

Interdisciplinarity and planning in France

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1. The notion of academic discipline in France.

- In France, academic disciplines have an institutional value, due to the **C.N.U.**: “*Comité national des Universités*”
- Half members are elected, half are appointed by the ministry.

(For instance Anna and I are members of the C.N.U., both elected

The role of the C.N.U. (1):

- 1) **qualification:**
- to give a national qualification to the new doctors to allow them to be candidate to become “**Maître de Conférences**” (senior lecturer)
- to give a national qualification to the “*Maître de Conférences*”, after they have passed their “Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches” (more or less after 10 years), to allow them to be candidate to become “**Professeur des Universités**” (Professor)
- to give the qualification to become “*Maître de Conférences*” or “*Professeur*” to all people, in our field, often **practitioners in planning**, having an activity in conceptual approach, through the production of articles in reviews, or books, even if they have no thesis or “habilitation”. Due to their one experience, they can be qualified to become an academic

The role of the C.N.U. (*following*)

- 2) **management of the carriers:**
- to decide promotion to colleagues after individual evaluation by the C.N.U. :
half of the promotion are proposed at this national level, half at the local level (Scientific Council of each university).
- To decide for sabbatical period for colleagues:
half of the period are proposed at this national level, half at the local level (Scientific Council of each university)

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- **74 sections = 74 disciplines**
- ...
- n°21 = antique and medieval history
- n°22 = modern and contemporary history
- n°23 = geography
- n°24 = urban and regional planning
- etc...

- Often, the debates we have are on the field: this historian, this geographer, this economist, this architect, this politist, this lawyer, this sociologiste... **is or isn't in the field ?**

- The question: is planning **a discipline or a field**, in which multiple discipline can bring things ?

- It is the existential question : **“To be or not to be...that is (really) the question.”** (thank you William for the copyright!)

2. The need of interdisciplinarity in our schools.

- In our field, **the words** used to name these curricula, more or less corresponding to “planning” in English, are, in French, « *Aménagement* », « *Aménagement du territoire* », « *Environnement* », « *urbanisme* », « *développement des territoires* », or a mix of all these terms.
- One of the reasons for the **foundation of APERAU in 1984** was to identify these curricula, mainly implemented in the 70's and 80's. the older ones (IFU, IUP) who joined the movement.

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- Often, at the beginning (60's), **these curricula appeared parallel to those in Geography**, classical Geography, the main vocation of which was to prepare the students to become teachers in geography and history, and not to be planners, even if a lot became planners in the 60's.
- But some academics, often geographers, but also biologists, sociologists or lawyers, thought that it was possible to create new curricula, gathering different fields and proposing **new academic practices in a specific program**.

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- The schools of planning have **inside academic staff from several disciplines**,...
- or can use the **competences of the different faculties** in their own university, ...
- or, due to the **multiple origin of academics in the 24th section** (urban and regional planning) have the resources inside of this section : planner and economist, planner and geographer, planner and architect...
- Example: For the last ten years, in Lille, the members of the section came from geography, history, architecture, civil engineering, political sciences, and economy (now retired).
- They can deal with **schools of architecture** about urban design
- Of course the recruit **practitioners** to teach (skill)

3. Interdisciplinarity and planning Role and position of APERAU.

- As may be you know, APERAU has adopted **a charter** for the quality of teaching...
- and the **members are evaluated** (the next to be evaluated is Lille, in the middle of april !)
- As you see next, **several items are turned towards interdisciplinarity**

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- The principles of the APERAU charter (1)
- 1. Quality and coherence of teaching
- 2. To promote the identity of the field of planning, especially concerning the name of the academic programmes.
- 3. **Promotion of common knowledge (culture) and multidisciplinary studies through out the different curriculums.**
- 4. To implement programmes with:
 - **multidisciplinary approach to teaching**
 - a collective workshop, if possible on topics proposed by professional and/or political bodies: a real study, not a subject given by the professors.
 - internship (training period) in private or public sector, but with a real mission
 - the production of a thesis – often linked with the subject of the mission of the internship

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- The principles of the APERAU charter: (following)
- 5. **A staff composed of academics from different fields** (geography, economy, sociology, law, political studies, history, engineer...), **and especially from planning**, AND professional planners. Professionals are not part of the permanent staff. Sometimes the permanent staff can be reduced and complemented with external professors and professionals.
- 6. At the level of the master, especially in the last year, we emphasise **the recruitment of students coming from different fields** such as : **planning, of course, architecture, geography, political sciences, economy, sociology...** because the job of a planner has many facets and needs different backgrounds, due to the variety of the missions : economic planning, neighbourhood policies, urban design...
- 7. To promote the research in the field of planning as an aim to enrich teaching.

4. Conclusion.

- So interdisciplinarity is at the heart of the practices of our schools
- But, may be, we can consider too that the field of planning, in comparison with academic disciplines is more “implementation oriented”: planning would be then a **science of action**, of implementation, of management of processes, “the way to do”, through an holistic approach...
- ... while geography, economy, sociology.. would be discipline for specific description and explanation – analysis (landscape, economical law, society...) and architecture is a practice in the same time it could be an history and an esthetical approach...
- ... for instance, like medicine in comparison with biology.