POLITECNICO DI TORINO
Repository ISTITUZIONALE

Spatial planning education across cultures

Original
Spatial planning education across cultures / Janin Rivolin Yoccoz, U., Gaeta, L., Mazza, L.. - In: ENCYCLOPEDIA. - ISSN 2673-8392. - ELETTRONICO. - 5:52(2025), pp. 1-10. [10.3390/encyclopedia5020052]

Availability:
This version is available at: 11583/2999251 since: 2025-05-09T09:18:29Z

Publisher:
MDPI

Published
DOI:10.3390/encyclopedia5020052

Terms of use:

This article is made available under terms and conditions as specified in the corresponding bibliographic description in the repository

Publisher copyright

(Article begins on next page)

15 October 2026

encyclopedia

MDPI

Entry

Spatial Planning Education Across Cultures

Umberto Janin Rivolin [1,*], Luca Gaeta [2] and Luigi Mazza [2,†]

[1] Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning, Polytechnic of Turin, 10125 Turin, Italy
[2] Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Polytechnic of Milan, 20133 Milan, Italy; luca.gaeta@polimi.it (L.G.)
* Correspondence: umberto.janinrivolin@polito.it
† Passed away in 2023.

Definition: Planning education is the transmission of technical knowledge applied to the design and regulation of space in towns and countries, together with the ethical consciousness of how this knowledge can affect society and the environment.

Keywords: planning education; spatial planning; urban governance; technical knowledge; zoning

1. Introduction

The recurrent difficulties of urban planning practices are often attributed, with good reasons, to external factors such as economic and social upheavals and the consequent detachment of public opinion from the ideal of collective responsibility and action as well as from the pursuit of broad societal objectives, e.g., [1]. "*Urban planning*—according to the Canadian School of Urban Planning at McGill University—*also known as town planning, city planning, regional planning, or rural planning in specific contexts, is a technical and political process that is focused on the development and design of land use and the built environment, including air, water, and the infrastructure passing into and out of urban areas, such as transportation, communications, and distribution networks, and their accessibility*" [2]. As we will argue more fully in this contribution, one might suspect that the term "urban planning" tends to be widely used precisely because it is a very inclusive term, allowing for different kinds of practices, depending on the circumstances, ranging from urban studies to urban design, planning, urban management, administrative practices, urban marketing, and so on. As a result, teaching about it can be difficult, unless one chooses to teach its essential technical practice, which, partly to avoid confusion or misunderstanding, we define as spatial planning. As should be clear by now, we note that the term "spatial planning" is less analytically connoted than other adjectives (e.g., urban planning, landscape planning, environmental planning, etc.) and, therefore, can indicate the technical core of the discipline, which must be the object of teaching so as not to run into the difficulties and confusion induced by the usual term "urban planning". The reader should acknowledge that the first and different version of this paper was presented by the authors at the 29th Annual Congress of the Association of European Schools of Planning [3].

Less common is the reflection on the more structural reasons inherent in the weakness of planners' technical knowledge [4,5]. We contend that part of this weakness is due to how technical knowledge is formed and transmitted from one generation of planners to another. Given its normative nature affecting land use rights, urban planning is mostly taught in close relation to the legal frameworks and cultural contexts in which it is practiced.

check for updates

Academic Editors: Raffaele Barretta and Andrea De Montis

Received: 14 February 2025
Revised: 19 March 2025
Accepted: 10 April 2025
Published: 15 April 2025

Citation: Janin Rivolin, U.; Gaeta, L.; Mazza, L. Spatial Planning Education Across Cultures. *Encyclopedia* **2025**, *5*, 52. https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia5020052

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

When we deal with planning, land "*must be seen not as an isolated physical unit but as something integrated into the whole of the society with its rules, institutions and socio-economic characteristics*"; in particular, "*the use of land and the value of land is far more than can be seen by the naked eye.* [...] *The rights to land, be it ownership or other interests, are vital*". And "*spatial planning is to a great deal concerned with land in a broad sense*" [6] (p. 2) [7]. Our study argues that, albeit understandably for practical reasons, this kind of teaching risks blurring the specific technical core of planning in a wide field of social science skills; thus, as a result, the students lack sufficient awareness of their future role and responsibility as "reflective practitioners" [8].

Teaching requires knowledge to be presented consistently to learners. This need is less apparent for urban planning education, as it concerns a complex field of knowledge and action in which diversity is a growing concern [9,10]. Planning education may be defined as the transmission of technical knowledge applied to the design and regulation of space in towns and countries, together with the ethical consciousness of how this knowledge can affect society and the environment. This entry is based on the idea that planning education ought to have a clear focus on specialized technical knowledge. Accordingly, spatial planning (see above) as technical expertise should be distinguished from urban governance as political decision-making. According to the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, urban governance is "*the process by which governments (local, regional, and national) and stakeholders collectively decide how to plan, finance, and manage urban areas*" [11]. However, the use of the term "governance" should not conceal the fact that only governments have the power to regulate land use. This proposal stems from the authors' joint reflection occasioned by the preparation of a handbook on planning education—its fourth edition is forthcoming—at the request of a well-known Italian publisher of university textbooks [12].

As students from various countries might bear witness to, planning education is commonly related to national contexts, as are most textbooks. On the one hand, this approach to teaching is reasonable due to the embeddedness of planning practices in the institutional framework of legal obligations, administrative routines and social values, which are commonly known as national planning systems [13–16]. On the other hand, the resulting teaching of technical knowledge is bound to contingent configurations of power and society and can barely be disentangled from them. Far from claiming that urban planning can be practiced somewhere as a value-free profession, the authors of the present entry nevertheless argue in favor of the viability of discerning its technical core for learning purposes. However, they fully recognize the validity of other educational approaches in the context of the debate on the training of urban planners, which takes on a global dimension with specific regional challenges [17–19].

The assumptions behind the proposed educational approach are the following:

1. Spatial planning involves transmitting and helping to develop specialized technical knowledge.
2. The technical aspects of planning knowledge may be clearly conveyed to students in theory and practice.
3. The institutional frameworks of professional planning practice do not fully determine technical knowledge.

Regarding these three assumptions, planning handbooks typically take different approaches. Firstly, the subject matter is tied to a particular "national" context, e.g., [20–22], from which it follows that technical knowledge is presented in direct relation to its institutional codification within that national setting. When no specific context is specified, e.g., [23,24], the characterization of technical knowledge often remains ambiguous. Additionally, the knowledge imparted to students covers a range of areas, including administrative and procedural skills, urban design, urban studies, and public manage-

ment. In this broad field, unless it is clearly distinct and organized in its components, technical knowledge can hardly find a proper place and, in most cases, is not "specific" to spatial planning [25].

An alternative mode of teaching requires handbooks to be based on new principles. The above-mentioned assumptions shape the understanding of what factors should be considered for training to take place without referring to a single national context. Instead, they lead to broadening the historical perspective to include authors and experiences that have laid the technical foundations of planning expertise. Disentangling planning education from single national or cultural backgrounds would enable international students to turn technical skills into professional proficiency in their countries of origin [26]. At the same time, it would make it easier for students to build international professional careers [27].

The following sections set out five theses, which give the reasons for the educational choices that should inform a handbook devised for teaching spatial planning across cultural contexts. It is appropriate to use a somewhat assertive tone to state the five theses, which are as follows:

1. Urban and regional planning is a blurred field of knowledge: its technical core should be identified as spatial planning. (The term "urban and regional planning" is introduced here to refer to the extension of the "urban planning" approach (see above) beyond the urban dimension, with the ideal inclusion of the entire region. This is, after all, the logical and rhetorical operation deliberately carried out by Patrick Abercrombie in 1933 (the first edition of his book) to legitimize the planner's profession beyond the urban dimension so that he would also be concerned with the countryside and landscape [28]).
2. Spatial planning serves as a tool for achieving urban governance objectives.
3. In an educational context, spatial planning methods should be linked to zoning. (The earliest known forms of spatial planning, thousands of years ago, consisted of the division of the urban area into zones and the allocation of some areas for public use over others for predominantly private use [29]. In modern times, zoning is recognized in German administrative culture between 1870 and 1915 as an instrument related to building regulations. In the early 1900s, it entered the town planning legislation of some countries (e.g., in Sweden in 1907 and in England in 1909 with the Town Planning Act). In 1916, New York City first adopted it to classify the entire city, built and unbuilt parts [30]. As is known, the historic US Supreme Court case "Ambler vs. Euclid" led in 1926 to the constitutionalizing of zoning in the US [31]).
4. Modern spatial planning has identifiable historical roots, the study of which forms the basis for all further learning.
5. Urban governance is not technical knowledge but rather a political practice that may be taught to explain the effects of spatial planning.

In conclusion (Section 7), a few considerations are drawn regarding the relationship between planning education and civic progress.

2. Spatial Planning as Technical Knowledge

Planners especially know that both political and technical approaches to organizing space are fundamental in every kind of society. As is well known, their contemporary characters took shape with the establishment of the modern nation-state [32]. No matter how many things may change in the future, the ordering of space will be a crucial societal issue. By "ordering of space", we mean the literal translation of the German term *Raumordnung* [33], adopted to denote the essential function of planning on the federal government level. In other words, we would say that it is the pre-political goal from which "urban planning" (see above) springs and is shaped, with political connotations in each institutional

context. Urban and regional planning addresses this societal need, even if, at times, it may seem inadequate, uncertain, or ineffective. We suggest that this understanding has to be set out before the teaching begins, ensuring that students recognize the significance of the subject, irrespective of historical periods or their specific national context.

More generally, as mentioned above, urban and regional planning is in fact a blurred field of knowledge, the technical core of which should be identified with spatial planning (thesis no. 1). In this regard, we believe that it is important, above all, to refrain from relying on shifting national variants of "urban and regional planning"—such as *town and country planning* in the United Kingdom, *urbanisme* in France, *urbanistica* in Italy, or *Raumplanung* in Germany and so forth—which are widely used in professional and academic discourse. These terms were established by the national technical cultures that emerged in the early twentieth century through the first disciplinary foundations, such as schools, journals, conferences, and associations. The issue, however, is that over the past century, the organization of space has encompassed an increasingly broad range of subjects. As a result, these national classifications have come to include a vast and diverse field of knowledge and disciplines, without clearly defining their boundaries. They describe bodies of knowledge that do not fit within a single framework due to the multiple objectives they pursue and the varying terminology they employ.

For these reasons, it would be preferable, when compiling a handbook, to adopt two interrelated terms that more effectively convey the political and technical functions of spatial organization: we suggest urban governance and spatial planning (see above). Urban governance refers to the political decision-making process through which choices about spatial organization—such as defining and regulating land use—are made. Spatial planning, on the other hand, denotes the technical expertise that supports urban governance in achieving its objectives. This terminological pairing brings clarity to the diverse field of "urban and regional planning" (or any equivalent national term) by distinguishing the techniques used to structure space from the political processes that determine this structure. This conceptual distinction can be applied to virtually any socio-administrative or cultural context, providing a general framework for understanding the discipline's specificity.

While traditional terminology merges political decision-making processes with technical expertise, distinguishing between urban governance and spatial planning enables a clearer separation of two distinct practices, each with its own characteristics and educational significance. Since spatial planning represents a form of technical knowledge applied for practical purposes, it can be effectively taught by tracing its origins back to ancient times, with a particular emphasis on developments over the past 150 years. This approach provides deep and far-reaching roots for land use regulation, clearly demonstrating how this practice ultimately translates into social control [34]. The term "regulation" is generally understood to mean the intervention of the state in the spheres of private activity to pursue purposes of general interest (reduce health and safety risks, traffic control, pursue goals of justice and transparency in consumer-producer relations, and so on). Among the many forms of regulation, one particular and important form is "land use regulation". Here, state intervention plays a decisive role in dealing with the externalities produced by land uses. However, its particularity is due to the characteristics of the regulated resource, a scarce and nonreproducible good that is constitutively and simultaneously continuous and discontinuous [35].

3. Spatial Planning as an Instrument of Urban Governance

To transmit technical knowledge effectively, its societal value should be defined and justified. In other words, a persuasive response should be provided to the following question: "from what kind of human practices does the need for a specific technical skill

originate and why?" Without this answer—it has to be admitted—it is more challenging to teach not only how technical knowledge should be applied but also, more importantly, what objectives and responsibilities are at stake. Contemporary handbooks on urban planning normally skip this question. Their implicit response traces the origin of technical knowledge to the institutionalization of professional planning practices in the modern era "*as a technique used by the public authorities*" [36] (p. 1) to pursue aims "*which are set out in legislation or in some documents of legal or accepted standard*" [21] (p. 2). This approach ultimately reverses the causal relationship between practical reasoning and institutional codification. In instances where attempts are made to define spatial planning without reference to a specific institutional framework, the following ideological assertion prevails: if urban planning is "*a process of formulating goals and agreeing the manner in which these are to be met*" [22] (p. 6), or "*an institutionalized social technology for systematizing knowledge pertinent for a particular kind of collective action and for marshalling the power required for its implementation*" [24] (p. 8), then it is also legitimate to overlook its technical nature.

Inasmuch as spatial planning serves as a tool for achieving urban governance objectives (thesis no. 2), its necessity emerged long before its institutional codification in the modern era. Spatial plans, as the more suitable tools for pursuing urban governance, have existed since the earliest human societies established permanent settlements and required mechanisms to organize and regulate space. This involved the outline of boundaries, enclosing sacred areas and distinguishing between public and private spaces. The earliest literary evidence of spatial planning appears in Aristotle's *Politics*, where the urban planner Hippodamus of Miletus is said to have linked the grid plan to the drafting of a political constitution [37]. This connection highlights how the technical practice of land surveys and division carries significant political implications.

Defining "urban governance" as the decision-making process by which political power regulates the use and development of land, whatever the institutional context—ancient or contemporary, of one state or another—in which this process occurs, is complementary to defining "spatial planning" as the technical expertise for doing so.

4. Spatial Planning as Land Use Zoning

The French linguist Émile Benveniste [38] argues that the Latin word for rule, *régula*, originates from the Indo-European root reg- (the same root as rex, meaning "king"). This root signifies drawing a straight line and establishing a right, seemingly referring to the act of land division. This etymology, so crucial to civil society, highlights that spatial planning can primarily be understood as zoning. Accordingly, in an educational context, spatial planning methods should be linked to zoning (thesis no. 3).

In its early modern stages, planning culture often conflated zoning with functional and social segregation [39], overlooking or neglecting the fact that land division itself—rather than its possible uses or effects—was the core of this ancient technique. Students should be guided to recognize that the essential skill of spatial planning begins with and fundamentally relies on the act of dividing urban land into zones with designated uses.

Emphasizing this concept opens the door to two significant pedagogical opportunities. First, it showcases how every technique within the scope of spatial planning is rooted in land partitioning actions, coupled with specific regulations governing land use within the designated area of the plan. The terms "area", "parcel", "sector", and "block" commonly used in technical planning documents all assume the outline of boundary lines, without which floor area ratios and other regulations would have no set meaning or could be legally binding. Secondly, it clarifies that zoning belongs to the core of spatial planning. However, this distinction alone is insufficient to ground a systematic and communicable body of knowledge. Moreover, it does not imply that spatial planning should disregard the valuable

contributions of social and environmental sciences. However, to convey the social value of spatial planning it is crucial that students recognize land division as a core skill.

Zoning provides a solid foundation for the technical training of planners, regardless of their country or cultural background. There is no universal approach to zoning, as it is a flexible technique adaptable to diverse goals and contexts [40,41]. In fact, zoning is implemented in nearly all cities, across a wide range of political systems, economic structures, climates, and cultural settings. As an ancient technique that remains relevant today, zoning reflects the enduring link between land, spatial planning, human settlements, and citizenship. Another crucial skill to learn is how to differentiate between the emancipatory use of boundaries—which supports equitable spatial organization—and their segregationist or discriminatory applications [42]. In this regard, the ethical implications of zoning must be carefully considered in the training of future planners. The autonomy of technical knowledge does not absolve it from responsibility, making it essential for students to understand the social and moral consequences of planning schemes.

5. The Matrices of Contemporary Spatial Planning

For any disciplinary knowledge to be established, it must develop an intellectual and professional genealogy. This task is typically undertaken by historians of the discipline, who trace its evolution and foundational principles. Such historical overviews are often briefly outlined in the introductory chapters of handbooks, e.g., [21,43], providing essential context for understanding the field's development and significance. Instead, technical knowledge can be more organically linked to the objectives of urban governance in the modern era while still recognizing its autonomy.

Urban governance underwent significant changes between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, largely in response to the spatial consequences of the Second Industrial Revolution. The rapid urban expansion and industrial growth of this period made it imperative for the modern state to regulate urban development through land use control. Within this context, contemporary spatial planning emerged as a discipline, shaped by the development of new models for organizing space, aimed at addressing the challenges posed by fast urbanization and ensuring a long-term approach to land management. Likewise, modern spatial planning has identifiable historical roots, the study of which should form the basis for all further learning (thesis no. 4). The modern matrices of spatial planning correspond to the technical knowledge developed by authors who pre-empted, albeit in different ways, the characteristics and values of contemporary urban planning. Notable, though not exclusive, examples include Catalonian-born Ildefons Cerdá, Scotsman Patrick Geddes, and Englishman Ebenezer Howard [12]. These figures were deeply engaged in their time, actively working across multiple social and professional domains. Their broad commitments and diverse interests did not prevent them from developing distinct theories, models, and rules for spatial planning, many of which remain in use today—though not always with explicit acknowledgment of their origins.

Cerdá was the only one among the three to have received formal training in a technical school of engineering and to have been integrated into a professional body. However, throughout his life, he also took on administrative and political roles at various stages. The central element of his technical doctrine was the design of the grid plan, which he applied to the expansion of Barcelona. He elevated this urban design approach into the cornerstone of a "General Theory of Urbanization", laying the foundation for systematic urban planning principles [44]. By placing grid plan design and building regulations at the core of his theory, Cerdá was able to develop technical solutions to address the hygienic, economic, housing and transport challenges of urbanization. However, his technical application of grids and building rules was not limited to functional efficiency; it also considered their

impact on citizens' material rights and wellbeing. Drawing from the rich tradition of urban grid plans, Cerdá linked them to an ideal of liberal and progressive governance. In his vision, the very form of the city acted as a mechanism to curb the accumulation of positional land rent, promoting more equitable and affordable spatial development. Additionally, he saw the grid as a tool to enhance communication and interaction among citizens, reinforcing urban cohesion and accessibility.

Geddes was an unconventional biologist and a strong proponent of the Darwinian concept of evolution. He was not only a theorist but also a social activist who eventually became a planner, all the while striving to establish a new science [45]. His contribution to spatial planning techniques extended beyond the well-known "survey, analysis, plan" method—which he himself never systematically applied. Instead, his true innovation lay in how he linked the planning process to the historical and geographical context of each city, as demonstrated in his work across Scotland, India, Cyprus, and Palestine. Geddes' planning technique was adaptive, deeply attuned to the unique characteristics of each urban culture and aimed at restoring harmony between nature and human settlement—an equilibrium that industrialization had disrupted. For him, urban planning was not merely about spatial organization; it was an ongoing process of renewal, intertwining the evolution of space, community, and environment. More precisely, he viewed planning as a means to strengthen the relationship between a community and its surrounding ecosystem. Through his work, Geddes sought an alternative to the unsustainable, dissipative development model that had hitherto dominated urban growth. His vision proposed a regenerative approach, where cities evolved in balance with their ecological and cultural environment.

Howard was a self-taught visionary who moved between various professions and across the Atlantic, drawing from a diverse range of intellectual influences to craft an ambitious social reform program. His key contribution to spatial planning was his functional deconstruction of the industrial city, which he then reassembled into a cooperative, balanced, and hierarchical system of land use and mobility, extending across an entire region. Through his Garden City diagrams, Howard argued that unchecked urban expansion was a major source of societal conflict, disrupting social harmony. He envisioned urban planning as a cooperative effort within civil society, advocating for planned communities that balanced housing, industry, and green spaces [46]. By promoting urban planning as a voluntary, collective and structured process, Howard played a crucial role in shaping twentieth-century planning principles, particularly within the framework of the welfare state. His ideas laid the foundation in favor of modern urban development in the twentieth century, influencing the creation of planned cities and regional planning policies worldwide.

In short, the technical knowledge of spatial planning emerged from a combination of three key matrices: regulatory, processual, and systemic [47–49]. While these elements do not always merge into a fully coherent or exhaustive framework, they provide students with the fundamental building blocks necessary for further learning and specialization in the field.

6. Urban Governance as a Political Practice

The first two theses differentiate between the technical role in spatial regulation and the decision-making and executive duties of political authority. The two subsequent theses summarize the technical substance of spatial planning which, in principle, could be taught without referring to institutional and legal frameworks. At the same time, the diverse and pressing challenges faced by urban governance—such as urban containment, historic center preservation, smooth and safe mobility, environmental and landscape protection—raise equally complex methodological questions for technical knowledge. This makes it advisable to teach

planning techniques in conjunction with decision-making processes. However, it is important to be aware that urban governance is not technical knowledge but rather a political practice that may be taught to understand the effects of spatial planning (thesis no. 5).

Contrary to what is often stated or implied in contemporary planning handbooks, it seems essential to highlight that national planning systems, including the institutional structures, procedures, types of plans for different administrative levels, and targeted policies, do not represent the technical core of urban planning. If they did, the need for contextualization could blur the distinction between technical expertise and political responsibility. Instead, contextualization serves a different purpose: it helps demonstrate that the objectives and political impacts of spatial planning are never absolute but are always shaped by the values, characteristics, and goals of the specific planning system within which technical knowledge is applied.

Urban governance is a political practice that involves various types of lay knowledge, with procedural knowledge and decision-making analysis being key points of reference. In practical terms, urban governance revolves around identifying planning issues and deciding how and when to address them. An effective way to teach urban governance is through case studies, as they make it possible to carry out with students a detailed examination of local decision-making practices [50]. A handbook can adopt this approach by presenting real-world examples that illustrate the stakeholders involved, their actions and roles, the extent of their authority, and their connections to influential forces and interests shaping decisions about a particular area. Furthermore, case studies can be transformed into interactive "games", where students assume the roles of various stakeholders and attempt to develop alternative shared solutions beyond those that emerged from the actual decision-making process [51]. Among the various actors in urban governance, planners play a distinctive role as experts possessing specialized technical knowledge, which differentiates them from the lay public. This kind of expertise must remain central to planning education, even though it operates within the limits of a broader political framework.

Preserving a clear distinction between technical and political responsibilities is not meant to diminish or minimize the influence of technical knowledge on urban governance. Rather, it serves to highlight that planners' responsibilities extend beyond drafting plans, as they also play a role in the social construction of planning systems [16]. Defining the technical nature of spatial planning is crucial for educating professionals to recognize that planning systems are not merely formal, static structures to be navigated or resisted in the pursuit of creativity, improved built environments, or social wellbeing [14]. Moreover, understanding that spatial control for political, social, and economic purposes predates modern planning systems helps contextualize contemporary planning practice within a broader historical and institutional framework. This is essential for grasping the role technical knowledge plays in the progressive design of citizenship.

7. Conclusions and Prospects

As a sound basis for teaching across national borders, the five theses presented in this entry advocate the distinction of spatial planning from urban governance, the former being instrumental for the latter. The technical knowledge of spatial planning can be best assimilated if zoning is set out as its cornerstone and if robust historical matrices are identified. Thus, the contextual and decisional nature of urban governance would not prevent learning specific technical expertise but rather show how to apply it to different institutional cultures.

These final reflections provide an opportunity to consider the political relevance of teaching spatial planning. It is widely recognized that political decision-makers and the lay public often express disappointment over urban planning's weak or contradictory responses to complex, persistent issues—commonly referred to as wicked problems. The economic, environmental, and social crises of recent years have significantly eroded public confidence in the idea of

collective action and shared responsibility, as well as in the pursuit of common interests, thus undermining some fundamental principles of spatial planning. The fiscal crisis and the further weakening of public authority have stripped urban governance of a crucial function, reducing it to little more than just a market-driven approach to spatial development. So far, efforts to simplify urban governance—intended to make it more efficient and transparent—have often failed. This happens because public and private professional bodies frequently exploit complex and poorly designed procedures, which, rather than improving governance, expand the discretionary power of decision-makers, obscure accountability, and facilitate collusion.

It is our contention that the challenges mentioned above are, at least in part, a long-standing consequence of an unstable approach to teaching technical knowledge, one that lacks the necessary consistency and clarity. Since spatial planning plays a role in shaping the evolving concept of citizenship, it is reasonable to suggest that public confusion or distrust toward professional planning is, over time, also a reflection of how planners themselves have been trained, often through methods that are insufficiently focused or selective. In conclusion, a bridge is needed to connect robust planning expertise with accountable and inclusive governance, and its foundations lie in university lecture halls.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Acknowledgments: The living authors would like to extend special thanks to Luigi Mazza, who passed away in 2023, their teacher and co-author of the handbook that served as the primary source of inspiration for this contribution.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Ponzini, D. Introduction: Crisis and renewal of contemporary urban planning. *Eur. Plan. Stud.* **2016**, *24*, 1237–1245. [CrossRef]
2. School of Urban Planning, McGill University. What Is Urban Planning? Available online: http://www.mcgill.ca/urbanplanning/planning/ (accessed on 20 March 2025).
3. Gaeta, L.; Janin Rivolin, U.; Mazza, L. Handbooks in planning: Five theses for teaching across national borders. In Proceedings of the Aesop Annual Congress, Prague, Czech Republic, 13–16 July 2015.
4. Mazza, L. Technical knowledge, practical reason and the planner's responsibility. *Town Plan. Rev.* **1995**, *66*, 389–409. [CrossRef]
5. Carter, E.J. Toward a Core Body of Knowledge: A New Curriculum for City and Regional Planners. *J. Plan. Educ. Res.* **1993**, *12*, 160–163. [CrossRef]
6. Larsson, G. *Spatial Planning Systems in Western Europe: An Overview*; IOS Press: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2006.
7. Plotkin, S. *Keep Out. The Struggle for Land Use Control*; University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA, 1987.
8. Schön, D.A. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*; Basic Books: New York, NY, USA, 1983. [CrossRef]
9. Diko, S.K.; Hollstein, L.M.; Palazzo, D. (Eds.) *Routledge Companion to Professional Awareness and Diversity in Planning Education*; Routledge: London, UK, 2023. [CrossRef]
10. Millard-Ball, A.; Desai, G.; Fahrney, J. Diversifying Planning Education through Course Readings. *J. Plan. Educ. Res.* **2021**, *44*, 527–534. [CrossRef]
11. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. What Is Urban Governance? Available online: https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/urban-governance/concepts-and-debates/what-is-urban-governance/ (accessed on 20 March 2025).
12. Gaeta, L.; Janin Rivolin, U.; Mazza, L. *Governo del Territorio e Pianificazione Spaziale*, 3rd ed.; De Agostini Scuola: Novara, Italy, 2021.
13. CEC (Commission of the European Communities). *The EU Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems and Policies*; Regional Development Studies 28; European Communities: Luxembourg, 1997.
14. Janin Rivolin, U. Planning systems as institutional technologies: A proposed conceptualization and the implications for comparison. *Plan. Pract. Res.* **2012**, *27*, 63–85. [CrossRef]

15. Nadin, V.; Fernández-Maldonado, A.M. Spatial planning systems in Europe: Multiple trajectories. *Plan. Pract. Res.* **2023**, *38*, 625–638. [CrossRef]
16. Servillo, L.; Van den Broeck, P. The social construction of planning systems. A strategic-relational institutionalist approach. *Plan. Pract. Res.* **2012**, *27*, 41–61. [CrossRef]
17. Frank, A.I.; Silver, C. (Eds.) *Urban Planning Education: Beginnings, Global Movement and Future Prospects*; Springer: New York, NY, USA, 2018. [CrossRef]
18. Sykes, O.; Shaw, D.; Webb, B. *International Planning Studies: An Introduction*; Palgrave Macmillan: Singapore, 2023. [CrossRef]
19. Green Leigh, N.; French, S.P.; Guhathakurta, S.; Stiftel, B. (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of International Planning Education*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2020.
20. Gabellini, P. *Tecniche Urbanistiche*, 12th ed.; Carocci: Rome, Italy, 2001.
21. Cullingworth, J.B.; Nadin, V. *Town & Country Planning in the UK*, 14th ed.; Routledge: London, UK, 2006. [CrossRef]
22. Caves, R.W.; Cullingworth, J.B. *Planning in the USA: Policies, Issues, and Processes*, 5th ed.; Routledge: London, UK, 2023. [CrossRef]
23. Selicato, F.; Rotondo, F. *Progettazione Urbanistica. Teorie e Tecniche*; McGraw-Hill: Milano, Italy, 2009.
24. Weber, R.; Crane, R. (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Urban Planning*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2012. [CrossRef]
25. Bonavero, F.; Cassatella, C. The Italian planner: Insights from 20 years of planning education and practice in Italy. *Plan. Pract. Res.* **2022**, *37*, 751–770. [CrossRef]
26. Shi, L.; Chiu-Shee, C. Taught in America I: How Does an American Planning Education Serve Mainland Chinese Students? *J. Plan. Educ. Res.* **2024**, *44*, 2337–2349. [CrossRef]
27. Ratnayake, R.; Butt, A. Encounters with the unfamiliar: International planning education. *Int. Plan. Stud.* **2017**, *23*, 51–64. [CrossRef]
28. Abercrombie, P. *Town and Country Planning*; Oxford University Press: London, UK, 1943.
29. Bairoch, P. *Cities and Economic Development: From the Dawn of History to the Present*; University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 1988.
30. Toll, S.I. *Zoned American*; Grossman Publishers: New York, NY, USA, 1969.
31. Wolf, M.A. *The Zoning of America: Euclid v. Ambler*; University Press of Kansas: Lawrence, KS, USA, 2008. [CrossRef]
32. Sassen, S. *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA, 2006.
33. Spiecker, M. *Raumordnung und Private*; Duncker & Humblot: Berlin, Germany, 2020.
34. Mazza, L. *Planning and Citizenship*; Routledge: London, UK, 2015. [CrossRef]
35. Netzer, D. (Ed.) *The Property Tax, Land Use and Land Use Regulation*; Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, UK, 2003. [CrossRef]
36. Marescotti, L. *Urbanistica. Fondamenti e Teorie*; Maggioli: Santarcangelo di Romagna, Italy, 2008.
37. Mazza, L. Plan and constitution—Aristotle's Hippodamus: Towards an 'ostensive' definition of spatial planning. *Town Plan. Rev.* **2009**, *80*, 113–141. [CrossRef]
38. Benveniste, E. *Indo-European Language and Society*; Faber: London, UK, 1973. [CrossRef]
39. Jacobs, J. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*; Random House: New York, NY, USA, 1961.
40. Goldstein, J. *Zoning Alternatives: Current Trends and New Directions*; University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, NC, USA, 2004. [CrossRef]
41. Hirt, S. American land-use and planning law in comparative European perspective. In *A Research Agenda for US Land Use and Planning Law*; Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, UK, 2023. [CrossRef]
42. Whittemore, A.H. Exclusionary Zoning: Origins, Open Suburbs, and Contemporary Debates. *J. Am. Plan. Assoc.* **2020**, *87*, 167–180. [CrossRef]
43. Benevolo, L.; Benevolo, A. (Eds.) *Il Nuovo Manuale di Urbanistica*; Mancosu: Roma, Italy, 2009.
44. Cerdá, I. *Teoria General de la Urbanizacion y Applicacion de Sus Principios y Doctrinas a la Reforma y Ensanche de Barcelona*; Instituto de Estudios Fiscales: Madrid, Spain, 1867.
45. Meller, E. *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner*; Routledge: London, UK, 1990.
46. Hall, P.; Ward, C. *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard*; Wiley: Chichester, UK, 1999.
47. UPC (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Laboratori d'Urbanisme). *Treballs Sobre Cerdá i el Seu Eixample a Barcelona*; Ajuntament de Barcelona: Barcelona, Spain, 1991.
48. Ferraro, G. *Rieducazione Alla Speranza. Patrick Geddes Planner in India, 1914-1924*; Jaca Book: Milano, Italy, 1998.
49. Hardy, D. *From Garden Cities to New Towns*; Spon: London, UK, 1991.
50. Denoon-Stevens, S.P.; Andres, L.; Jones, P.; Melgaço, L.; Massey, R.; Nel, V. Theory versus Practice in Planning Education: The View from South Africa. *Plan. Pract. Res.* **2020**, *37*, 509–525. [CrossRef]
51. Van Hulst, M. Storytelling, a model of and a model for planning. *Plan. Theory* **2012**, *11*, 299–318. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.