contexts. This should prevent premature conclusions focused on "roles" of corporate actors such as "the nation state", "the railway company", etc.

Second, the samples should represent those actors that directly participate in the planning process by virtue of their competencies and resources, and thus decide about measures and instruments to be applied. This principle recognizes that the "*actors of power*" are provided with the primary means of discourse (re-) production. To evaluate, if and in what way discursive concepts have influenced the shaping of positions and measures, one should start with the public authorities of the different levels (nation state, region state, counties, municipalities, associations and cooperations), public-private organizations in charge of determined planning tasks (project companies, regional planning agencies, transport authorities) and particular private companies (transport operators, infrastructure providers, real estate developers).

Third, the previous argument does not suggest that other actors are insignificant. On the contrary, in case of relevant *discourse transformations* it is obligatory to ask for the origins or initiators, since they could well be situated outside the group of institutionally "powerful" actors. However, since the interest is to explain what has actually been decided, a dedicated analysis of the spectrum of alternative positions will not be undertaken. This would be a perfectly complementary task, since it could give an insight into the reasons, why their arguments have not been considered. However, the approach followed provides an implicit explanation for this question if the existence of discourse coalitions can be shown.
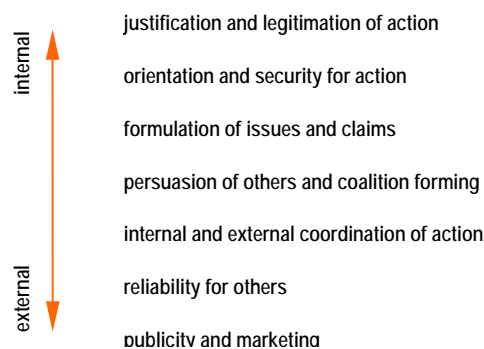
Fourth, naturally not every contribution appears to have the same weight in the planning process or effect on the derived measures. Thus the chronological perspective of the *process analysis* should allow identification of the relevant documents or "cornerstones", since for the long time periods of 10-15 years considered, political changes introduced by elections, policy shifts or institutional alterations can be of specific importance.

2.3.3 Document composition and discursive functions

In a discourse analytical perspective, the selected documents have to be studied considering the levels they are composed of. To start, there are the modes of text and graphics, the singular words, phrases, data and images that may carry various propositions to be acknowledged as such. In turn, they appear combined in headings, paragraphs, chapters, tables, covers and maps, according to an overall formal *superstructure*. Nevertheless, the hierarchy of the superstructure also indicates the relative significance of the different elements, e.g. the main body of a document (cover, titles, text, graphics) compared to subordinate parts (footnotes, annex, etc.). Together all these elements construct a specific *discourse topic* that the document deals with, such as "service development in X" or "public transport access of Y". This construction is what constitutes the principal contribution of that document to a discourse (or several discourses).

Evidently, there is an author behind any document, and thus also particular *motives* to edit and publish it. Both the singular elements and their aggregation into a higher order of a document reflect not only the cognitive orientation, but also the motives of the author(s) and can therefore be interpreted in this respect.[35], After a document has been published, however, its actual discursive *functions* may well diverge from what the author(s) originally intended. Thus, motives and functions, in addition, are not necessarily the same and can be identified independently. Most of all, a single document usually accomplishes *several functions* in parallel (Fig.II.3).

Fig.II. 3: Discursive functions of planning documents; source: author

| internal |
| justification and legitimation of action |
| orientation and security for action |
| formulation of issues and claims |
| persuasion of others and coalition forming |
| internal and external coordination of action |
| reliability for others |
| publicity and marketing |
| external |

These functions can be fulfilled positively, but might as well be inverted so that a document actually contributes, e.g. to question existing legitimation or create conflicts. In this respect it should also be borne on mind that the functions refer to both other actors and the author himself. Therefore, they equally affect action, *re*-action and *inter*-action, which illustrates the discursive character of subject positions.

2.4 Interpretation and reconstruction

The ultimate step from the analysis of context, process and numerous single documents to the interpretation of the planning discourse poses two interrelated difficulties. On the one hand, a quantitative problem has to be resolved in respect to the size of the text samples, because regardless of the previous

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[35] cf. the distinction of motivational and cognitive orientation in: Mayntz/ Scharpf 1995, 39-60

selection, the extent of the relevant documentation still makes a detailed *presentation* of the results impossible. On the other hand, the qualitative problem of choosing from a wide range and variety of utterances also has to be tackled. In order to attend to these difficulties three operative rules have been adopted for the analysis.

1. The *situatedness* of the texts and statements has to be considered. The specific time of publication and the references to other actors or documents in the planning process need to be clarified for the interpretation of the content. The analysis of the planning process and its chronology thus also contribute to justify a first selection here.

2. The *superstructure* of the documents has to be taken into account as a criterion. To consider the delimitation of the topic, the elements of the content and the argumentative thread allows not only to position excerpts within the document, but also within the discourse. However, a comprehensive documentation of this reflection would require extensive space. Therefore, the analysis of the superstructures and the method of documentation are shown only as an example.[36]

3. The selected excerpts have to be interpreted focusing on the *concepts and arguments* used. This analysis needs to be performed by an actor using several documents with different topics to trace the argumentation and identify the resulting position within the discourse. Conclusions can then be presented for each actor and have to account for exceptions and gaps in their respective discourse structures.

Finally the analysis of the context, process and all texts can be put together in order to obtain a complete picture of the planning discourse. This *discursive reconstruction* is achieved by a "diagonal" report that acknowledges the findings from the different steps, and refers to the initial questions of this study.[37] This is achieved by a synthesis that identifies and interprets the relevant discourse structures, their functions, resulting actor coalitions and emerging conflicts.

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[36] An average document summary occupies 2 pages A4, and a total of 86 documents has been analyzed in detail. See Annex, chapter VII.4 for examples.

[37] cf. Kroger/ Wood 2000, 179-86