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Using practice theory to conceptualise balancing and values in urban planning

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ABSTRACT

Despite its importance, balancing has received limited attention in planning research. Emphasising the significance of balancing in achieving planning outcomes, we argue that this lack of research hinders the comprehensive analysis of balancing as the basis of planners' work. This practice review aims to demonstrate that balancing, especially the interplay between balancing and values, is a major element of planning processes from the conceptual perspective of practice theory. Further research on balancing may lead to an enhanced understanding for both scholars and practitioners of how values are invoked in planners' day-to-day work.

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1. Introduction: balancing as a central planning practice

Spatial planning can be best described as the process of making spatially effective decisions to shape and guide the future of cities and regions. For this purpose, planners develop planning concepts and strategies, discuss initial ideas and proposals with interested stakeholders and politicians, and develop legally binding land-use plans; always taking into account broader ecological, economic, and social developments and trends, as well as locally specific conditions for housing, working, culture, and leisure. In this context, planners usually aim to develop several future alternatives, from which one option is likely to be selected and realised in practice (Brooks, 2002, p. 13; Sager, 2012, p. 27). Spatial planning can thus be viewed as 'a form of intervention which seeks to balance competing stakeholders in the development process in order to bring about outcomes which reflect the "common good"' (Fox-Rogers & Murphy, 2016, p. 75). Here, socio-cultural factors such as values play a key role. Accordingly, the balancing¹ of different interests and values, consideration of alternatives, and assessment of the impacts of projects are the basics of planners' work (Grant, 2022).

It is surprising that, with a few exceptions (Lennon *et al.*, 2018; Grant, 2022), balancing as a fundamental planning task has so far received rather little attention. Consequently, balancing as a theoretical concept as well as a planning activity is vaguely defined (Grant, 2022). The intellectual basis for balancing as part of planners' daily routine has not been sufficiently explored (Campbell, 2002; Lennon *et al.*, 2018; Solly, 2021), perhaps because

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the overall day-to-day routines of planners have been little researched (Ferm & Tomaney, 2018, p. 281; Schoneboom *et al.*, 2022, p. 182).

Consequently, more profound insights into the way in which values are reflected and played out in balancing seem to be crucial to better understand balancing as a central part of planning tasks (Lennon *et al.*, 2018, pp. 491–492). This practice review article demonstrates that balancing, especially the interplay between balancing and values, is a major element of planning processes by using a praxeological perspective. The aim is to develop a kind of model or conceptual-analytical understanding of balancing to show the potentials but also limits of this approach for empirical research. We meet this objective by elaborating on the concept of balancing and its interconnectedness with values (Section 2), before proposing a conceptual framework for understanding balancing as a complex planning practice, focusing on a praxeological perspective (Section 3). Finally, we show what this framework can make visible when applied to balancing processes in Germany. Following a brief discussion, we conclude with key insights and a future research outlook.

2. Balancing and its intersection with values and valuing

Planning aims to achieve ‘balanced planning outcomes’ (Fox-Rogers & Murphy, 2016, p. 87) that reflect the common good. Thus, the process of balancing can be understood as a lens for reconciling competing stakeholders’ interests. In this regard, it is necessary to balance the needs of present and future generations; environmental, social and economic claims; needs and demands between different spatial scales and entities; and concerns between public and private or public and particularistic interests by considering different alternatives and interests (Healey, 1992; Campbell & Marshall, 1998; Sager, 2012; Lennon *et al.*, 2018; Grant, 2022).

In doing so, planners face the challenge of combining normative and empirical knowledge in their day-to-day routines. Furthermore, as knowledge is limited, partial, and ephemeral, analyses of balancing processes are further complicated. In addition, consideration of planning alternatives or claims usually takes place in situations in which political majorities (can) change, conflicts of use and values exist, and the planners’ scope for action is limited (Campbell, 2002, p. 274).

In balancing, planners often generalise from previous experience and rely on their intuition and judgement (Campbell, 2002). Thus, balancing is clearly not free of subjective preferences and values, but is also not subject to complete arbitrariness, as it is equally dependent on facts (Campbell, 2002; Klosterman, 2013). This finding is not entirely new and does not imply ‘that planners . . . have therefore given no thought to questions of attitudes, values and ethics’ (Kitchen, 2007, p. 146; see also Thomas, 1994; Forester, 1999). However, the role of values has not yet been fully explicated, although there is consensus that ‘the idea of the value-free or the value-neutral planners is neither an appropriate concept nor an accurate assessment of how planners actually think or behave in practice’ (Kitchen, 2007, p. 147; see also: Howe & Kaufmann, 1979; Lauria & Long, 2019). As Faludi and Waterhout (2006, p. 6) have shown, even the application of scientific methods during the analysis and elaboration of planning alternatives is highly subjective and value laden. Balancing thus involves a range of value-laden choices and ethical dilemmas (Forester, 1999; Ferm & Tomaney, 2018), and affects the key activities of planners in planning processes. Indeed, values and facts have to be regarded as

intertwined in balancing activities and cannot be separated (Klosterman, 1983; Campbell, 2012; Davoudi, 2015).

According to sociological research (Schwartz, 2015; Kraatz *et al.*, 2020, p. 478), values, on the one hand, can be seen in direct relation to material objects, as ‘something directly attached or ascribed to preferred objects’ (Thome, 2015, p. 47). For example, a house has value because it can be used for living in. In this context, it is possible to categorise values using attributes, for example environmental, use, or market value. Some authors differentiate between values that are more oriented towards the goal state (terminal values, e.g. transparency or democracy) and values that describe a pattern of behaviour to achieve this state (instrumental values, e.g. transparent or democratic) (Rokeach, 1973). Furthermore, values have an affective dimension (Barth, 1993; Gecas, 2008).

On the other hand, values also offer a nonmaterial dimension, referring to ‘(enduring) beliefs or conceptions that construe something as preferable or desirable’ (Thome, 2015, p. 47). Accordingly, the abstract concept of security might underlie the utility value of a house as a shelter. Both approaches – values as conceptions and values as physical objects – characterise ‘what is important to us in life’ (Schwartz, 2012, p. 3) and can intertwine when a value ascribed to an object is regarded as the primary (symbolic) meaning of the object (Thome, 2015, p. 47).

Further studies shift the focus from values as concepts towards the process and practices of valuation, dealing with processes of value attribution to material and immaterial goods. Here, values are considered to be produced in a reciprocal process in which actors actively contribute to value creation (in the sense of what is considered valuable) as they engage in the process of valuation (in the sense of attributing value to something) (Heinich, 2020, p. 77). When speaking about processes of value attribution, scholars commonly differentiate between two aspects: 1) giving worth to something, and 2) evaluating something (Heinich, 2020). Another major theoretical foundation is that values are not seen as inherent to objects but as constructed within social practices and mainly extrinsically ascribed to the object of valuation (Heinich, 2020). This also illustrates that values are not just solely related to individuals but represent social concepts, offering members of a group a repertoire of social values or standards that ‘are conveyed and inculcated, over various stages of development, via socialisation processes and supported by social practices and interaction rituals’ (Thome, 2015, p. 48).

To sum up, values as ‘shared mental representation(s)’ (Heinich, 2020, p. 77) are socially constructed and relatively stable while embedded in specific socio-cultural contexts. They provide functions of legitimisation, orientation, communication, and order.

3. How to analyse balancing while taking values into account

The multi-layered characteristics of balancing processes require a new approach to depict the complex relationship between balancing and values. Here, practice theory presents a potentially useful approach, offering a holistic perspective that can depict the complexity of balancing. This praxeological approach allows the analysis of balancing as comprising practices that are ‘ordered across space and time’ (Giddens, 1984, p. 2). Referring to Shove *et al.* (2012), social practices can be regarded as the foundation and central unit of all social life.² This means that all ‘social phenomena are to be understood as constellations of, aspects of, or rooted in practices’ (Schatzki, 2016, p. 29). Thus, practice is the

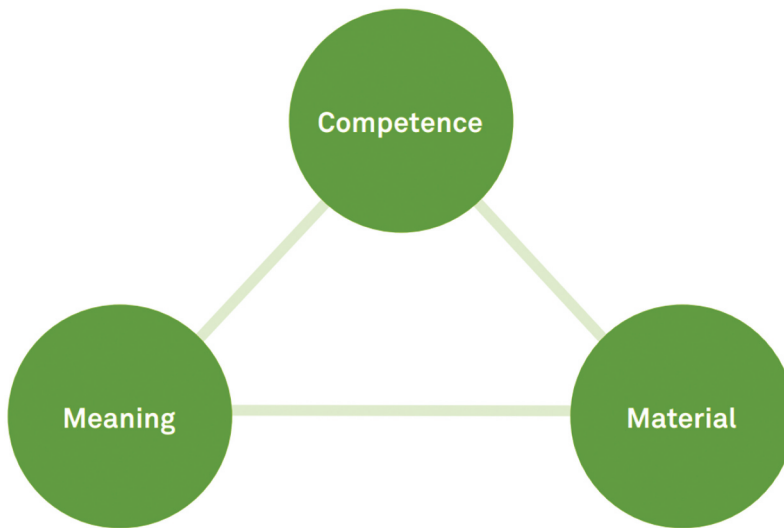


Figure 1. Model of a social practice with links between the elements (Source: Authors' representation based on Shove *et al.*, 2012, p. 25).

central unit of the analysis, not the qualities or characteristics of individuals (Shove *et al.*, 2012).

Shove *et al.* (2012) understand practices as consisting of three different elements (Figure 1), namely: material, 'including things, technologies, tangible physical entities, and the stuff of which objects are made' (2012, p. 14); meaning, which subsumes 'symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations' (2012, p. 14); and competence, which includes 'skill, know-how and technique' (2012, p. 14).

In addition, Shove *et al.* (2012, p. 7) distinguish between practices as entities and as performances. Framing 'practice-as-entity' (2012, p. 8) involves analytically approaching practice, which is the primary perspective of this article. Here, the different elements are understood as the outcomes of practices that can be integrated or not integrated in practices. They can also be between these two stages, and can circulate, which may lead to the creation of new practices or the dissolution of existing ones (Shove *et al.*, 2012; see also Schatzki, 2016). 'Practice-as-performance' (2012, p. 7) refers to the actual enactment of practice: 'It is through performance, through the immediacy of doing that the "pattern" provided by the practice-as-an-entity is filled out and reproduced' (2012, p. 7).

To explore the extent to which practice theory can contribute to the conceptual analysis of balancing processes in urban land-use planning, the following section describes a fictitious balancing example in a German planning context. This is then used to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the derived conceptual framework with regard to balancing, including values and valuing processes in balancing.

3.1 Balancing in a fictitious German city

Let us imagine the following situation that seems to be typical, at least in a German context.³ In a growing and prospering city, a well-developed and centrally located, large industrial site falls

into disuse. The planning department is responsible for developing a concept for its subsequent use. To this end, planners could refer to the following requirements for action:

- Development of the site into a residential area to create affordable housing and minimise the development of residential land in the outer area (protection of open space in the outer area as an objective in the German Federal Building Code). This also includes that other uses that do not interfere with residential use (e.g. kindergartens, schools, supermarkets) are also permitted to a lesser extent.
- Development of the area into a mixed-use area (office, commercial, residential) in order to implement the guiding principle of the European and mixed-use city (as an objective of the New Leipzig Charter on the transformative role of cities for the common good).
- Utilization of the area to build a new office and commercial area. The city demonstrably lacks highly qualified job opportunities, which are to be realized on the site in order to strengthen the city's economic development.
- Keeping the area as free as possible and introducing renaturation as part of climate adaptation measures and concepts of sponge cities (e.g. cold air area and infiltration area as part of open space protection in the inner area, which is an objective in the German Federal Building Code).
- Use of the area for large-scale open-space photovoltaic systems (securing the energy supply as a new political priority in some of the German federal states).

Based on such needs for action and the local context, the planning department – at least ideally – has to develop various plan alternatives for the next use of the area and to compare them with one another in terms of their benefits for the municipality. The alternative with the highest benefit for the municipality is finally selected and then concretised through the binding urban land-use plan.

The development of the binding urban land-use plan is a genuine local task (Gierke & Schmidt-Eichstaedt, 2018, p. 142). The plan sets targets and restrictions for urban development (e.g. for the density of built use) which are binding for both private individuals and public authorities. At this point in the advanced planning process, balancing occurs primarily during the development and selection of different variations of the option that was chosen (e.g. regarding the density of residential development, height of buildings, proportion of publicly subsidised housing, etc.).

The decision on which variation to implement must take into account public and private concerns. The concerns have to be balanced fairly against and among one another. Here, different phases of the balancing process and various balancing materials can be distinguished (Figure 2). First, planners have to identify the affected concerns. For this purpose, planners draw on various reports and expert opinions (e.g. reports on the expected impacts of a planned project on biodiversity), on statistical evaluations (e.g. on population development), and on planning specifications of higher-level plans (e.g. whether residential land use at the planned location within the city is permitted by the regional plan and/or the municipal preparatory land-use plan). When planners know which concerns are affected, they have to balance the concerns. The basis for this is, on the one hand, the actual impact (e.g. the intensity of noise pollution in the intended residential area), on the other hand, the formal requirements, such as nature conservation law. In the third step, planners have to balance and offset the different

Balancing in the broader understanding of the term

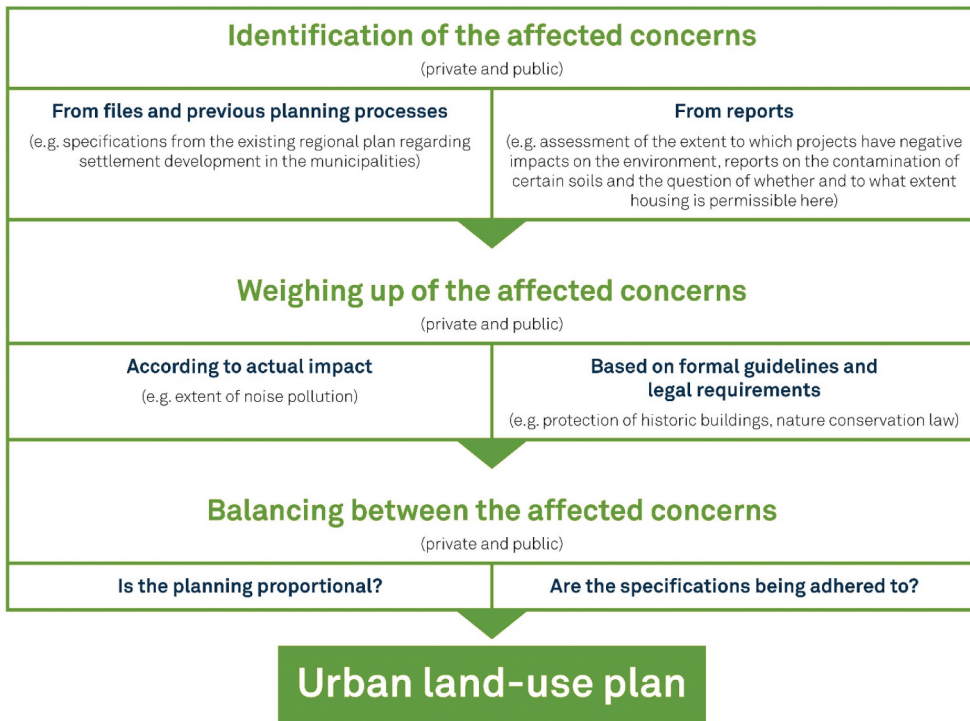


Figure 2. Process of balancing in Germany (simplified representation) (Source: Authors' figure based on Zemke, 2018, p. 32).

concerns. The central question here is to what extent the plan and the intended impacts are proportionate. If they are proportionate, the variation will be converted into a legally binding urban land-use plan, which is finally approved by the city council.

In our fictitious case, the municipality decides to convert the former industrial area into a residential area with a small proportion of office and retail space. The decision could be explained by the fact that photovoltaic use is politically aspired to but not privileged, and that politicians give higher priority to the issue of affordable housing as this is one of the most urgent problems to be solved by municipalities (Difu, 2023). This could also be justified by population growth, the increase in one- and two-person households, and the increased need for housing. At the same time, the city administration has succeeded in developing another centrally located brownfield site as an office and commercial location. Furthermore, an investor wants to develop the brownfield site for residential use. Under these circumstances, the investor would assume the costs for technical and social infrastructures and create at least 30% publicly subsidised housing. A preliminary contract with the investor has already been signed, which once again supports the municipality's decision, as the municipality will not incur any costs for the development of the area. In addition, the investor has also agreed to implement small-scale measures for

climate adaptation (high proportion of open spaces and creation of retention areas) in the intended residential area.

During the preparation of the legally binding urban land use plan, the planning department also commissioned further expert opinions to legally secure the decision for the residential area. The expert report on the soil, for example, has ruled out soil contamination, so that residential use can be realised on the former industrial site without any problems.

The goal of creating affordable housing is, of course, in the public interest and legitimised by the German Federal Building Code. Nevertheless, in our fictitious case, it remains unclear how the concrete balancing process was carried out. Equally, it is unclear why, for example, housing is more important here than climate mitigation or energy supply both of which are either explicitly listed in the German Federal Building Code (Article 1) or have a high political priority as objectives of urban planning. Thus, what becomes evident here is that the alternative claims and interests are in competition with each other and that balancing for or against an alternative depends on numerous factors such as the role of local contexts, the priorities and values of the planning department and the responsible planners or local politicians, the experience of planners with similar projects in the past, or the degree of formalisation of the balancing process. This is the starting point, based on which we will now reflect on the fictitious example. We do so by using the three dimensions materials, meanings, and competencies to examine the connections to values and the valuation process within balancing. These connections to valuation are inherent to balancing and become visible, when for example, meanings are ascribed, materials are considered or competences are reproduced.

3.2 *Balancing from a praxeological perspective: first insights*

3.2.1 *Material*

Balancing always considers the location of the affected planning area and its initial socio-spatial conditions, as well as the socio-spatial conditions and territory of the municipality. In our fictitious example, this is reflected in the initial situation of a growing and prospering city.

As a second dimension of materiality, existing planning documents also play a central role in the balancing process. In the example described above, it is, inter alia, the regional plan with its goals and specifications that the planning department must take into account when drawing up a binding urban land-use plan. At the same time, the planning department – with regard to the inner development envisaged in the fictitious example – also has to consider various planning concepts and reports which municipalities draw up for individual sectoral plans (e.g. housing, transport, retail, landscape) that prioritise certain social values. Moreover, balancing is based on reports that help identify any affected concerns (Figure 2). In our fictitious example, this refers to the expert report on soil properties. Also conceivable would be a cost-benefit analysis commissioned by the investor to assess the proposed alternative in terms of its feasibility and impact.

Third, comments from civil society and public interest groups obtained through participation processes play a major role in the development of the binding urban land-use plan. The official draft of the binding urban land-use plan is published for a period of at least 30 days, with the aim of publicising the plan and giving affected stakeholders the

opportunity to express their objections or comments (Zemke, 2018). The planning department has to consider these objections and comments, balance them against each other – both steps implying a process of valuation – and then respond to each stakeholder as to whether or not their concerns have been included in the binding urban land-use plan (including reasons). Therefore, planners oftentimes document comments in so-called balancing tables (Table 1), showing both the comments received and reactions from the administration. Our own survey among planning departments in major German cities⁴ has shown that 87% of the planning departments use a balancing table or a comparable format for the consideration of comments and objections. From these cities, 73% structure the balancing table based on the received comments, 27% use the planning guidelines according to Art 1 (paragraph 6) of the Building Code in combination with the received comments to structure the table.

These tables, as well as the plans and explanatory memorandums, are important documents that must be prepared for the adoption of a legally binding urban land-use plan. Many planning departments work digitally but still have to print these official documents so that they can be circulated within the administration for signatures and later directed into local politics. With regard to balancing, another dimension of materiality is addressed here, including equipment, office infrastructure (e.g. soft- and hardware), and modes of operation. Thus, it can make a difference how planners access and value the material under consideration (in the sense of valuation), what routines they use, and whether planners work exclusively digitally or more analogously when identifying affected concerns from files and reports (see Figure 2).

It seems that certain values are represented symbolically in the different materials, i.e. the planning documents, surveys, expert reports, balancing table, and the binding

Table 1. Exemplary structure of a balancing table (Source: Authors' figure).

Balancing Decision of		Balancing comments from the public, authorities, and others		Date: dd-mm-yyyy		
Running number	a) Name of participants: b) Comment from: b) Suggestion:	a) Proposed resolution b) Justification c) Resolution number	Voting results			
			Yes	No	Abstention	
1.1	a) Participant A b) dd-mm-yyyy c) It should be noted that intensive colours of the facades or the use of shiny materials on the new buildings do not appear to have approval from a technical view.					
1.2	a) Participant B b) dd-mm-yyyy c) Furthermore, it should be noted that ... the building boundary on the B 101 is consistently adhered to.					
1.3	a) Participant B b) dd-mm-yyyy c) The project is rejected in its current form. The main reason for rejection is the inadequate handling of the water balance.					
1.4	...					

land-use plan. For example, they can be formulated as nouns (e.g. noise protection), adjectives (e.g. relevant for consideration), or be found in planning regulations and visualised by lines, colours, and pictograms (Moroni & Lorini, 2017). The documents themselves can be understood as ‘something directly attached or ascribed to preferred objects’ (Thome, 2015, p. 47). Furthermore, their relevance also lies in the fact that their form and structure are interconnected with the practice of balancing. Consequently, several material entities are important for balancing.

3.2.2 Meaning

The element of meaning subsumes ‘symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations’ (Shove *et al.*, 2012, p. 14). In this regard, it addresses spatial concepts and dominant narratives for spatial development (e.g. the 15-Minute City) which in turn might be seen as expressing underlying values (e.g. equality).

Looking at the fictitious case, we can observe specific meanings that are ascribed to the planning concepts and the land to be built upon, which implicitly or explicitly suggest underlying valuation processes. Here, *inter alia*, inner urban development is preferred to exterior and greenfield development, which also meets the Federal Building Code’s legal requirements for land conservation (Articles 1 and 1a) and contributes to achieving the federal government’s sustainability goals. The goal of zero land consumption can thus be understood as an expression of a high level of environmental awareness and ideas to limit the consumption of finite or non-renewable resources. These legally binding goals can be interpreted as being based on certain abstract values such as the value of protecting the environment for current and future generations. This, in turn, could be further related to intra- and intergenerational justice. All in all, various values are attached to certain planning goals, which are either procedural or substantial.

At the same time, the Federal Building Code addresses further concerns and thus meanings (e.g. social and cultural needs of the population) that are in competition with each other and may be valued differently in the balancing process. For example, balancing inner urban development and noise pollution is one of the most challenging tasks in German balancing processes, as our survey among planners in major German cities indicates.⁵ Growing municipalities, in particular, need to create additional residential space and, as mentioned above, should do so primarily in inner areas. At the same time, these areas are often located in areas with mixed land uses (e.g. retail, housing, business, industry) or along heavily trafficked roads, where noise limits restrict residential land use. The noise limits are intended to ensure healthy living and working conditions (Article 1 Federal Building Code). This shows that the goals and underlying meanings such as urbanity, urban cohabitation, lively neighbourhoods, climate-friendly districts, or quality of life might conflict, even if they follow similar purposes. For balancing processes, it follows that the ideas that guide planning must be hierarchized in relation to the concrete planning goal.

This can be observed in our fictitious case study. Here, climate-neutral and conservation measures, contributing to healthy and attractive living conditions as well as to sustainable neighbourhoods, are envisaged on a small-scale and thus during the implementation of the housing option. However, due to materiality, i.e. the spatial and societal framework conditions (see also Section 3.2.1), the goal of housing supply and liveable residential areas is given greater weight, which in turn illustrates the different

prioritisation of the goals and underlying values at the same time in the fictitious case. We can conclude here that meaning is not only important for balancing as it shapes the criteria for different assessments, but is also closely related to both values as abstract concepts and valuation processes. At the same time, the connection to the planners' competences becomes visible here, as values play a crucial role in moral decision-making and organisational values.

3.2.3 Competence

Competences encompass central features of an understanding of planning as a 'practice of knowing' (Davoudi, 2015) and subsume skills, know-how, and techniques (Shove *et al.*, 2012, p. 14). In the context of balancing, planners need various competences, including managerial, analytical, technical, communicative, creative-conceptual, and reflective skills.

As shown in our fictitious case, the main competence of balancing involves not only the contextual processing of information about what is deemed relevant or not, but especially the processing of this information by valuating it and by prioritising conflicting goals and values. Obviously, knowledge on values and valuation practices is embodied in the sense that it cannot be separated from the carrier of the practice. It is built on repetition and practice until it turns into experienced, applied knowledge originating from specific situations. However, planners also need to abstract from the local context and unpack the knowledge (Shove *et al.*, 2012). This 'capacity to decode is unequally distributed and itself born of previous practice-based experience' (Shove *et al.*, 2012, p. 53), which links the element of competence strongly to experience in performing balancing. This is also evident in our survey of planners in major German cities. When asking the planners how they value the developed alternatives, 66% of the participants indicated that they proceed systematically and/or use concrete methods. In this context, verbal-argumentative methods such as SWOT analysis are mainly used (38%), although experiential knowledge and subjective knowledge or attitudes also play a major role in their application. 34% of the participants apparently do not necessarily follow a systematic approach during a balancing process, but rely mainly on their personal and/or professional experience and decide on a case-by-case basis how to organise the balancing process.

Looking at values, it is important to stress that knowing how is always, explicitly or implicitly, related to a given end (Davoudi, 2015, p. 320). It is connected to the related values of the goal itself, but simultaneously influences the valuation process. In balancing processes, planners reproduce the values attached to the competences as well as the linked element of meaning (value of the goal), while 'at the same time carving out spaces for creativity and novelty to bring about change' (Davoudi, 2015, p. 323). This becomes clear in the fictitious case study, especially when the planning department is in favour of residential use and gives much greater weight to the associated values (e.g. healthy living conditions) than to, for example, open space protection or climate adaptation.

Furthermore, similar to planning in general (Forester, 1999; Ferm & Tomaney, 2018; Lauria & Long, 2019), balancing is associated with moral dilemmas. The central task of balancing involves carefully considering and evaluating different interests. In the context of planning, administrative decisions must remain detached from personal preferences (Hoekveld & Needham, 2013, p. 1639). It is not feasible to equally appease all interests, which inherently exposes planners to value conflicts. Here, planners must have

appropriate skills to separate personal and institutional values, to balance different particular interests against each other, and to decide in the interest of the common good.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The main purpose of the previous section was to sketch exemplary directions for empirical research on balancing using the perspective of practice theory. By developing a conceptual perspective, we have addressed not only the day-to-day work of balancing, but also the interconnectedness of values with balancing, presenting a novel view on the topic. This raises the question of how a praxeological approach can contribute to a better understanding of balancing.

This approach promises ‘better insights into planning practice’ (Zimmermann, 2017, p. 15; translated by the authors), i.e. balancing processes. An important implication of our findings is that a praxeological perspective brings together different elements of balancing by emphasising and connecting factors that were previously either not on the spectrum of what is deemed relevant or were not considered in an integrated manner. The interrelations among material, meaning, and competence are relevant to identify the different values and their impacts in balancing processes as well as to understand the valuation process on which balancing is based. In this regard, values are no longer reduced to abstract ideas and guidelines, but are seen as a process. The focus is thus on the construction and contingency of values. The conceptual framework helps to identify what is considered valuable in the consideration process and/or how planners value the comments of the public, public bodies, and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, the approach demonstrates the complexity of balancing and suggests that balancing is more than a single practice. This perspective leads to the notion of balancing being rather a bundle or even a constellation of practices and allows a differentiated view of the complex balancing process by dividing it into several connected, ‘organized activities’ (Schatzki, 2018, p. 154).

However, this is a first model or approximation that conceptually captures the complexity of values and valuation in balancing processes. For the analysis of planning practice, this approach must be further developed and tested; only then empirically validated statements can be made about the ‘organized activities’ (Schatzki, 2018, p.154) and how they relate to valuation practices. Nonetheless, we believe that the praxeological framework offers a systematic approach to analyse balancing processes and thus contributes to identifying and understanding the normativity of planning in further research.

Due to the interwoven nature of balancing with other social phenomena, our conceptual framework allows empirical research on balancing and values to be conducted in broader or narrower ways in practice. On the one hand, it could aim to expand our knowledge of manifold balancing practices by analysing and differentiating specific balancing practices and their interconnections to valuation. Starting for example from concrete cases of balancing, this involves asking questions like: What balancing practices can be identified? Which valuation practices exist therein? What extent are these valuation practices specific for planning? And what moral dilemmas are revealed here? On the other hand, by zooming into sub-practices of balancing, empirical research could

specifically analyse the integration of elements and advance the elaboration of conceptual details related to valuation. This means aiming to understand the three elements and their integration analytically as well as in practice. Furthermore, research in the field of values and valuation in balancing conflicts could present an avenue into the under-researched area of planning and emotions, equally promising to advance research on balancing.

Notes

1. In our literature research, we searched for both 'balancing' and 'weighing' as key terms. According to our understanding, both terms are understood similarly and used synonymously in the field of urban and regional planning. In the international context and especially in the Anglo-Saxon area, 'balancing' seems to be predominant when looking at different land-use interests or claims, or at the consideration and evaluation of planning alternatives. Against this background, we utilise the term 'balancing' in this article.
2. We mainly concentrate on the conceptualisation of practice theory elaborated by Shove *et al.* (2012). Further approaches are based especially on Schatzki (1996) and Reckwitz (2002), who provide important contributions to contemporary research on social practices.
3. Based on our research in Germany, we have aggregated our previous findings into a fictitious example; however, we assume that similar issues are being discussed in other EU countries and that the example is therefore also transferable to planning and balancing processes in other European countries.
4. All German cities with at least 100,000 inhabitants were contacted. Cities that do not currently have 100,000 inhabitants but have regularly had over 100,000 inhabitants in recent years were also included in the survey. A total of 85 cities were contacted. Of these, 47 cities answered the questionnaire in full (response rate: 55%).
5. In the survey ($n = 47$), the planners named conflicts with regard to urban density (32%), the compatibility between redensification and urban green space (25%), and noise conflicts (17%).

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