THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY EFFECT ON CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PRACTICES IN EUROPE

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to examine the significance of planning cultures under the lense of overcoming the dividing function of national borders. Doing so this papers seeks to analyse the collective memory effect on cross-border cooperation practices and more precisely to figure out to what extent subconscious collective memories influence formal planning decisions in general as well as the quality and success of cross-border cooperation processes in particular. However, rather than searching for the cultural nucleus of cross-border planning practice, I am proposing an analytical framework, capable of examining the question of how appropriate trans-cultural understanding can be built up in different cross-border regions. Absent such an understanding will tend to legitimise the stereotypes we hold of 'the others' and hamper the practice of cross-border cooperation.

1. Introduction: Setting the scene

European spatial planning has emerged in a way that has (mostly) ignored the complexities associated with national borders, tending to take a monochromatic view of them as either 'closed' (external borders of the EU) or 'open' (internal borders of the EU), often rooted in a singular view of either a 'space of places', or a 'space of flows' (after Castells 1996). But this view denies the much more complex, shaded reality of borders, which are ambiguous human constructions (*cf.* Paasi 2009; O'Dowd 2003). Unpacking the complex border phenomenon brings to the fore that borders are in fact comprised of an overlapping set of boundaries (including administrative, political, social, cultural, economic and mental), all of which have spatial and social impacts and influence spatial planning processes, decisions and outcomes (Haselsberger 2010). This understanding helps explain why properly working cross-border networks are rarely found throughout Europe despite the many financial support programmes and institutional frameworks set up by the European Union (*cf.* Dühr et al. 2010, de Vries 2008). Assuming that the planning systems mismatch is not the root-cause of the problem, as can be learned from successful cross-border cooperation projects (Fürst 2009), I am arguing that the lack of a trans-cultural understanding may be regarded as one of the reasons why, despite good intentions, long-lasting and effective cross-border cooperation turns out to be so difficult in planning practice.

As planning cultures are changing over time and the beliefs, perceptions, and feelings of different social groups, classes and entire societies are difficult to grasp

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(Friedmann 2005; Hofstede 2001, Knieling & Othengrafen 2009), it is not surprising that these complex aspects have so far been largely ignored in planning research debates. In this paper, I propose an analytical framework that will allow us to explore these mostly subconscious and all too often 'taken-for-granted' dimensions of cross-border planning. The innovative aspect of my approach lies in combining collective memory and planning culture theories and by unpacking 'taken-for-granted' generalisations about 'the others', which often take the form of negative stereotypes and misconceptions within a given planning culture. By doing so, I hope that this paper will contribute to a deeper trans-cultural understanding and thus help to overcome a critical aspect of the continuing, historically contingent, and divisive effects of (European) borders.

2. Cross-border cooperation: The significance of planning cultures

Overcoming national borders through spatial planning and, in particular, through various forms of cross-border cooperation is a very challenging task that requires much more than 'just' planning the physical space of the area under consideration. It has to deal with issues such as the figuring out of appropriate solutions for differing or even conflicting interests and intentions on both sides of the border. The situation becomes even more complicated when considering that human beings are not only part of their respective administrative and political systems, but behave according to their own cultural and societal backgrounds and experiences. Reeves (2001) alerts us that if planners, professionals and practitioners do not reflect upon these socio-cultural characteristics or do not consider them important enough in the planning process, this may compromise the effectiveness of planning.

But it is also the case that those directly involved in the planning process – planners, professionals and other practitioners – act according to their own social and cultural understandings as well as their value system, that is to say, according to their own planning culture(s). Fürst (2009) defines planning culture as a mental predisposition, encompassing specific values and orientations, which those involved in a given planning process share. These 'soft cultural factors', as Ernste (2012) calls them, are decisive for the success of any planning process. As part of their professional work, planners, professionals and practitioners, make or implement spatial plans or manage and coordinate development projects, in accordance to their *"ability to interpret and re-interpret rules and norms in the framework of their own personal motivations"* (Ernste 2012, p.88). Hence this group of people does not act in a detached and unemotional way, but according to what I call 'the collective planning ethos' of their country (representing the institutional and political settings in which they are embedded). On the other hand it has to be stressed that, in addition, very emotional individual, cultural and societal backgrounds – the 'habitus' (collective civilised dispositions) of a person, as Bourdieu (1979) calls them – are at play. They are characterised by gender, religion, race, ethnicity, language, politics, family background, education, dress-code, hobbies, interests, personal experience, professional qualification, views, beliefs and priorities.

In the scientific debate, it has been strongly emphasised that different planning cultures produce very different kinds of planning as well as that the underlying cultural differences may hamper cross-border cooperation and even risk the building up of negative or stereotypical judgments of 'the others' on the other side of the border (*cf.* Friedmann 1998, 2011; Sondercock 1998; Hofstede 2001; Healy & Upton 2010; Fürst 2009; Knieling & Othengrafen 2009; Haselsberger 2010). On the other hand it has also been demonstrated that trans-cultural understanding provides a means to grasp the way that *"planning tools and practices are being adjusted in different ways in response to common challenges and with what effect"* (Nadin 2012, p.2), and doing so furthers the spatial integration process. What is needed then is a truly trans-cultural understanding, where *"planners [on both side of the border] must identify what values they are taking into their work and whether they could provide betters services for their customers by seeking constructively to change some of their attitudes, values and ethics"* (Kitchen 2007, p.147).

This raises the question if planners, professionals and practitioners have the ability (or rather the political will and/or interest) to understand issues deriving from other frameworks and languages. Interestingly, *"similarities can be equally important as differences [when] looking at different perspectives and challenging one's own beliefs and attitudes towards people with which one is dealing."* (Reeves 2011, p.598-9) Dory Reeves further alerts us (by referring to the work of Susan Bryant 2001 on the building up of cross-cultural competences) that it could be very problematic if the planning culture within which a planner is embedded appears to be too similar to the institutionalised practices of his/her cooperation partner. This might easily lead to over-identification and moreover to inappropriate assumptions about the reality. Languages serve as a good example here. The meaning of the terms *Raumplanung* (Austria, Germany), *Urbanistica* (Italy), *Urbanisme et Aménagement du Territoire* (France, Belgium, Luxembourg), *Town and Country Planning* (UK), *Ruimtelijke Ordening* (the Netherlands), and *Land Use Planning* (Ireland) all evolved in their own particular legal, socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. Strictly speaking, the terms are not internationally transferable to other countries, except in the most general sense. This applies even in countries with the same language; *Raumplanung*, for instance, has different meanings in Austria and Germany (*cf.* Haselsberger 2009).

So what we can learn from current debates is that planning cultures:

- are very hard to grasp as they encompass various interests, beliefs and perceptions as well as different means of resources, such us power and money (Reimer & Blotevogel 2012) originating from different spatial scales (e.g., local, regional, national, supra-national, cross-border), which are not necessarily harmoniously aligned;
- are manifested in many different (symbolic and ideological) layers, such as values, traditions, attitudes, mind sets and habits, which are shared by those taking part in the respective planning process (Fürst 2009);

- vary from place to place as well as from context to context, but might gradually converge over the next few decades due to the ever-expanding worldwide net of professional contacts and the internet (Friedmann 2011); and that they
- are difficult to decode from non-native-language-speakers and cannot be transferred easily to any other context or situation (Haselsberger 2009).

Although it is often argued that the concept of planning culture is unclear and difficult to define within humanistic and social science research and that it is a big challenge to operationalise it as a scientific concept (Knieling & Othengrafen 2009), a first important theoretical-analytical roadmap has been provided by Gullestrup (2009). He distinguishes between a horizontal dimension of culture (those segments of culture, which are manifested on the same 'perceivable' level: e.g. immediately visible cultural traits) and a vertical one (those segments of culture, which provide an understanding for the perceivable cultural layers: e.g. hidden, taken-for-granted assumptions and fundamental legitimating cultural traits). For him culture consists of (a) meanings, attitudes and values – the emic perspective (according to Harris 1999) or the cultural specific aspects of communication (according to Reeves 2011) – as well as of (b) the visualised or manifested product of social interactions – the etic perspective (according to Harris 1999) or the generalised aspects of communication (according to Reeves 2011). Knieling & Othengrafen (2009) have further elaborated the model of Gullestrup (2009) by incorporating the three levels of culture as introduced by Schein (2004) into it. Doing so, they have introduced the 'cultural planning model', which consists of three levels, namely (a) 'planning artefacts' (visible planning products, structures and processes); (b) 'planning environment' (shared assumptions, values and cognitive frames that are taken-for-granted by members of the planning profession); and (c) 'societal environment' (underlying and unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings which are affecting planning) (Knieling & Othengrafen 2009, p.57).

Although these models provide important insights for grasping the planning culture complexity, it is argued here that the dimension of time and change – although partly considered in the Gullestrup model – does not achieve the attention required. The model of Gullestrup only briefly introduces the 'culture dimension of time' and limits it to 'culture change-initiating factors'. He distinguishes between external ones, those deriving from nature e.g. climate change or from other cultures e.g. through European integration processes and internal ones, those which arise within a particular culture, due to political change, etc. But planning cultures are subject to change or as Friedmann (2011) describes it, they are "*in movement in the sense that they are continually being revamped to adapt to perceived changes both internal and external in origin*" (p.196). Hence the question arising is of how shared meanings and values are constructed and why which elements are passed over – or not – to the next generations and what impact this process has for the building of personal and social identities turns out to be a fundamental issue.

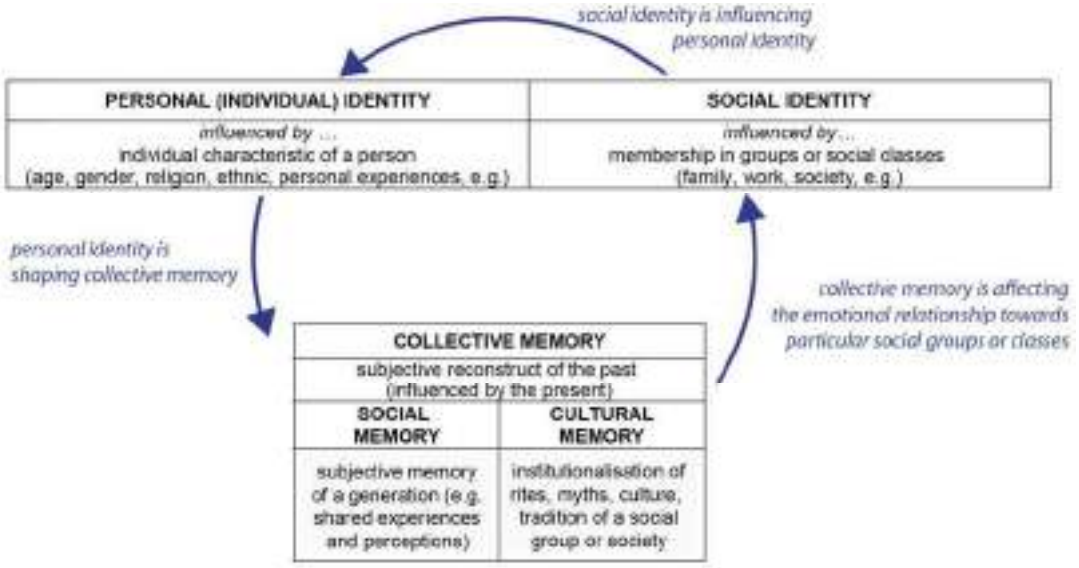
This is particular relevant in a cross-border planning context, where different kinds of boundaries are often deeply rooted in the minds of people, manifested through stereotypes and sometimes expressed through distrust and fear. Building on the hypothesis that spatial planning and consequently cross-border cooperation is strongly (but often unconsciously) influenced by identities, collective and cognitive (mental) pictures of a specific area, adapted from 'collective memories' of social groups (e.g. societies), which are only coherent in a relative sense, I'm arguing that it would be important to find out how far 'subconscious collective memories' affect the quality and success of 'formal cross-border cooperation processes and practices'. Interesting, however, is that while the awareness of the identity phenomenon is present in the 'sociologists' world' (e.g. Manuel Castells), little attention is paid to it in the 'planners' world'.

3. The subconscious dimension of planning: Collective memory matters

Collective memory offers useful insights into the 'cultural mismatch' understanding of problems in cross-border cooperation processes and practices and doing so help to better specify and conceptualise some of the still prevailing difficulties in cross-border network structures emerging from real interactions between partners who may occupy more or less coterminous juridical, organisational, cultural and cognitive planning spaces.

The added value of collective memory becomes even more evident for the planning culture discourse when considering that it provides a fundamental basis for the construction of social identity or to say it with Sandercock (1998) words *"to take away a person's memory is to steal a large part of their identity"* (p.208). Identity in turn is an essential segment of planning culture (Castells 2010). As introduced in Figure 1 the development of an individual's identity is partly influenced by the groups and social class (*cf.* Bourdieu 1979) to which a person belongs. Interesting in this context is that belonging to one social group may favour the interests and opinions of in-group members (inclusiveness) over out-group members (exclusiveness), which in a cross-border planning context can also result in the building up of generic stereotypes of 'the others' (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005). This also means that cross-border cooperation activities may fail simply because the social affiliation to their own group (or society) is much stronger and more developed than a desire for contact with some particular out-group, in particularly in those cases where there is a fundamental split in interests and perception between the cross-border cooperation partners (Haselsberger forthcoming 2012).

Figure 1: Interrelationship Identity – Collective Memory



Source: Haselsberger (forthcoming 2012)

The emotional relationship of groups and individuals' towards a particular group or even society as a whole depends on both collective memory and history, which are by no means synonyms (Halbwachs 1985). In contrast to history (more or less objective and static picture of the past), collective memory is a subjective reconstruction of a past that is shared, passed on and constructed permanently by a particular social group or class, through personal (individual) experiences and traditions, that may permit temporal and spatial distortions of past happenings. Hence, collective memory colours the present and is embodied in contemporary practices

According to Aleida Assmann (2006) collective memory can be divided into the more subjective social or communicative memory (for example the memory of a generation, which refers to a time-horizon of around 80-100 years) and the more objective cultural memory (institutionalisation of the rites and myths of a society). Social memory is the most subjective form of memory, which builds on the individual perspective of a single person and remains vital as long as this person is alive and/or part of the group. A personal (subjective) example may help to explain the significant role of knowledge building by this kind of (subjective) memory. My father served actively in the Second World War. Thus he personally experienced the moment when the Italians changed sides: at the beginning of the war, he had fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the Italians as allies, but by the end his former 'war colleagues' had become enemies. Luckily he survived the War, but what remained was his generalised picture of Italians, mainly characterised by distrust. Despite living next to the Italian border, travelling to Italy was not acceptable for him. This – of course personal and subjective – example helps to explain why in some cases it may be so difficult to work together across national borders and in particular to build up reciprocal trust. Cultural memory might thus be described as '*the culturally*

institutionalised heritage of a society' (Assmann J. 1995, p.130) insofar as it preserves the knowledge from which a society derives its identity, tradition and culture. The distribution and adjustment of the cultural memory is institutionally organised through expert bearers (such as scientists, academics, priests) and becomes reality through time-independent cultural patterns or *lieux de mémoire*[2] (texts, hymns, rites, monuments, signs, cultural emblems) as well as institutional communication (recitations, practices, observances). The work of Nora (1984) concerning the loci memoriae of France exemplified that the society itself creates identity through visible and non-visible cultural patterns. He argues that comprehensive time- and place-independent cultural patterns enable all to build on a collective identity, even if people sharing this identity are not personally acquainted. Important, but often underestimated, is the extent to which these *lieux de mémoire* are influencing and shaping peoples' opinions and viewpoints. Hymns serve as a very good example to underline this point: '*Wo man mit Blut die Grenze schrieb*' – where the border was drawn in blood (Carinthian hymn); *'heiss umfehdet, wild umstritten […] viel geprüftes Österreich'* – strongly fought for, fiercely contested […] much tested Austria (Austrian hymn); or *'Già l'Aquila d'Austria, le penne ha perdute. Il sangue d'Italia, il sangue Polacco, bevé, col cosacco, ma il cor le bruciò.'* – The Austrian Eagle has already been plucked. Italian blood, Polish blood, it drank, together with the Russians', but its heart was burned. (Italian hymn)

4. Collective memory & planning culture: An underestimated interrelationship

The planning culture discourse has strongly emphasised that cultural differences manifest themselves in several different ways or perspectives. Nonetheless the focus of the current debate has tended to be on the formal end of the spectrum, in an anecdotal way. The subconscious aspects of culture, those being referred to as underlying and unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings in the planning culture debate although being recognised as important cultural dimensions have not received the attention required in the theoretical planning culture discourse so far.

Figure 2 depicts the prevalent cultural considerations emerging from sociology as well as planning theories and debates much as the layers of an onion. Doing so it provides the basis for a comprehensive overview of how collective memory is shaping and influencing planning-specific formal and informal discourses and practices. Social memory (the nucleus of culture) and societal environment (the nucleus of planning culture) build up the core of the onion. Representing the emic perspective of (planning) culture, these aspects are hard to grasp from an outsider perspective and as a consequence are often referred to as 'taken-for-granted' in the scientific debates. The situation becomes even more difficult when considering that both core dimensions are heavily interrelated and influence each other subconsciously. On the other hand cultural memory and the planning environment as well as the planning artefacts are introduced as the most superficial layer of the onion

[2] A *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, physical or non-physical, which has (the potential to) become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community (monuments, hymns, e.g.) (*cf.* Nora 1984).

– the etic perspective of (planning) culture – which from an observer perspective is immediately visible. In addition the framework unpacks also the degree of objectivity of the different layers, with the core layer(s) characterised by different meanings, attitudes and values as the most subjective form of (planning) culture. The outer layers of the framework, on the other hand, represent the most objective aspects of (planning) culture, which could also be described as the visualised and manifested product of social interaction.

All layers of the comprehensive framework have a clear relationship to each other, in both a horizontal (within the respective layer) and vertical (cross-layer) way. On the one hand, the horizontal relationship assists the understanding of how the several layers of collective memory are influencing the layers of planning culture and consequently the planning profession as a whole. On the other hand, the vertical or cross-layer relationship – with individual preferences based on nurture and experience influencing and shaping the kinds of collective action – underlines the importance and relevance of subconscious and subjective aspects within formal structures, such as the planning system as a whole. Due to the cross-layer relationship, where the informal-subjective layer, which derives its evidence from the social memory, is recognised as a central anchor point towards the understanding of what impact socially produced culture has on planning, the dimension of time and change is fully considered and integrated in the framework introduced.

Figure 2: Collective Memory & Planning Culture's Framework

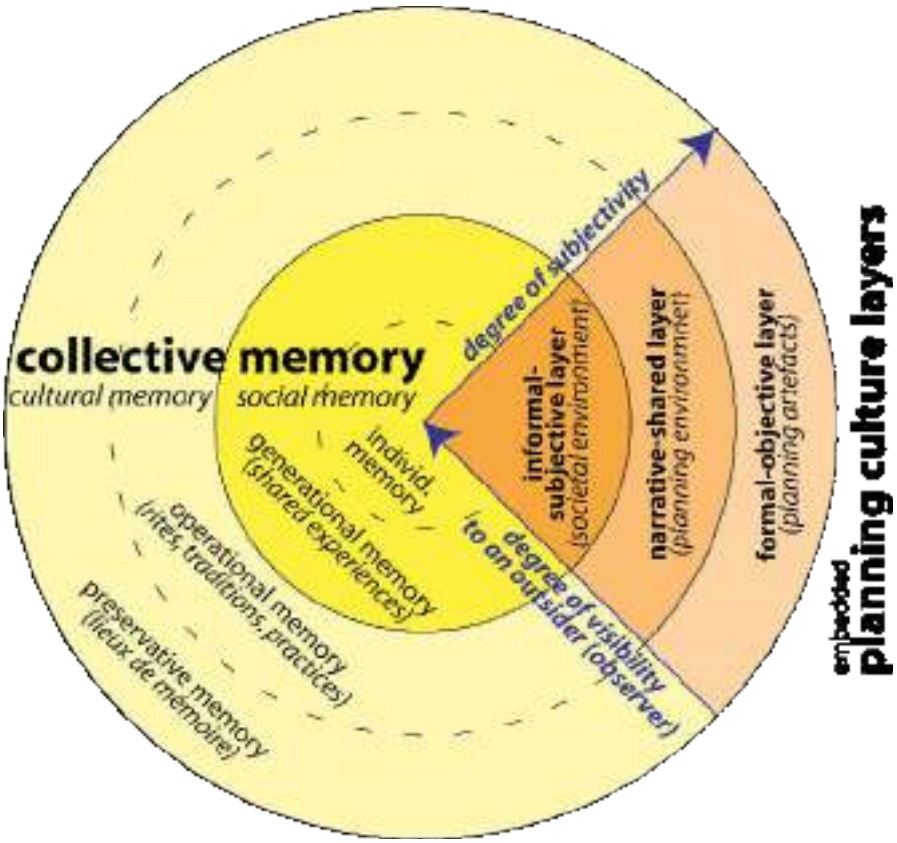


Table 1: Collective Memory Layers

Collective Memory Layers	***Social memory*** (conversational remembering): transmitted interactively; limited to a time-horizon of 80-100 years; intergenerational scope; consists of: (a) The ***individual memory*** might be described as a biographical remembering of own experiences and relationships based on which an individual derives his/her personal identity. (b) The ***generational memory*** emerges in a specific milieu of spatial proximity, where it gets shaped and transmitted through regular interactions, discourses and dialogues based on shared ways of life, experiences and perceptions.
	Cultural memory (institutionalised collective remembering): transmitted symbolically; unlimited time horizon; trans-generational scope; consists of: (a) The ***operational memory*** manifests the rules and attitudes of collective activities and practices a culture considers as socially essential, such as social and religious ceremonies, rites, actual behaviour or dress codes. (b) The ***preservative memory*** is the most symbolised layer and consequently the immediately perceivable cultural layer of a society. It becomes reality through time-independent cultural patterns or lieux de mémoire, such as artefacts, texts, monuments, national holidays, hymns.

Source: Authors' elaboration
(dimensions after Assmann A. 2006; Assmann J. 1995)

Table 2: Planning Culture Layers

Planning Culture Layers	***Informal-subjective layer*** The basic value layer influencing people's acceptance for plans, social justice, social efficiency, moral responsibility, etc. Core cultural layer (according to the Gullestrup model) Societal environment layer (according to the Knieling & Othengrafen model)
	Narrative-shared layer The formalised layers of norms and rules, planning practices, objectives and principles, shaping the contents of planning, such as considerations for ethnic minorities or handicapped persons. Manifested cultural layer (according to the Gullestrup model) Planning environment layer (according to the Knieling & Othengrafen model)
	Formal-objective layer The immediately perceivable layer and its resultant outcomes, such as planning systems, structures, institutions, instruments and products. Manifested cultural layer (according to the Gullestrup model) Planning artefacts layer (according to the Knieling & Othengrafen model)

Source: Authors' own elaboration
(dimensions after Gullestrup 2009; Knieling & Othengrafen 2009)

The framework suggested allows further the proposition that 'what planners do or consider important' is rooted in their individual concerns which are transmitted to wider social expectations and influence the way planning work takes place in a particular national, regional or local context. Because of these differences emerging from the different planning cultures, the exchange of planning ideas and practices, meaning when *"planning ideas and practices get to travel from one context to another"* (Healey 2010, p.XX), turn out to be a major challenge in particular in a cross-border context. Also Friedmann (2011) described this phenomenon very well on the case of the World Congress of Planning held in 2001 in Shanghai. *"The global discourse was far from unified, and […] planners often talked past each other, not quite knowing whether or not they made sense to their polyglot audiences."* (Friedmann 2011, p.164)

5. The significance of 'the others': Trans-cultural understanding has many dimensions

Considering that cross-border network and structures of cooperation evolve from social interactions between partners who may occupy more or less coterminous juridical, organisational, cultural and cognitive planning spaces, the added value of trans-cultural understanding becomes evident for any cross-border cooperative endeavour. But how can it be built up? Due to the fact that borders are ambiguous human constructions constituted by many different kinds of overlapping boundaries (Haselsberger 2010), I am hypothesising that it is not sufficient to *only* understand 'the others' planning approach, but in addition to unpack the taken-for-granted yet powerful generalisations about 'these others' which might have been yoked to negative stereotypes and prejudices over time. Ethnographers (such as Brown & Theodossopoulos 2004) have highlighted with a series of case studies that it is through the strategic use of stereotypes of 'the others' that social and political boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are drawn. By stabilising expectations concerning what lies beyond the 'self-constructed differentiating border of comfort' (van Houtum 2003), doubts, uncertainty and vulnerability are reduced within the bordered territory. This means, on the one hand, that it is through the awareness and perception of otherness, that social solidarity and membership is affirmed and hence a society is able to define itself (Paasi 2005). On the other hand, such certainty is generated by the distortions of collective memory in characterizing 'the other' (Herzfeld 1992), where (those in) power assert a positive meaning for their own identity while defining difference as 'otherness' (Sandercock 1998). Evidently these distortions impede cross-border cooperation. Brown & Theodossopoulos (2004), for example, have highlighted in their work, about the 'constructions of otherness in southeast Europe' that the contingent constructions of otherness is exhibiting the region's profound historicity, but 'history-as-interpreted' and not 'history-as-lived'. Furthermore it is important to acknowledge that the rhetoric about 'the others' (deriving from 'history-as-interpreted') reveals itself in everyday life through more or less subjective versions of collective memory (cartoons, aphorisms, jokes, proverbs, etc), where content is abstracted from context. Mainstream media but also politics play a significant role in the production but also transmission of the

(mis)perception about 'the others', as Arsenault & Castells (2006), have demonstrated on the example of how the Iraq War was justified in the USA.

As the picture of 'the others' is manifested in the minds of people and gets expressed through social behaviour and practices, I am arguing that the proper understanding of 'the others' and the way 'otherness' is produced builds up the basis for trans-cultural understanding and doing so assists the overcoming of mental barriers. In methodological terms the proper understanding of 'the others' requires a slightly adapting of the analytical framework (introduced before) regarding its focus of analysis towards a multilayered consideration of the different perceptions of 'otherness' (see Table 3).

Table 3: Understanding 'the others' (potential layers of analysis)

Unit of Analysis	Expected Evidence
Emotional Perception of 'the others': **Experiences & Feelings** *(informal-subjective layer)*	*How people think and feel about 'the others' in specific and general terms:* • *individually (personal experiences, stories, feelings, emotions, e.g.)* • *collectively (shared experiences, myths, stories, ways of life, events, e.g.)*
Popular Perception of 'the others': **Mainstream Media & Politics** (*narrative-shared layer)*	*How the picture of 'the others' is generated and communicated by:* • *mainstream media (newspaper, radio, television, e.g.) and* • *politics (e.g., political agendas)* *and how it is manifested within the popular 'place culture' (e.g., music, cuisine, education)*
Official Perception of 'the others': **Legal & Contractual Frameworks** (*formal-objective layer)*	*How 'the others' are represented in:* • *official documents (e.g., laws, government reports) and* • *planning documents (focus: national, regional, local and focus: cross-border)*

The interrelationship of the three layers of analysis introduced in Table 3 provides a mean to understand how 'the others' are represented in a particular planning culture and what impact this has on cross-border cooperation practices. Doing so, it is most likely that the collective memory effect on cross-border cooperation practices can be grasped. Unfortunately the story is not as simple as it looks like at first sight. As discussed earlier, human beings tend to interpret and re-interpret information according to their own socio-cultural backgrounds and experience. In order to not risk fudging the evidence gained from different planning cultures that would favour the investigator's own culture, a neutral 'interpretation scheme' has to be set up before the field work takes place. This 'interpretation scheme' may vary from situation to situation and context to context.

6. Conclusions: Overcoming borders through trans-cultural communication

The building up of more effective long-lasting cooperative structures, based on mutual trans-cultural understanding and reciprocal trust, not only requires the understanding of the involved planning cultures and the role 'the others' play within it. This is only the first step on a longer journey towards the overcoming of deeply embedded boundaries.

An equally important second step is the cultural exchange, the communication and dissemination of 'the others' planning culture in an adequate trans-cultural way. This is a step, which can be done effectively only if (a) 'the others' culture (including its language) and planning literacy skill as well as (b) the way how the professional's perception of 'the others' is affecting the situation are well understood (Reeve 2011, Friedmann 2011). Moreover, success relies on the planner's engagement as well as his/her capability to negotiate, mediate, advocate and facilitate between conflicting interests. It is important that people involved in this step respect the diversity and difference of cultural views and are able to interpret them in an unemotional way (Sandercock 1998). Unfortunately the issue of trans-cultural communication, which is a competence more than a technical skill, has not yet achieved the attention required in professional training and planning education curricula (Reeve 2011).

If trans-cultural communication is done properly, it will certainly favour the building up of cross-border identities, which is considered here as the third important step towards the overcoming of the borders' dividing function. Several authors (*cf.* Smith 1992; Eder 2005; Haselsberger 2012) have highlighted that collective cross-border identities are possible. They argue for example that there is no contradiction between progressive forms of identity or even multiple identities originating in different national identities, as observed in the case of migrants. Moreover it should be underlined that identification with and belonging to larger social circles does not imply that smaller circles such as the family or the local, regional and national space are automatically displaced. On the contrary, these circles are more like layers. In terms of constructing a cross-border identity *'the consequence for the individual is an increase in choice: between his national and cosmopolitan identification he has the additional choice of being European'* (Eder, 2005, p.212). It appears that cross-border identities provide a means to assist complex societies (as in the case of a cross-border context) to overcome conflicting interests. But how can they be built up? Eder (2005), for example, argues that what is required is *"to bring the past of different groups together and merge them into a new past, they need to be coordinated in light of a past that transcends the diverging and often conflicting pasts that might have separated the members of the new group so far"* (pp.200–201). Hence, a shared overcoming of e.g., the failures of history by placing emphasis on the different facets emerging from the different nation-states – in the sense different but equally important – is building up collective memory as the basis for a collective cross-border identity.

However, if trans-cultural communication is done improperly, it could either foster existing negative stereotypes or revitalise those which have already been overcome as Jedlicki (2005) exemplifies with the case of the Polish German relationship. *'I was*

too optimistic when I wrote that the trauma of Nazi crimes had been overcome and their memory did not burden the Polish relations with Germany any more. […] Unfortunately, in recent years there were disturbing signals coming from some segments of the German society that have stirred uneasy feelings in Poland. [These signals] *arouse fear, distrust, and the worst recollections of the wartime massive expulsions of the Polish population from the territories annexed to the Reich […]. The healed wounds opened again. This is fully understandable, even if sometimes oversensitive response.'* (p.46). The Polish-German example raises two important points in terms of building up a cross-border identity. The building up of a collective memory is a very sensitive issue, which needs to be reconstructed permanently, by a retelling of the common past. Accordingly also the building up of a collective (cross-border or even European) identity is an ongoing process, within which individuals reshape their own collective memory, in relation to that of other relevant groups.

Acknowledgement

The arguments made in this paper will be presented at the conference on the basis of some specific examples of cross-border planning projects in Europe.

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