

A new approach to the planning of European cities

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Intro

Urban planning in Europe is entering a new phase. Cities across Europe have experienced a long period of growth. Since the industrial revolution, there has been growth despite crisis and wars. During the 20th century, the population rose sharply and economic growth averaged around three percent. This means that national income in that period grew by a factor of 20. The built environment also rose sharply with more homes, businesses, services, and infrastructure. The built-up area in the Netherlands, for instance, increased by 2% per year during that time (a factor of 7) at the expense to the country's agricultural and natural spaces. Almost all areas of society such as labour participation, mobility, education, income, and real estate experienced growth. In that period, urban and regional planning was a question of management and allocation of growth. This situation has clearly changed. There are a number of signs showing that the quantitative growth will not be as spectacular and integral as in the past. Potential growth will take on more of a qualitative nature. That means we have to find another way of spatial planning.



Features of traditional planning

Is the current method of planning appropriate to deal with the new situation? And if not the case, then how do we deal with it? One could simply say that there is so much going on that the old procedure must be revised. Yet it is sensible to look at a number of characteristics in order to ascertain if the old method is still appropriate.

A first characteristic is the strong sectoral approach in combination with growth. The planning of housing, business locations, schools, health care, infrastructure and so on were all managed separately and focused on growth. Then there are some sectors where there is

hardly any coordinated planning. For example, the office market in the Netherlands has large fluctuations and nowadays also has a large amount of vacancies due to a lack of basic planning and exacerbated by the sector's long lead times. The same is true for the market of retail buildings. Both of these extremes, namely, too much or no planning, along with the separation of the sectors, will lead to undesirable situations. If growth is the normal course of development, then growth often solves problems in spite of bad, or no, planning.

The second characteristic is the issue of different spatial scales. Basically you can say that there is always a kind of planning but the scale varies by sector. In a free market like the office market, planning is done at the level of the building. At that level the initiator reflects on the future, the use of resources and the desired quality. There is no coordination different places in the area or activities in the same sector or other sectors. In sectors such as school construction, on the other hand, there is coordination within the same sector. For each sector, the scale in which coordination takes place differs. We know for examples in the Netherlands transport areas, housing areas, health regions and so on. In addition, administrative units such as provinces and municipalities sometimes service as a planning area.

The sectoral approach, as we know it, seems awkward because space covers all sectors. In the past, coordination between sectors occurred during the design of new areas. Every sector filled a claim with the adoption of the plan and so it was clear to what extent the various claims could be met. Where the pressure was greatest, the claim could best be realized. Now that major land claims are a phenomenon of the past, this system no longer works.

The third characteristic is the dominance of the government. Over the last decennia spatial plans in excess of the scale of the individual building were mostly set by the government. Moreover, there was also a strong financial involvement of the government. Therefore, the public sector dominated with respect to spatial planning. This dominance provided security but was also seen as unbalanced because the government had (too) many faces: director, quality controller, investor, financier and grant giver. In the Netherlands, all subsidies for the built environment were abolished in 2015, and the role as investor and financier is now limited to infrastructure and public space. Many government buildings are obsolete. The role of government has become more modest and much clearer. There is no sense in further discussing the traditional method. We need to find an alternative.

Need for planning

The next question to be addressed: is there a need for spatial planning now that possibilities for expanding the built environment are limited? Should there not just be a free market within a limited spatial field? In some countries this is the case, but in most European countries there is spatial planning due to the major interests that are involved in the built environment. The infrastructure and public space are the responsibility of the government. The government sets also standards for the quality of the space and the buildings. The private sector will benefit from a well-organized form of planning because the quality of the own building is highly dependent on the quality of the environment. Statistical analyses of differences in price levels between different environments have shown that about 50% of the value of real estate is determined by the environment. Moreover, the built environment depends on large investments with a long life, which mostly need to be realized with borrowed money. Therefore the value of our savings depends partly on the value of the

environment, and thinking about the future of an area becomes a necessity. That means that both the public and the private sector are interested in good planning but with a new approach.

New circumstances

In the past few years we have seen a crises in many areas. Though recovery will come, it may take a different form due to changes in societal conditions. Population growth has stalled and in many places populations are decreasing despite immigration. The level of education has reached its limits. The size of the workforce will probably even start to fall. The individualization which presented an additional increase in the number of households seems to be in its final phase. Many markets have become replacement markets. This also applies to the built environment. One can say that, in many regions, the built environment is spacious enough to accommodate expected activities. This situation does not mean that we can stop paying attention to the built environment. On the contrary, there will be a large-scale adjustment, transformation and redevelopment in coming decades. There are several reasons for this:

- The aging of the population creates different priorities and different needs for housing and amenities.
- The welfare society is under great pressure. This will have implications for the nature and size of the facilities.
- The recognition of our climate crisis and resulting pursuit of sustainability will lead to changes in space usage.
- Developments in information technology will continue to shape the design of cities, similar to the introduction of electricity.
- After the current economic crisis, a shift in economic activities will also be of great importance for spatial planning.

These are just a few examples; there are undoubtedly more transformations and changes that will affect how we consider the built environment. A new approach with clear principles is needed in order to be prepared.

Principles for a new approach in spatial planning

In order to face the new situation, a number of principles have been formulated for spatial planning. Those are:

Planning based on a search for new communal values and new connections

All people are different. There are differences in abilities, needs and values. In a democratic society everyone is a free decision-making centre and equal before the law. Decisions must be taken both individually and collectively. By giving communal values a central role in spatial planning, it is easier to overcome the gap between individual and collective decision-making. The democratic credentials of the process can be improved. Moreover, most political parties are oriented around certain values. This is a major reason for a different approach, but there are more reasons:

- The value approach shows the value of the existing environment in relation to the changes resulting from new investments into new values and new connections.
- The use of the same language of values makes it possible to bridge the gap between spatial scales and between different sectors.

- Several infrastructure networks will be transformed. Other streams will result in a reorientation of values.
- A sectoral approach loses sight of potential synergies. The significance of many investments is often seen in other areas. A values approach provides the opportunity to find these synergies.
- Spatial planning is not a technocratic process. Every choice has a moral aspect. The values approach also brings that element in to decision making.



The city and its surroundings are the central spatial unit

The connection between various spatial functions is nowhere greater than in the city. It is obvious to choose the city and its surroundings as the basic unit of planning. Inside this unit the same planning rules and communal values can be applied. Moreover, the city and its surroundings are facing an important task: to better balance the flows coming into the city and the flows leaving the city. A nice word for this task is a healthy metabolic of the city.

More focus on bottom-up processes

Many initiatives for investments come from outside the area concerned. Decentralization and reduced emphasis on expansion provide more power to the people, enterprises and institutions of the area where they are located.

A planning process that focuses on the best of all possible worlds via co-creation

A process that focuses on the best result sounds like a cliché, but it is not. An approach based on communal values must be able to prove its worth; the result-focused process will help identify synergies. Often, the process is different and aimed at the least-awful outcome. A result that is generally good-enough for everyone, but not great for anyone. In the first case, there is value creation at several levels, but not in the second case. Therefore a major role in the process is reserved for the creative ability of the parties involved and the strength of the design. That will always have to take place in cooperation with the parties concerned. A nice word for it is co-creation.

Art and culture should form an integral part of physical planning

Years ago, a fixed percentage of construction project costs were reserved to invest in art; this money was intended primarily for beautification of the building being developed. This is a honourable measure but does not do justice to the importance of art and culture. Physical investments draw attention to, and can even shape, the culture of an area. Art can play a role in discovering the past, giving form to the building process and developing an area's new

identity. In all cases, new connections are made and new images come to light. Art can work as a social search engine.

Contributing to the learning ability of the society

Each project must contribute to the learning ability of society. At a minimum, all participants in a project learn something from it, but that is not enough; in this case there is no active knowledge development. A more wider learning process requires proper documentation of projects and proper evaluation. Learning ability can only increase significantly if there is an active knowledge transfer about projects *outside* the immediate circle of stakeholders. In the Netherlands there are extensive records and facts about areas but virtually nothing recorded and shared about *projects* undertaken in those areas. We see changes but do not know how they come about. With proper documentation we can also develop impact analyses, thereby strengthening learning capacity.

Distinction between perspectives and projects

Perspectives are sustainable pictures of the future based on individual and communal values and which play an active role in society. Perspectives are shared by (large) groups of people, sometimes united in interest groups or political parties, but often not. One discovers, mostly in practice, that there is a shared vision. Projects are specific physical investments with a beginning and an end, an initiator, clients and a financial settlement. In every case, a spatial project requires a perspective on the future. Therefore, a project is always the result of one or more perspectives, sometimes a result of a conflict between different views, and sometimes a compromise. Recognition of both lasting differences of opinion and the efforts to bridge these differences create dynamism in society.

Maximum transfer of information to all relevant parties

The emphasis on the transformation of the existing built environment leads to the involvement of new and sometimes surprising stakeholders. Especially in today's information age, there is really only one possible strategy in such a situation, and that is openness. The transformation of the existing built environment requires maximum openness and transparency.



What are communal values and how to adopt them?

Definition of communal values

Four themes are here suggested: cultural, social, economic and physical approaches to defining values. Additionally, communal values may relate to the population or to the physical context, so eight values are emerging. Essentially, there are infinitely many different values, but in the political debate the same eight are consistently brought forward and can be reliably used. These values are displayed in figure 1.

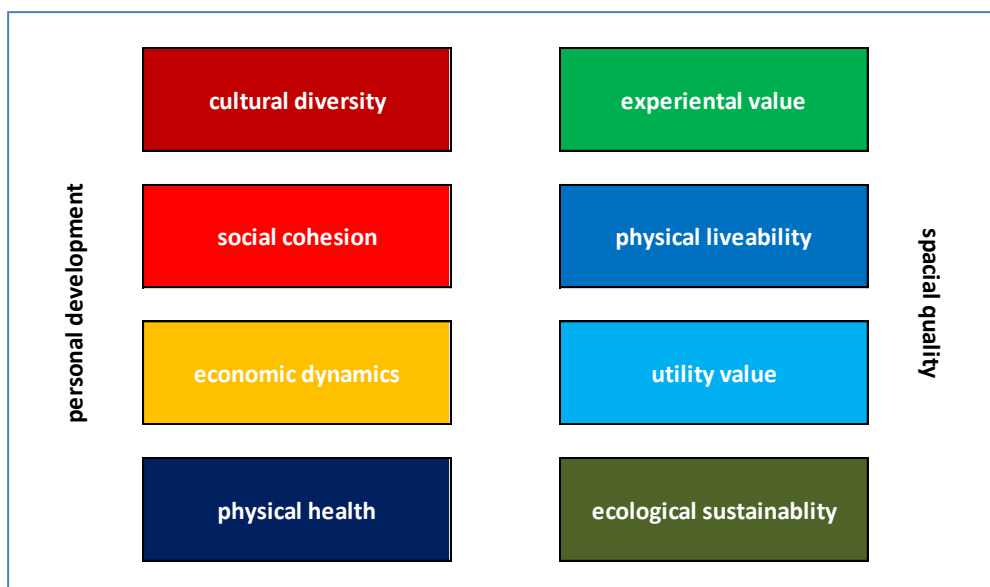
Cultural diversity

Cultural diversity is the value that indicates whether a community possesses the possibility of free expression. Similar to most European nations, the Netherlands is a free country where everyone can express himself freely. However, there are differences in the degree to which use is made of this freedom of expression. In areas where there are many cultural activities or areas with a large creative industry this space is used more intensively. Culture is essentially about the tension between preservation and change. Lack of diversity can lead to rigidity and thus deterioration. But too much diversity may lead to chaos and confusion.

Social cohesion

Social cohesion is also an essential communal value. It shows the degree of solidarity in a society. Partly this solidarity is regulated by the state through a various types of social insurance. But certainly this time of economic crisis shows that the state does not, and according to some, cannot, cover everything. Social cohesion is also a matter for the locals, as evidenced by the extent to which people are living together, in the way people are dealing with neighbours and by levels of participation in social processes through associations and volunteering. An essential dimension to social cohesion is the tension between alone or together. Although individualism is a widely held value, giving space to own actions and take responsibility, there seems to be a change coming up. In many places, people are looking for new forms of collectivism. But, conversely, doing everything together and nothing alone can be oppressive. In extreme cases it leads to exclusion.

Figure 1: communal values



Economic dynamics

Economic dynamics are required to provide for the maintenance of life. Here is a tension between growth and contraction. How far should we go in order to allow growth and prevent economic shrinking and when does this lead to big problems? The debate on climate change is a good example of this tension. The economic sector has its own value indicator, which is the domestic product.

Physical health

Health is a value which is highly valued by many people. Health care has evolved over the years to become the largest item in the national budget. Not only the state but also individuals spend a lot of money to get healthy and to stay healthy. Sports are popular, healthy food is 'in' and sales of healthy living-themed books are doing particularly well. Indicators of health include life expectancy, absenteeism, obesity and the appreciation of the public for their own health. Health is about the tension between homogeneity and heterogeneity. Solid and stable patterns provide stability and provide healthy circumstances. but are vulnerable to changes.

Spatial quality

The communal values associated with the population have, in a certain sense, a counterpart in spatial quality. The cultural, social, economic and physical value of the environment in which we live is addressed via spatial quality: experiential value, physical liveability, physical utility and ecological sustainability. Three of the four values – all barring liveability - are derived from Vitruvius.

The experiential value or beauty has never been a big issue in the Netherlands. It's a miracle that we have produced so many great artists. Our greatest painters were not recognized or embraced by their country: Van Gogh (France), Mondriaan (USA), and de Koning(USA), moved abroad and Rembrandt died in poverty. And the first alderman has yet to be turned away because he or she approved a disgusting building.

Physical liveability mainly came up in the 80s and 90s. There were even political parties founded on this theme. It is still an important item.

Over the years, the most important item has been the physical utility of the environment, mostly focussing on one sectoral aspect such as housing shortages, congestion, suitability for agriculture or safety against flooding.

Environmental sustainability has in recent years become a major theme, around which new political parties are also emerging.

The measurement of values

Values have a double meaning. On the one hand, they can be used objectively by anyone to determine indicators. On the other hand, values are highly subjective and related to individual or communal goals such as quality of life or social cohesion. In the different applications developed by the author a combination is used. First, there are objective indicators that can be set for each area, such as density, dwelling size, income, education level and so on. These indicators can be used to determine the score on a particular value. This is a proven method applied by multiple agencies and institutions. There are reasonably acceptable measures of economic dynamism, quality of life and the like. On the other hand, there are studies of the population in which they asked for the appreciation of all aspects of

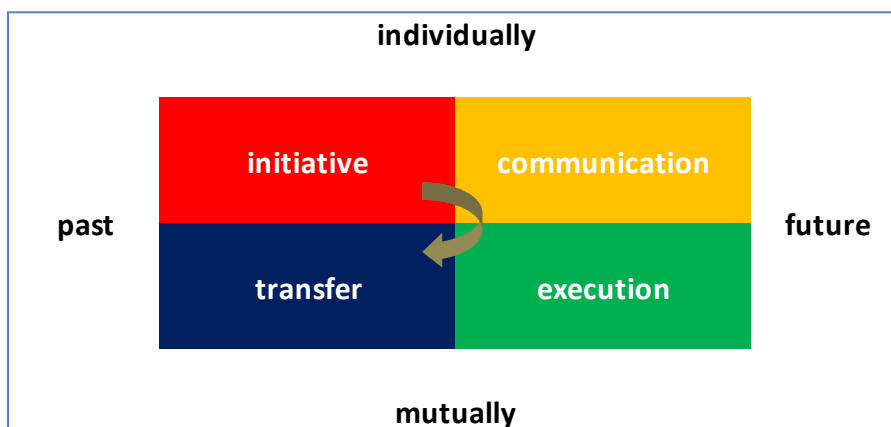
society. These subjective measures are also used. Together they should provide a reasonable picture of the diverse communal values at all spatial scales. Nevertheless, more debate is needed in order to come up with generally accepted values.

Spatial planning based on communal values

Now that the basic principles have been established and we know how to measure communal values, the approach can be further developed. Every action consists of four elements. This applies to small daily actions and to investments for major spatial transformations, whether we work according to a new or an old way of spatial planning. These steps recur again and again; see figure 2.

Every action requires initiative. Without initiative, nothing happens. Communication follows initiative, about what we do and how we do it. Execution follows communication and, finally, a transfer to the surroundings. Even with the smallest action, there is a transmission to the surroundings. If I move from one place to another, I take an initiative. There is communication in order to determine the direction. Then follows execution. The transfer to the environment is minimal, but present, namely the change in the air around me and the footprints I leave behind.

Figure 2: action in 4 steps



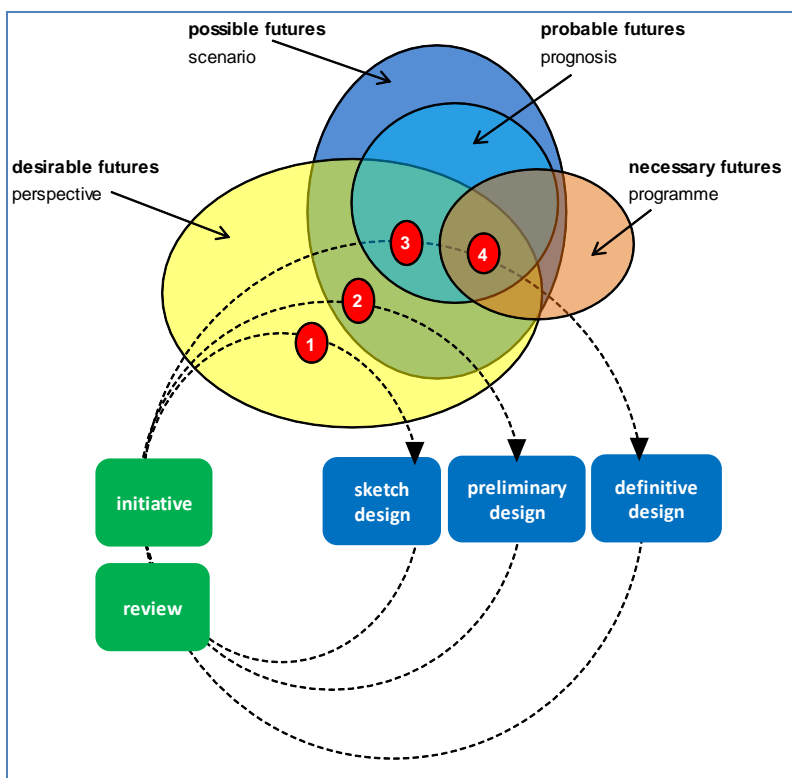
An act always has a circular and a linear side. The parts follow each other (linear), but after the transfer there will be a new beginning. A displacement is an endless series of new initiatives to get anywhere. A spatial investment is part of an endless series of initiatives in urban development.

For large spatial projects we can therefore identify the same parts. The initiative consists of establishing the context, in terms of values, and the position of the initiator within that context. In spatial investments multiple parties are always involved. In the old situation the initiative was mainly owned by a limited number of parties, government and developers. In the new situation there are more, and a much greater variety of parties. This requires a complete inventory of the people involved and their roles. Finally, the starting values regarding communal development must be established.

The communication component is further examined because of its essential role in the new spatial planning. If something goes wrong, it's usually in this event. Communication consists of the inventory of expected values - a complicated process – and therefore important to clarify.

A spatial investment always requires a vision and the resources to make it happen. During the process, the vision must be so sharp that it can be implemented and there should be sufficient resources for the implementation. It is a combination of narrowing and widening. If one of the two fails then the project will fail. The result is shown in figure 3. The figure may look complex but upon closer inspection is straightforward. The upper part of the figure shows the collection of futures for an individual or a group. A distinction is made in desirable, possible, probable and necessary futures. It is true that the probable futures are always a part of the possible futures. The desirable futures not only span probable and possible futures, but can also fall outside these collections. The same is true for the necessary futures. In layering the futures we identify 10 subsets, each with its own character and consequences. In the middle are the necessary, desirable, likely and possible futures. Everything goes on smoothly. Completely outside are the futures that are not possible, not probable, not wanted and not needed and therefore not very interesting. All other combinations have their own significance. Interesting combinations are the futures that are desirable and possible, but not likely. There is work to be done. This also applies to futures that are probable and possible, but not desirable.

Figure 4: process with respect to communication



The purpose of spatial planning is to formulate a necessary plan. All parties support the plan, which still fits within the desirable and possible futures. Very schematically, one would first have to define the desired future (1). We call the result a sketch plan and it is the realization of one or more perspectives. If that's beyond the possible future then a new step is to be undertaken. It can be on any basis. Examples: the spot is not appropriate, there is not enough money, the design does not meet the requirements, not all stakeholders are satisfied, etc.. The new preliminary design must fit within the possible futures (2). The move to a probable future can be made when all resources are put in effect (3) and the people involved have committed themselves to the implementation process (4).

The designs are always tested for their contribution to the various individual and communal values. That means the question of whether the initiative is continued until a final design is answered

Examples

An approach based on these principles is by no way a generally accepted approach. Methods that have worked for a long time do not disappear in one night. The current crisis may be a catalyst to look for a different approach. In the following examples projects are mentioned in which the author experimented with the new approach. In all examples, use was made of the value approach and co-creation. Until 2005 the projects only involves theoretical exercises. Later it concerns practical projects and the approach was focused on implementation.

1998: The Metropolitan Debate: Developing a new method for decision-making, together with TU Delft, University of Amsterdam and the HMD foundation. The principles are similar to the principles in this article. The method was applied in the project NL2030 in the preparation of the Fifth National Note on Spatial Planning in the year 2000.

1998: Het Nieuwe Ommeland: Application of the decision-making method in the rural areas. Project together with LTO Netherlands.

1999: Northward: Search for new projects with district Amsterdam Noord, community groups and institutions from Amsterdam Noord. Residents groups were supported by designers and artists.

2002: Where is my money? National debate on the use of ICES funds (natural gas revenues). Project together with the Institute for Public and Politics.

2005: Bacinol debates: Search for new projects in Delft along with creative industry in Delft. Project has resulted in several new initiatives.

2006: Valuable interventions in districts: Project along with several housing associations. Quest for meaningful projects and effect analysis.

2010: Delft sizzles: Development of perspectives and projects in Delft South East together with TU Delft, DUWO student housing, community groups, water board, municipality of Delft and the foundation called "Living with Water". Deadlock around building in this district gave way for new projects.

2013: New Wealth: Development of perspectives and projects in the centre of Leeuwarden with community groups, associations of retailers, municipality of Leeuwarden and institutions.

2013: SPOTS: redevelopment of boiler houses to cultural centres as part of Kosice 2013 European Capital of Culture. Project together with community groups and the organization of SPOTS.

2014: Perspective Region Zwolle: Development of perspectives and projects with provinces and municipalities of the region Zwolle.

2003-2015: CPO (collective private organizations): Various projects with Hulshof Architects around CPO. The method follows the principles and the steps as described above. The

projects were always undertaken together with community groups, municipalities and sometimes with housing associations, banks and other institutions.

Recommendations

An open planning driven by communal values and established through co-creation has been increasingly put to use but is still far from commonplace. The current crisis is bringing a nice momentum in order to change this. This requires:

- A number of important players such as governments and social institutions should act according to these principles. One party must begin and it is obvious that the government and the social institutions of the government can do that. There are still too many projects where these principles are violated and where the taxpayer pays the bill. A few municipalities have started; consider, for instance, the Almere principles.
- Communicate the principles: The familiarity with this method will have to increase. This can be done by showing examples. Through publications and through teaching, people can be made familiar with the approach.
- Government as director: The government has had too many roles in the past. Director of spatial processes according to the given rules is a good step forward.
- Art and culture as a catalyst: Art as a catalyst has been only sporadically applied, but a great success when used as such. For example, see the Metamorfose Poptahof in Delft and Hotel Transvaal in The Hague. More experiments are required.
- Recording of values: At present, the core of national statistics is the commitment to the economic value added. This is the holy grail of economic dynamism. The other values must be recorded with the same vigor.
- Documentation of projects: Better documentation of projects is absolutely necessary. Projects are what people do. This shows who cooperates, what resources are committed, and the end results. Projects above a certain amount of money should have higher standards for recording, if only on a sample basis. Despite large scandals with building projects in the past, practically nothing is being done to prevent reoccurrences and to start a learning process.
- Communicating results: Better registration and documentation of projects and values pave the way to a greater capacity to learn about spatial investments. It also paves the way towards integration with non-spatial projects.

