

Impact of Workplace Settings on Planner's Planning Paradigms

Guijun Jiang

School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham, B15 2TT, Birmingham, England.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the roles of planning practitioners in different workplace settings in China and their impacts on planning paradigms. The study identifies three main paradigms in the Chinese planning context: participatory, interdisciplinary, and collaborative planning. These paradigms exhibit varying levels of applicability and challenges across local governments, the private sector, and research institutions.

KEYWORDS

Planning paradigms; participatory planning; interdisciplinary planning; collaborative planning; local government; private sector; research institutions; Chinese planning practices

The construction industry is indeed a dynamic sector which brings together various practitioners who are expected to collaborate for the successful completion of projects. For example, architects and contractors are among the practitioners whose contribution is particularly essential for the industry to operate smoothly. While these stakeholders play crucial roles, their work requires the full involvement of planners. These practitioners are indeed important because they are making it possible for the profession to evolve properly, and address some of the new 21st century challenges that continue to emerge (Sandercook, 2012).

1 Discussion and Analysis

1.1 Planning Paradigms

There are several planning paradigms that illustrate how planners in China perform their duties. These paradigms are collaborative, participatory, and interdisciplinary. The main premise of the participatory paradigm is that the planners make it possible for other stakeholders to become actively involved in the work that they perform (Monno & Khakee, 2012). For instance, it is quite common for the planning process to be dominated by a few actors.

On the other hand, under the interdisciplinary paradigm, planning professions invite practitioners from other fields to join them in their work (Glaser et al., 2019). For instance, a planner may involve social scientists and environmentalists in order to design projects that are sustainable and eco-friendly. One of the advantages of the interdisciplinary paradigm is that it allows the planning professionals to collaborate with others in order to address the more complex problems that they are now encountering as part of their work (Lawrence et al., 2019).

The third paradigm that planners seem to be embracing is collaborative planning. Basically, under this paradigm, planners partner with other stakeholders who are involved in project implementation for the purpose of achieving common goals (Nelson, 2019). For instance, planners working with local governments could collaborate with their colleagues employed by private businesses and the national government to ensure that projects are undertaken successfully.

1.2 Workplace Settings in China

There are several workplace settings in China where the planning professionals are offering their experiences and skills. Local Government .

Local governments are among the places where planners in China seem to have found meaningful engagement. This is because these organizations are playing a crucial role in the numerous urban development projects that the country is undertaking (Zhang et al., 2021). While the local authorities perform numerous functions, some of the most essential roles that they execute include ensuring adequate funding for projects, garnering public support for the initiatives that they undertake, and lobbying the national government for finances (Zhang et al., 2021). Additionally, the governments also establish the regulations and policies that guide how the projects are carried out.

1.3 Private Sector

Other than local governments, planning practitioners in China also work in the private sector where they perform a

number of important roles. Unlike the local governments which undertake projects that safeguard public interests, private businesses are primarily driven by the profit motive. For example, across China, the private sector is involved in a wide range of projects that include infrastructure programs and real estate schemes. In fact, according to Dinlesorz and Fu (2022), in recent years, the private sector has witnessed significant growth, and accounts for a substantial portion of the economic progress that China continues to report.

1.4 Research Institutions

Other than the settings described above, planners in China are also involved in the operations of research institutions in the country. Hu (2020) recognized these institutions as among the organizations that benefit immensely from the work that the planning practitioners perform. According to Hu (2020), these entities are involved in various programs designed to ensure that the projects that China undertakes address the country's urban development needs while accelerating economic growth.

2 Implications for Planning Paradigms

What is clear from the discussion this far is that China offers planning practitioners numerous opportunities to participate in the nation's development.

2.1 Participatory Planning

Local Government: As established earlier, in China, local governments are heavily involved in the planning process. When they work in this setting, the planning practitioners benefit immensely from the participatory paradigm. This is because the local governments are expected to work closely with other stakeholders such as the national government and private contractors (Zhang et al., 2021). For example, one of the key tasks that the planners would need to undertake is consult the national government about how the local authorities can complete projects with tight budgetary and timeline constraints. However, there is a need to note that there are some limitations that may make it difficult for the planners to implement participatory planning.

Private Sector: In the Chinese private sector, it would indeed be challenging for a planner to reliably adopt the participatory planning paradigm. As pointed out earlier, for the players in this industry, profit is the primary motive that underpins their operations and strategies.

Research Institutions: Given that their work requires collaboration with partners, Chinese research institutions are likely to endorse the participatory paradigm. According to Yin et al. (2023), already, these institutions are working closely with planners who are expected to help them resolve some of the most pressing challenges undermining urban planning in the country.

2.2 Interdisciplinary Planning

Local Government: For planners working in the local government context in China, they are likely to face some hardships as the interdisciplinary paradigm is not solidly embedded into this setting. As noted earlier, the government landscape in China is shaped by factors like bureaucracy and political loyalty. Given this situation, it would be frustratingly challenging for a planning professional to successfully advocate for interdisciplinary planning.

Private Sector: As is the case with the local government setting addressed above, a planning practitioner in China is also likely to face hardships when seeking to promote interdisciplinary planning within the private sector. According to Zhao (2018), market forces are the primary factors that drive how this sector operates. In essence, the private businesses mostly seek to maximize profits by delivering solutions that actually resonate with consumers.

Research Institutions: As established earlier, research institutions in China are already implementing approaches that encourage approaches that require the involvement of diverse stakeholders. Given this fact, it would be particularly easier for a planner to persuade a research institution in the country to implement the interdisciplinary paradigm. According to Mitsova (2018), given the complexities of the projects that they handle, these institutions are especially uniquely positioned to experience the benefits of the interdisciplinary approach.

2.3 Collaborative Planning

Local Government: In Chinese local government, collaborative planning has a significant chance of becoming established given that collaboration already forms an important part of how these organizations operate. For example, the local governments are joining forces with the national government for the purpose of ensuring adequate funding for

projects, and securing local interests (Zhu & Tang, 2018).

Private Sector: In recent years, the collaborative planning paradigm appears to be gaining popularity in the Chinese private sector. This is according to Wang et al. (2023) who observed that the players in this sector are forging relationships with key partners who are helping to drive their growth. Wang et al.

Research Institutions: Lastly, research institutions are another setting where the collaborative planning paradigm is likely to flourish. This is because as established earlier, the institutions undertake work that require strong partnerships. Furthermore, China is playing an increasingly important role on the global stage with regard to planning.

3 Conclusion

Planning remains a dynamic discipline that continues to serve an essential function in project implementation. Today, planners are involved in a wide range of projects where they leverage their extensive experience to deliver positive outcomes. This is especially the case in countries like China where these practitioners are working with other stakeholder to ensure that projects are undertaken properly. In China, there are various workplace settings that offer the professionals the opportunity to have an impact. These settings include local government, research institutions, and the private sector.

About the Author

Guijun Jiang was born in Xuzhou, Jiangsu, China, in 10/11/1999. He is a postgraduate student in University of Birmingham, He received the bachelor's degree from Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology. Email: jianggj1999@163.com.

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