The Evolution of Planning Thought Lecture Series assembled fifteen highly respected individuals, who have influenced and shaped the field of planning over the last 40+ years, at the Vienna University of Technology, Austria from 19th to 23rd May 2014 in order to impart their collective wisdom on the current and next generation of planners. This Lecture Series took place as part of the 200 year anniversary celebrations of the Vienna University of Technology, Austria and was made possible due to the support from many sponsors, including the Regional Studies Association.

The following intellectual leaders in the field of planning whose thoughts are keenly sought out by audiences internationally contributed to the Evolution of Planning Thought Lecture Series:
The aim of the Evolution of Planning Thought Lecture Series was to unpack the roots of planning through oral histories and moreover to figure out how the current and future generation of planners can make use of all the great planning ideas elaborated by the first generation of planners. It explored how planners developed theories and conceptual tools, how these conceptual tools shaped the development of practice, how planners organised themselves increasingly at an international and global scale, and the conceptual, institutional and practical gap that remains to be filled. The Lecture Series provided a unique platform to reflect on the past in order to respond to current challenges but also to reflect on the past to further the field of planning in the future.
From a methodological point of view the aim of this Lecture Series was to give life to what intellectuals do and write, and moreover to help people understand this more deeply. Therefore an autobiographical approach was applied seeking to (a) unfold the several ways that planning ideas have evolved, developed, circulated and moved through time and space; (b) unpack the original purposes for which the “big planning ideas and achievements” were generated; (c) provide a means to understand how these planning thoughts can be adopted meaningfully in a different time, context and situation; (d) offer a sort of roadmap/toolkit for tackling current and future challenges – based on lessons learnt from past experiences – and; (e) prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations of established concepts.

The Evolution of Planning Lecture Series highlighted that planning ideas cannot be cleaved totally from the life of the person and moreover that planning ideas and personal life circumstances are constantly interacting. Thus, if we really want to understand the “history of planning ideas” we have to care about the history of the person who generated the idea too, though only to the extent that it bears upon, illuminates and revivifies their thinking. I am arguing that only if we understand the real purposes for which these ideas were generated (meaning ideas seen in context) can we use them to tackle contemporary challenges. If we fail in this endeavour, there is little point in using them and we will forget them over time.

The results from the Evolution of Planning Thought symposium will lead to a book in which the essays and biographical experiences of the contributors will be recounted for all to see. This book is edited by Beatrix Haselsberger (Vienna University of Technology, Austria) and her 2 co-editors Laura Saija (University of Catania, Italy) and Julie Knight (Towson University, USA). Therefore, in addition to the Lecture Series, which was open to the public, a set of other activities (book workshops, editorial meetings, inter-generational dialogues between young planners and students from Vienna and the planning pioneers, a world café) took place as part of the Vienna symposium in May 2014.

For more information about the Evolution of Planning project visit: http://info.tuwien.ac.at/planning-thought/ or follow us on Twitter: @PlanningThought

Bio Box
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