

Spatial Planning Matters! Inspiring Stories and Fundamental Topics

Editors: Ana Perić, Bernd Scholl, Rolf Signer

Publisher: vdf Hochschulverlag AG, Zürich 2018



Planning is puzzling and as the world takes on an increasing level of complexity, the process becomes more critical for the outcome of a project than the physical intervention. Whose voices are drowned out and what is the role of planners in this process? Academics from ETH Zurich held a series of seminars around these issues with international academics and practitioners in the planning field. The 232-page book documents the research result.

The overall structure of the publication features an example-driven approach, with two main sections: 'inspiring stories' and 'fundamental topics'. The first collects seven completed and nine ongoing projects, showing a variety of challenges and approaches in actual planning practice in Europe and the USA. The essays in 'fundamental topics' discuss issues and innovative strategies that should be kept in mind at different stages of the planning process. For example, in the essay *Planning Approaches or Nothing Comes from Nothing*, it is mentioned that the problem analysis at the beginning of the planning is crucial and cannot be overstepped to establish goals directly. The lack of wide discussion of the problems is the reason for the planning mistakes in *Stuttgart 21*. The book's structure serves well its purposes of bridging the gap between practice and theory and reaching a broad audience outside professional circles.

The publication is innovative in content and academically sound. It has a clear and well-focused structure, cross-referencing between examples and theory, informative but restrained layout. The clear structure helps people with different backgrounds better understand the planning process. Professionals can better understand innovative theories and how theory is connected to practice through the example-driven structure, notes and glossary. Non-professionals can rely on detailed narratives and rich diagrams in the chapter of examples to understand the vital planning process that was previously unnoticeable. However, the book's perspective on planning focuses on social aspects. Discussions remain open on how nature is involved as a significant player in the planning and how, for example, the process can change to adapt to the climate challenge. Additionally, the planning cases in the book focus on Europe with a brief mention of the United States. Some planning projects in other countries are still open to research and discussion. European examples are sufficient to provide new insights, but exploring more projects in different contexts and developing theories, regardless of success or failure, would make the planning mechanism and theory more robust and universal.

This book is not a substitute for a comprehensive planning textbook, but it is innovative enough to be a must for planning students who have mastered the theory but have no practical experience. It is also recommended for planners, politicians, and others who are constantly searching for a more efficient planning process.