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Equip the warrior instead of manning the equipment Land use and transport planning support in the Netherlands

Marco te Brommelstroet

Abstract

This paper assesses the embedding of land use and transport instruments—Planning Support Systems (PSS), models and tools—in Dutch planning practice, in order to shed light on how planners perceive these instruments and to ascertain the reasons and manner of their utilization. These insights provide much-needed input to improve support instruments for land use and transport planning, particularly during early planning phases and on the regional level. The research adds to the emerging literature on PSS. It builds on general insights into what blocks the use of PSS in practice, and employs a user-oriented approach to gain more insight into how users perceive these bottlenecks and how they relate to specific land use and transport planning instruments. The existing research geared toward improving these instruments has a technical focus on the intrinsic workings of the instruments themselves. However, the way in which they are used in planning practice has remained largely ignored and poorly understood. Based on data from a user-based survey administered to land use and transport practitioners in the spring of 2007, this paper describes how LUT instruments are embedded in planning practice and how they are perceived by planning actors in land use and transport planning. The findings suggest that a technical focus is insufficient to improve the implementation of these instruments. The key bottlenecks, identified in the survey, actually are centered on "softer issues," such as lack of transparency and poor communication in the planning process. The closing analysis and discussion offer some potential remedies for these shortcomings.

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