Toward a Holistic Planning Culture Framework: Integrating Individual, Collective, and Societal Dimensions

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Abstract: Planning culture scholarship has evolved significantly over six decades, yet fundamental analytical tensions persist: between systematic comparison and contextual specificity, between structural determinism and agential capacity, and between cultural continuity and institutional change. Existing frameworks, particularly the influential Culturised Planning Model, struggle to address these tensions because they inadvertently reproduce the structure-agency dualism they seek to transcend, treating institutional contexts as relatively fixed parameters that shape but are not shaped by planning practice. This paper presents a holistic planning culture framework that bridges this divide by drawing on sociological institutionalism's insights into how actors simultaneously work within, reshape, and transform institutional arrangements. The framework distinguishes three interdependent cultural layers: individual attitudes (encompassing knowledge, beliefs, and actions), collective practices (including procedural rules and actors' constellations), and societal environment (reflected in steering styles). Unlike hierarchical models that imply unidirectional causation, this framework conceptualises these layers as mutually constitutive – simultaneously structuring and being structured by planning practice. This recursive character explains both cultural reproduction (through mutually reinforcing relationships) and transformation (through contradictions creating openings for institutional entrepreneurship). The framework enables more nuanced analysis of how planning cultures operate across multiple scales, how identical formal instruments produce divergent outcomes, and how endogenous change emerges through everyday planning practice. By treating planning culture as a dynamic institutional field rather than a static context, the framework supports more reflexive, culturally-informed planning practice.

Keywords: Planning culture, sociological institutionalism, structure-agency, holistic framework, transformative capacity, comparative planning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, spatial planning narratives have undergone a fundamental reorientation. Early-2000s discourses emphasised the transnational circulation of planning ideas and practices across diverse contexts (Healey, 2012, 2013), reflecting broader globalisation dynamics. By contrast, the late 2010s witnessed a territorial turn: the place-based approach promoted in *Territorial Agenda 2030* (EU Ministers, 2020) reframed spatial development around the specificities of territories, positioning diversity as a strategic asset rather than an obstacle. This shift from flows to fixity paralleled theoretical developments within planning scholarship – from models emphasising multicultural negotiation and consensus-building (Sandercock, 1998; Healey, 1997; Innes & Booher, 2010) toward approaches foregrounding cultural traditions, practices, and identities, as codified in the *New Urban Agenda* (United Nations, 2017). These transformations signal culture's centrality not merely as contextual backdrop but as constitutive force shaping – and being shaped by – planning processes.

Understanding culture as a collectively produced system of meaning (Douglas, 2004), planning scholarship increasingly recognises the analytical imperative of examining how cultural dimensions operate through planning practice. Culture encompasses intangible norms and everyday practices, i.e., the informal 'ways of doing things' that operate alongside statutory systems to shape planning outcomes (Faludi, 2005; Friedmann, 2005). These cultural dimensions often remain invisible to practitioners trained within singular institutional contexts, yet analysing such cultural factors proves essential for understanding contemporary planning's complex political, economic, and environmental pressures (Knieling & Othengrafen, 2009a; Sanyal, 2005).

Yet a persistent puzzle troubles cultural analysis in planning contexts: planners across different contexts often deploy strikingly similar formal instruments, such as zoning ordinances, environmental impact assessments, and participatory procedures, yet these identical tools produce divergent outcomes (Perić, 2024; Perić & Hoch, 2017). A comprehensive plan in one jurisdiction becomes a rigid regulatory blueprint; the same instrument elsewhere functions as a flexible negotiation framework. Public participation procedures in one setting enable genuine co-production; identical

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mechanisms elsewhere devolve into tokenistic consultation. This puzzle suggests that formal institutional arrangements tell only part of culture's story. What remains inadequately theorised is *how* and *why* similar planning artefacts operate differently across contexts – and specifically, how cultural dynamics operating at individual, collective, and societal levels interact to produce these variations.

Existing frameworks for analysing culture through planning practice struggle to address this puzzle because they inadvertently reproduce the structure-agency dualism they seek to transcend (Perić, 2018). Dominant models treat institutional contexts as relatively fixed parameters that shape but are not shaped by planning practice. Individual agency appears constrained by structures; structures appear independent of agential action. This analytical separation obscures culture's dynamic, mutually constitutive relationship between actors and institutions – the very relationship that might explain why identical planning instruments produce different outcomes.

This paper presents a holistic framework for analysing culturised practices that positions planning as the empirical domain, through which culture's multilayered operation becomes visible. Drawing on sociological institutionalism's insights into how actors simultaneously work within, reshape, and transform institutional arrangements, the framework illuminates culture not as a static context but as a dynamic field constituted through planning practice. Rather than treating formal procedures, collective practices, and societal orientations as separate analytical domains, the framework positions them as interdependent cultural layers whose interactions constitute culture's transformative potential as observable through planning processes.

The paper proceeds in four moves: first, tracing cultural scholarship in planning around enduring conceptual tensions; second, examining dominant frameworks' limitations, particularly the influential Culturised Planning Model; third, establishing sociological institutionalism as a theoretical foundation for more dynamic cultural analysis; and finally, outlining the holistic framework and its analytical implications for understanding culture through planning practice.

2. PLANNING CULTURE SCHOLARSHIP: PERSISTENT ANALYTICAL TENSIONS

Planning culture scholarship's sixty-year evolution reveals less linear progress than recursive engagement with fundamental conceptual challenges. Rather than resolving core analytical problems, successive theoretical turns have reframed them – exposing tensions that persist precisely because they reflect culture's inherent complexity as an analytical construct. Three interrelated tensions structure the field's development and illuminate why conventional approaches prove inadequate.

2.1. First Tension: Between Systematic Comparison and Contextual Specificity

Planning culture emerged as an analytical category partly to explain a paradox: why ostensibly rational planning processes produce divergent outcomes across contexts. Early work sought systematic frameworks for understanding this variation. The significance of institutional settings, ideological commitments, and tacit routines – what Friedmann (1967) distinguished as bounded, non-bounded, and extrarational dimensions of planning thought – signalled that technical rationality alone could not account for planning's diverse manifestations. Similarly, attention to how political-administrative configurations shape planning processes (Bolan, 1969) suggested systematic relationships between contextual factors and planning practice.

Yet as comparative work proliferated, a predicament emerged: frameworks sufficiently general for cross-contextual comparison risked flattening local specificities, while thick description of particular contexts resisted generalisation. The 1980s emphasis on interpretive frameworks and discursive practices (Rydin, 2003), followed by the valorisation of cultural diversity and situated knowledge (Sandercock, 1998; Fischer & Forester, 1993), intensified this tension. By the 2000s, when 'planning culture' achieved formal status in comparative scholarship (Sanyal, 2005; Knieling & Othengrafen, 2009a), the field faced a methodological bind: comparative frameworks required standardised categories, yet planning culture's essence seemed to lie precisely in what resisted standardisation.

Contemporary scholarship navigates this tension through scalar differentiation: some emphasise national-level cultural patterns (Li *et al.*, 2020; Nummi *et al.*, 2023), others regional governance cultures (Purkarthofer *et al.*, 2021), still others local practice variations (Jackson, 2022; Carpenter *et al.*, 2022). Yet scalar choices themselves reflect theoretical commitments about where culture 'resides,' leaving

unresolved the question of relationships between scales. Does local planning culture represent the instantiation, deviation, or autonomous emergence of national culture?

2.1. Second Tension: Between Structural Determinism and Agential Capacity

A second persistent tension concerns the relative weight of institutional structures versus individual agency in constituting planning culture. Definitional attempts repeatedly invoke both: Faludi (2005) emphasises planners' attitudes toward state, market, and civil society, thus foregrounding individual dispositions; Friedmann (2005) highlights how planning is institutionalised and enacted, again emphasising structural arrangements; Getimis (2012) synthesises these through attention to actors' values, beliefs, and collective ethos. Conceptually, structure and agency appear co-constitutive.

Yet analytical practice frequently reproduces their separation. Frameworks organise cultural dimensions hierarchically: observable institutional artefacts rest on cognitive frameworks that reflect foundational societal orientations. This implies unidirectional determination from deep to surface levels. Institutional contexts appear as relatively fixed parameters that constrain action. Individual actors enact cultural scripts rather than authoring them, and carry forward inherited traditions rather than transforming them. Even scholarship acknowledging culture's intangible, informal dimensions tends to treat these as contextual factors shaping practice rather than as constituted through practice itself (Reimer & Blotevogel, 2012).

This structural bias creates particular problems for planning scholarship, which has long emphasised practitioners' interpretive, communicative, and strategic capacities (Healey, 1997; Forester, 1989). If planners creatively navigate institutional constraints, strategically mobilise cultural resources, and incrementally shift normative frameworks through practice –as empirical research consistently demonstrates – then frameworks treating structures as given and agency as constrained miss precisely the dynamics that make planning culture consequential.

2.3. Third Tension: Between Cultural Continuity and Institutional Change

The stability-change paradox constitutes planning culture scholarship's deepest puzzle. If planning cultures reflect deep-seated societal orientations transmitted across generations, how do they transform? Frameworks that emphasise cultural embeddedness struggle to theorise mechanismsof change beyond external shocks or crises (Othengrafen, 2010). Recent work acknowledges planning culture's dynamism (Reimer, 2013; Sanyal, 2016; Nummi *et al.*, 2023) yet lacks a conceptual apparatus for explaining transformation processes endogenous to planning practice itself.

This puzzle intensifies when recognising that planning fundamentally concerns deliberate change – altering urban trajectories, shifting development patterns, transforming sustainability practices. Planners do not simply work within existing institutional arrangements; they actively seek to modify them. If planning culture encompasses 'ways of doing things,' then planning for change necessarily involves changing planning culture. This is a recursive process requiring theoretical resources that most planning culture frameworks lack.

2.4. Why these Tensions Persist

These analytical tensions resist resolution not through conceptual failure but because they reflect genuine complexity in planning culture as a phenomenon. Culture simultaneously exhibits cross-contextual patterns and irreducible local specificity; it both structures action and emerges through that action; it demonstrates remarkable durability yet undergoes continuous transformation. Adequately theorising planning culture requires frameworks accommodating these apparent paradoxes rather than resolving them through analytical fiat.

Such frameworks must treat multiple scales as mutually constitutive rather than competing; conceptualise structure and agency as recursively related rather than analytically separate; explain reproduction and transformation through a unified theoretical vocabulary rather than treating them as opposed processes. Existing planning culture frameworks, however influential, struggle precisely at these junctures.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND THEIR ANALYTICAL LIMITS

The most systematic attempt to operationalise planning culture for empirical analysis remains Knieling and Othengrafen's (2009b) Culturised Planning Model. Its conceptual architecture – distinguishing planning artefacts (observable products and processes),

planning environment (cognitive-normative frameworks), and societal environment (fundamental societal orientations) – provides a structured approach to culture's multiple dimensions while acknowledging both visible and tacit cultural elements. The model's influence stems from genuine analytical contributions: it differentiates conscious from unconscious cultural layers, offers systematic categories for cross-contextual comparison, and recognises culture as encompassing far more than formal institutional arrangements.

Yet precisely the model's systematic character illuminates the conceptual limitations that constrain its analytical power. These limitations crystallise around a core theoretical commitment: treating institutional arrangements as contexts for action rather than as constituted through action. This commitment generates several problematic consequences.

3.1. The Immobility Problem

The Culturised Planning Model positions structures, i.e., political systems, administrative configurations, and economic arrangements, as relatively stable parameters shaping planning practice. These appear within the model, not as outcomes requiring explanation, but as givens that establishthe operational context for planning. Ernste (2012) identifies this as a structuralist bias: institutions constitute the backdrop of planning culture rather than its substance.

This framing proves analytically costly. It cannot readily explain how institutional arrangements themselves change through planning practice, i.e., how, for instance, repeated participatory planning processes gradually normalise citizen involvement, transforming it from exceptional to expected; how professional planning innovations diffuse to reshape standard practice; how local planning experiments eventually influence national policy frameworks. By treating institutions as context, the model misses institutions as accomplishment.

The model similarly struggles with temporal and spatial variation. Without conceptual resources for theorising how planning cultures change, it cannot explain documented shifts in national planning cultures over time (Nummi *et al.*, 2023) beyond attributing them to external societal transformation. Without a framework for relating planning cultures across scales, it cannot analyse documented divergence between national policies and local implementation (Purkarthofer *et al.*, 2021) beyond describing them as separate cultures. The model offers a snapshot of planning culture at a particular moment and scale but lacks a theoretical apparatus for explaining dynamics within or across spatiotemporal boundaries (Pallagst *et al.*, 2021).

3.2. The Categorical Ambiguity Problem

The model's three levels contain overlapping elements that undermine analytical precision. Consider communication and participation: the model locates these within planning artefacts as observable practices. Yet communication patterns simultaneously reflect procedural requirements (regulatory dimension), professional norms about appropriate stakeholder engagement (normative dimension), and taken-for-granted assumptions about whose voices matter (cultural-cognitive dimension). Reducing communication to 'artefact' obscures these multiple institutional dimensions.

Similarly, planning instruments and procedures appear split between planning artefacts and planning environment levels without clear justification. 'Political, administrative, economic and organisational structures' – seemingly paradigmatic examples of societal-level context – reside instead within the planning environment. These classificatory ambiguities signal a deeper theoretical confusion about the relationships between observable practices and underlying orientations (Getimis, 2012; Perić, 2018). If categories overlap or seem arbitrarily assigned, systematic comparative analysis becomes problematic: researchers must make ad hoc decisions about where particular empirical observations fit, undermining the comparability that the model aims to enable.

3.3. The Absent Agent Problem

Most fundamentally, the Culturised Planning Model lacks a robust conception of actors as strategic, reflexive agents embedded within yet capable of critical distance from institutional arrangements. The societal environment layer treats 'people' as a collective, obscuring individual agency, knowledge claims, power differentials, and strategic action. Getimis (2012: 29) specifies what is missing: attention to "mental predispositions and shared values of those involved in *all stages* of the planning process," including analysis of who participates, how power operates, which knowledge types gain legitimacy, and through which interaction formats decisions emerge.

Without such an actor-centred perspective, the model cannot explain the empirical finding that identical formal procedures produce dramatically different outcomes across contexts – the very puzzle planning culture concept should illuminate. If formal institutions determined practice, identical procedures should yield similar results. That they do not suggests something beyond formal institutions matters,yet the Culturised Planning Model provides no systematic way to analyse this. Individual interpretations, strategic mobilisations of procedural ambiguity, and power-laden negotiations shaping which formal rules actually matter – these dynamics disappear from view.

This absence becomes particularly acute when considering cultural change. If deep societal orientations determine surface practices, and if individuals merely enact inherited cultural scripts, then endogenous change becomes theoretically inexplicable. Cultural transformation requires external perturbation or macro-societal shift; incremental, actor-driven institutional change vanishes as an analytical possibility. Yet planning research consistently documents precisely such bottom-up change: practitioners who creatively reinterpret formal requirements, communities who reshape participation norms through persistent engagement, and coalitions that gradually delegitimise established practices (Healey, 1997; Forester, 1989; Innes & Booher, 2010).

3.4. Theoretical Implications

These limitations – immobility, categorical ambiguity, absent agency – are not incidental flaws but symptoms of underlying theoretical commitments toward structural explanation over practice-based accounts. The Culturised Planning Model exemplifies a broader tendency within planning culture scholarship to privilege stability over change, structure over agency, context over constitution. Overcoming these limitations requires a different theoretical foundation, i.e., one treating institutions as simultaneously structuring and structured by practice, as simultaneously durable and dynamic, as simultaneously constraining and enabling.

Such a foundation must conceptualise actors as embedded yet reflexive, working within institutional logics while possessing the capacity to modify those logics through everyday practice. It must analyse institutions as multilayered – encompassing regulatory frameworks, normative commitments, and cultural-cognitive schemas – while recognising these dimensions as interdependent rather than hierarchical. It must theorise cultural reproduction and transformation through a unified framework rather than treating them as opposed processes. Sociological institutionalism, particularly cultural-cognitive variants that emphasise institutions' constitutive character and transformative potential, offers precisely these theoretical resources, therebyenabling a planning culture framework that bridges persistent analytical tensions while addressing identified conceptual limitations.

4. RECONCEPTUALISING PLANNING CULTURE FRAMEWORKS: SOCIOLOGICAL INSTITUTION-ALISM PERSPECTIVE

Institutional theory encompasses diverse traditions, but sociological institutionalism – particularly the cultural variants developed by Scott (2014), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and synthesised by Hall and Taylor (1996) – offers conceptual resources suited explicitly to addressing the identified limitations of planning culture frameworks. Unlike rational choice institutionalism's focus on formal rules and strategic behaviour, or historical institutionalism's emphasis on path dependence and critical junctures, sociological institutionalism foregrounds the mutually constitutive relationship between institutions and actors, treating culture neither as an external constraint nor as a mere preference, but as constitutive of institutional life itself.

4.1. Institutions as Multilayered Cultural Systems

Scott's (2014) influential framework conceptualises institutions as comprising three interdependent pillars: regulative (formal rules, laws, sanctions), normative (values, norms, role expectations), and cultural-cognitive (taken-for-granted assumptions, cognitive schemas, symbolic systems). This tripartite structure parallels planning culture's concern with formal procedures, normative frameworks, and deep-seated orientations, but with a crucial difference: Scott treats these dimensions as analytically distinct yet empirically inseparable. Regulatory frameworks rest upon normative justifications; normative commitments become embedded in cognitive schemas; cognitive frameworks shape which regulatory arrangements appear legitimate or even conceivable.

For planning culture, this multilayered conception offers several advantages. First, it explains why identical formal planning instruments produce different outcomes: the same regulatory framework operates within different normative and cultural-cognitive contexts, generating divergent practices. Second, it

illuminates how institutions simultaneously constrain and enable: formal procedures limit action yet also provide resources that actors mobilise to achieve goals. Third, it clarifies relationships between stability and change: institutions exhibit durability through mutual reinforcement across regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive dimensions, yet transform when actors exploit inconsistencies between these dimensions or import alternative logics from other institutional fields.

4.2. Embedded Agency and Institutional Entrepreneurship

A central puzzle in institutional theory concerns how actors can change institutions when those same institutions shape actors' interests, cognition, and capacities – the 'paradox of embedded agency' (Seo & Creed, 2002). Actors are simultaneously embedded within and capable of critical distance from institutional arrangements. Sociological institutionalism addresses this through concepts of reflexivity and institutional entrepreneurship. Reflexivity, i.e., the capacity to monitor, evaluate, and potentially transform one's own practices, emerges through several mechanisms: contradictions between institutional logics, exposure to alternative institutional models, performance crises that delegitimise existing arrangements, or social movements mobilising counter-normative frameworks (Battilana *et al.*, 2009).

Institutional entrepreneurs leverage this reflexivity to drive change. Rather than accepting institutional arrangements as given, they strategically recombine existing elements, import practices from other fields, or reframe established activities to align with emerging normative frameworks (DiMaggio, 1988). Crucially, institutional entrepreneurship need not involve heroic transformation; incremental bricolage, i.e., creatively repurposing available institutional materials, constitutes an equally significant change mechanism (Campbell, 2004).

For planning culture, the embedded agency concept illuminates how planners work simultaneously within and upon institutional arrangements. Planners do not simply implement procedures but interpret, adapt, and selectively enforce them; stakeholders do not merely participate in prescribed formats but reshape participation norms through practice; communities contest dominant development paradigms while operating within regulatory constraints. This recognition reframes planning culture from a static context to a dynamic field of institutional work.

4.3. Institutional Logics and Field-Level Dynamics

Sociological institutionalism's concept of institutional logics, i.e. "socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices" (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008: 101), provides a framework for analysing how multiple, sometimes contradictory, organising principles coexist within planning fields. Planning operates at intersections of state logic (public interest, procedural legitimacy), market logic (efficiency, property rights), professional logic (expertise, technical rationality), and community logic (participation, local knowledge). These logics provide actors with different repertoires for action, different criteria for legitimacy, and different bases for authority.

Planning culture's complexity partly reflects navigation among competing logics. Conflicts that appear as technical disputes often involve deeper contestation over which institutional logic should govern specific decisions. A participatory planning process may simultaneously invoke professional logic (expert facilitators ensuring procedurally sound deliberation), community logic (residents as legitimate knowledge-holders), and state logic (participation fulfilling regulatory requirements). Understanding planning culture requires analysing not only which logics operate but how actors strategically invoke, blend, or buffer them (Pache & Santos, 2013).

4.4. Institutions as Process: Reproduction and Transformation

Perhaps most importantly for planning culture scholarship, sociological institutionalism conceptualises institutions as ongoing accomplishments rather than fixed entities. Institutions exist only through continuous enactment; reproduction is an active process, not passive inheritance (Jepperson, 1991). This process orientation fundamentally reframes the structure-agency relationship: structures do not exist apart from practices that instantiate them, yet these structures simultaneously pattern future practices. Every instance of following institutional rules canalso modify those rules through drift, reinterpretation, layering, or conversion (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

For planning culture, this means formal procedures, normative frameworks, and societal orientations exist not as independent variables shaping planning outcomes but as continuously reproduced through planning practice itself. Each time planners convene participatory meetings, they reproduce (or potentially

modify) participation norms; each development decision reinforces (or challenges) prevailing development paradigms; each planning document instantiates (or contests) professional knowledge hierarchies. Planning culture is not a context for planning practice but is constituted through that practice.

These institutional theoretical resources – a multilayered conception of institutions, embedded yet reflexive agency, competing institutional logics, and a process-oriented perspective – provide a foundation for a planning culture framework that transcends the structure-agency dualism. By conceptualising institutional arrangements (formal procedures, normative frameworks, societal orientations) as simultaneously structuring and structured by practice, as simultaneously stable and dynamic, as simultaneously constraining and enabling, sociological institutionalism enables a more holistic analysis of how planning cultures operate and transform. The framework presented below operationalises these theoretical insights specifically for planning culture analysis.

5. TOWARD A HOLISTIC PLANNING CULTURE FRAMEWORK

Building on sociological institutionalism's insights into institutions as multilayered, dynamic systems enacted through embedded yet reflexive agency, the holistic planning culture framework reconceptualises cultural dimensions not as hierarchical levels but as interdependent layers (Figure **1**). Three interwoven layers – individual attitudes, collective practices, and societal environment – each encompass distinct yet mutually constitutive categories. Critically, the framework positions these layers not as separate analytical domains but as different entry points for examining the same phenomenon: how planning cultures simultaneously reproduce and transform themselves through everyday planning practice.

5.1. Individual Attitudes: Knowledge, Beliefs, Actions

The framework begins with individual actors as culturally embedded yet reflexive agents capable of critical engagement with institutional arrangements. Individual attitudes encompass three interrelated categories:

a) *Knowledge* includes both expert concepts, e.g., disciplinary frameworks from training in urban planning, public policy, economics, or other fields, and experiential knowledge derived from everyday practice, layperson cognitive frameworks, common sense understandings, and situated norms (Rydin, 2007). Importantly, actors hold multiple, sometimes contradictory, knowledge types simultaneously, strategically deploying different knowledge claims across institutional contexts.

b) *Beliefs* emerge from core values, subjective perceptions, interpretations, emotions, and affective responses (Hoch, 2006). Unlike knowledge, which actors experience as public

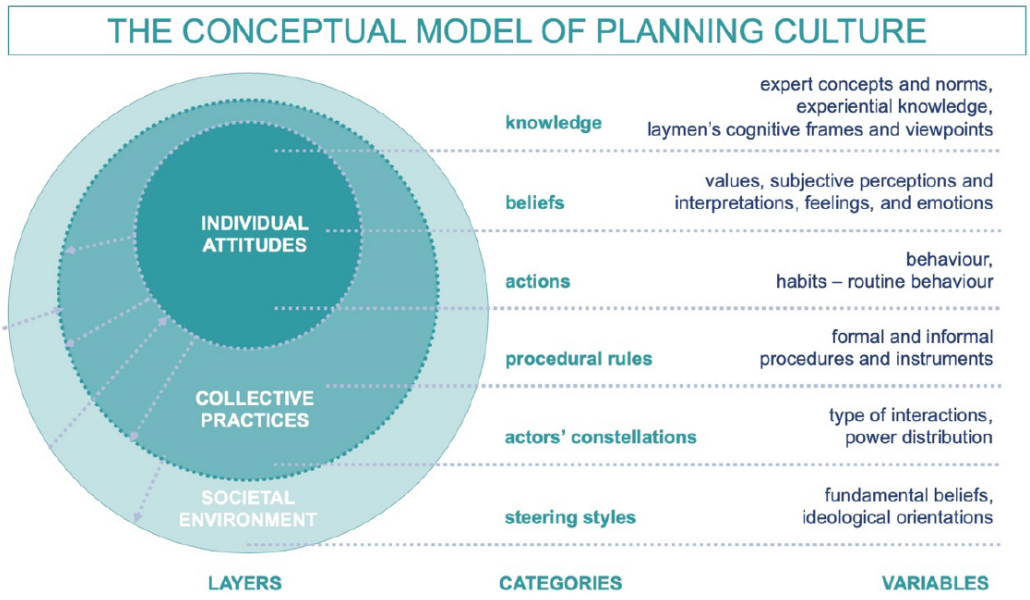

Figure 1: The holistic planning culture framework. Source: Author.

and shareable, beliefs feel intensely personal even when socially patterned. Together, knowledge and beliefs comprise actors' interpretive frameworks, i.e., the cognitive-cultural schemas through which they make sense of planning situations and imagine possible futures.

c) *Actions* manifest these frameworks through observable behaviour (current activities with future consequences) and habits (routinised practices performed without deliberate reflection). Actions simultaneously reflect and potentially transform knowledge and beliefs: habitual practices can reinforce dominant schemas, yet deliberate actions – particularly when encountering resistance or failure – can trigger reflexive reconsideration of underlying assumptions.

This layer directly addresses the Culturised Planning Model's lack of actor-centeredness by foregrounding individual agency while acknowledging actors' embeddedness in broader cultural frameworks. Unlike models treating individuals as passive culture-bearers, this approach recognises actors as interpreters who make sense of institutional requirements, as strategists who navigate competing institutional logics, and as reflexive agents capable of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions.

5.2. Collective Practices: Procedural Rules and Actors' Constellations

Individual attitudes become consequential through collective practices, understood as the interactive processes through which shared assumptions, norms, and strategies emerge and solidify. This layer encompasses two categories:

a) *Procedural rules* include both official procedures and instruments (comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, environmental assessments, participatory requirements) and informal conventions coordinating actor interaction (meeting protocols, communication norms, deliberative practices). Following Scott's (2014) framework, these rules operate simultaneously as regulative constraints (limiting permissible actions), normative guides (specifying appropriate behaviours), and cultural-cognitive templates (providing taken-for-granted scripts).

b) *Actors' constellations* (Getimis, 2012) capture relational dimensions of planning practice: interaction types (conflict, consultation, participation, bargaining, cooperation), power distributions (concentrated versus fragmented authority), knowledge hierarchies (which expertise counts as legitimate), and coalition structures. Rather than assuming harmonious consensus or treating conflict as a planning failure, the framework recognises power asymmetries and contested interests as constitutive features of planning cultures.

Collective practices embody Scott's (2014) three institutional pillars: procedural rules provide the regulatory architecture; norms governing appropriate interaction govern stakeholder engagement; and cognitive schemas about legitimate authority shape power distributions. This layer resolves the Culturised Planning Model's categorical confusion by treating formal and informal dimensions not as separate levels but as intertwined aspects of collective practice.

5.3. Societal Environment: Steering Styles

Individual attitudes and collective practices operate within broader societal contextswhile simultaneously reproducing or transforming them. Rather than cataloguing all possible contextual factors, the framework focuses on steering styles (Fürst, 2005) as condensed expressions of fundamental societal orientations. Steering styles combine decision-making modes (control versus consensus) with authority structures (polycentric versus polarised), yielding four ideal types: democratic-cooperative, democratic-competitive, corporatist, and paternalistic.

Steering styles reflect underlying governance logics, ideological commitments (market-oriented, welfare-oriented, sustainability-oriented), and basic political-administrative configurations. They operate as institutional logics in Thornton and Ocasio's (2008) sense: providing actors with cultural-cognitive frameworks for interpreting situations, normative templates for evaluating actions, and regulative expectations about appropriate authority relations.

This layer differs from the Culturised Planning Model's societal environment by emphasising the dynamic relationship between macro-level orientations and micro-level practices. Steering styles are not exogenous contexts that determine planning practice, but are themselves reproduced or challenged through

that practice. Democratic-cooperative steering requires continuous enactment through inclusive procedures and consensus-seeking behaviour; absent such practices, the steering style erodes toward more competitive or paternalistic modes.

5.4. Dynamic Interdependence and Transformative Capacity

The framework's distinctive contribution lies in conceptualising these three layers as dynamically interdependent through practice. Rather than hierarchical causation flowing from deep societal orientations to surface artefacts, the framework posits recursive relationships:

- Individual attitudes shape collective practices (actors' knowledge and beliefs influence how they engage procedural rules and negotiate with others);
- Collective practices shape individual attitudes (participation in specific interaction formats socialises actors into particular norms and cognitive schemas);
- Collective practices both reflect and reconstitute the societal environment (e.g., enacting democratic-cooperative steering through inclusive procedures reinforces that logic; systematically excluding certain actors gradually transforms steering toward paternalism);
- The societal environment shapes individual attitudes (prevailing steering styles condition which knowledge claims appear legitimate and which beliefs seem reasonable).

This recursive character explains both cultural reproduction and transformation. Reproduction occurs when mutually reinforcing relationships across layers stabilise particular configurations. Transformation occurs when contradictions emerge, e.g., when individual beliefs clash with procedural requirements, when collective practices deviate from formal rules, and when enacted steering styles diverge from espoused values. Such contradictions create openings for institutional entrepreneurship: actors exploit inconsistencies to introduce alternative practices, reinterpret formal procedures, or challenge established norms.

Critically, this framework transcends structure-agency dualism by treating institutional arrangements (procedural rules, steering styles) not as external constraints on autonomous actors but as cultural-cognitive resources actors deploy while simultaneously reproducing or transforming them. Planning culture appears neither as a fixed context determining practice nor as an infinitely malleable construct but as a structured yet dynamic field of meaningful action.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The holistic framework for cultural analysis presented here positions planning as a productive empirical domain for examining how culture operates across individual, collective, and societal dimensions. Rather than treating culture as background context explaining planning variations, the framework reveals culture as actively constituted through planning practice, hence making planning processes particularly valuable sites for cultural investigation. Several implications emerge for research and practice, while opening productive avenues for future inquiry.

Methodological implications. Treating culture as dynamically constituted through interdependent layers suggests methodological approaches attending to processes rather than only outcomes, to practices rather than only formal structures. Empirical cultural analysis requires examining how actors interpret and enact procedural rules, how collective interaction reinforces or challenges established norms, and how everyday planning practices cumulatively reproduce or transform steering styles. Ethnographic methods, process tracing, and practice-focused discourse analysis become essential complements to institutional mapping and comparative typology-buildingfor revealing culture's operation.

The framework also reorients comparative research using planning as an empirical lens. Rather than classifying national planning cultures as fixed types, comparison illuminates how different configurations across individual attitudes, collective practices, and societal environments generate distinctive cultural dynamics observable through planning. Cross-national convergence in formal procedures may mask persistent divergence in enacted practices; apparent institutional stability may conceal significant shifts in underlying normative frameworks. Comparison becomes an exploration of relationships between layers rather than a classification of planning culture types.

Analytical implications. The framework enables a more nuanced analysis of cultural change as it

manifests in planning contexts. Rather than attributing transformation to external shocks or macro-societal shifts, analysis can trace how incremental modifications at one layer create pressures on others. For instance, it elucidates how planners' adoption of new professional knowledge gradually delegitimises established procedural rules, or how communities' participatory practices slowly reshape formal inclusion requirements. Cultural change appears neither as a dramatic rupture nor as a glacial evolution but as continuous institutional work navigating tensions between layers.

The framework also illuminates culture's relationship to power dynamics more clearly than structure-focused approaches. By foregrounding actors' constellations, knowledge hierarchies, and authority distributions within the collective practices layer, the approach reveals how cultural dynamics systematically privilege certain voices, knowledge types, and interests while marginalising others. Culture-power relations operate not only through formal authority but through naturalised cognitive schemas that render some perspectives self-evident while rendering others unintelligible – dynamics particularly observable in planning arenas, where multiple actors contest decision-making.

Practical implications. For planning practitioners, the framework suggests that culturally-informed practice requires attending to culture's operation across all three layers simultaneously. Reforming procedural rules is insufficient if underlying beliefs and prevailing steering styles remain unchanged; fostering participatory attitudes means little without a procedural infrastructure that supports inclusive interaction. Effective cultural transformation requires aligned shifts across individual, collective, and societal layers, which institutional theorists term 'institutional work' (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006): deliberate efforts to create, maintain, or disrupt institutional arrangements.

The framework also cautions against cultural determinism. While cultural patternsshape action, they do not predetermine outcomes. Embedded actors retain reflexive capacity to recognise institutional contradictions, imagine alternatives, and pursue incremental change. Culture as observable through planning practiceappears not as an immutable tradition but as a continuously negotiated accomplishment.

Future directions. Several productive research trajectories emerge. First, an empirical application of the framework across diverse planning contexts could reveal whether certain configurations across layers are more conducive to sustainability transitions, equity outcomes, or adaptive governance. Second, longitudinal analysis could trace how cultural configurations transform over extended periods, identifying catalysts and mechanisms of change. Third, multi-scalar analysis could examine relationships between cultural dynamicsat national, regional, and local levels, exploring how innovations diffuse or how scalar mismatches generate conflict.

Most fundamentally, future research might explore culture's normative dimensions as manifested through planning: what configurations support democratic legitimacy, procedural justice, and substantive sustainability? The framework provides an analytical architecture for such inquiry without presuming the superiority of any particular culture. By illuminating how culture operates as a structured yet dynamic field, with planning serving as a particularly rich empirical domain for such investigation,the framework ultimately aims to support more reflexive, culturally-informed practice capable of deliberately cultivating institutional arrangements aligned with democratic imperatives.

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