

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND: LESSONS FROM DUTCH PLANNING¹

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When asked to talk to this distinguished audience, I decided to talk about my exposure to Dutch planning. In this respect, I am reminded of the characters in the Spielberg science fiction movie to which the title of this paper alludes and who have physically encountered extra-terrestrials. I reflect on my experience by describing my encounters, over more than twenty-one years, as a planning academic and educator, with Dutch planning.

I doubt, though, whether there are any direct lessons to be drawn, let alone lessons for post-apartheid South Africa. For reasons too obvious to belabour (small country, a people disciplined by the perennial fight against the sea, the ensuing Dutch attitudes towards land, and a, so far, strong housing policy) the preconditions of planning are favourable. Rather, lessons of the achievements, and also the shortcomings, of Dutch planning are indirect and require theoretical reflection. The ultimate lesson will, indeed, be that academic work, reflecting on planning practice, is the best way of learning from each other, thus re-emphasizing the old saying that there is nothing more useful than good theory.

More specifically, the lessons relate to the role of plans in planning, to the discipline of planning (for which the Dutch have coined the term planology) and to planning doctrine. The role of plans was the focus of a comparison of local planning in the Netherlands and in England and Wales, my first encounter with Dutch planning. Planology as a discipline became an issue in the second encounter during the Dutch version of the "proceduralist" versus "substantivist" conflict in planning theory. Planning doctrine is a concept formulated in an effort to come to grips with my third encounter with the relative success of strategic planning in the Netherlands.

The occasion for these encounters is simply told: After having spent the best parts of seven years in Great Britain, helping with developing the Oxford Polytechnic (now Oxford Brookes University) planning courses, I was appointed at Delft University of Technology in 1974, moving to the University of Amsterdam in 1977. Since then, I do research and teach there on what since 1982 is a fully-fledged planning course, not unlike British "three-plus-one" courses.² I carry a Dutch passport and Dutch is one of my working languages.

First Encounter: The Leiden-Oxford Study

Needless to say, neither Delft nor Amsterdam appointed me on the strength of my Dutch experience. Nay, I was appointed on basis of my work on planning theory. Still, I wanted to find out about Dutch planning, so what better way than mounting research spanning my previous, albeit modest exposure to British planning and my new environment? Firstly, such research could test the hypotheses in "Planning Theory" (Faludi 1984, first published 1973). Secondly, inspired by the less well-known sequel to the famous book "A Systems Approach to Urban and Regional Planning" (McLoughlin 1969), the title of which is "Control and Urban Planning" (McLoughlin 1973), I wanted to focus initially, not on plans and plan-making, but on implementation, and that way to analyze the impact of plans on development³.

When it came to pass⁴, the research team⁵, somewhat to my chagrin, rejected the idea of testing my preconceived hypotheses. Rather, we made do with the bare bones of a conceptual framework, and from there we let empirical reality take over. I have

never returned to the hypotheses in "Planning Theory" since.

However, we did start with implementation. In both towns selected for comparison, Leiden in the Netherlands and Oxford in England, we focused on fairly routine developments to establish what the role of plans in them had been. If ever I was put in a similar position, I would do the same: look at how the environment comes about, and what the role of plans in its development is.

As regards findings, I focus on the Dutch side⁶. These findings set me on a course of rethinking the role of plans. Here was a system of world fame, but the legally binding plans which it produced were honoured more in the breach than in the observance. Even after the planning act of 1965⁷ had come into full force in 1970, more than two thirds of all building permits in Leiden were given in contravention of the relevant plans! Leiden was neither special, nor, strenuous efforts to rectify it notwithstanding, has the problem disappeared since. This casts doubt on the role of plans as conceived by the law.

Dutch attitudes on this are mixed. Some decry the cavalier manner in which plans are circumvented. Others accept them to the point where they see plans as useless. In discussions at the time, one of the practitioners made revealing comments. Having seen to it that the project was completed at the requisite speed, almost regardless of what the plan had said, this central operator behind the development of a neighbourhood of approximately five-thousand homes in our presence reminded one of his colleagues that it was high time for a plan to be adopted. One of his neighbours had started building a shed, which being a resident himself of that neighbourhood, he objected to. Thus, the plan was an

instrument for preserving the physical fabric once it had been built. Pressed on this, the same person pointed to a scheme on the wall of his office indicating the developers to whom various sections of the entire scheme had been allocated. This scheme had little to do with the statutory plan, but for him it had been the framework which he had referred to.

What to make of such a role of plans, even in a system highly regarded for its achievements? Because of our approach, doing studies of projects first, and of the relevant plans only afterwards, our answers were perhaps somewhat loaded in favour of development and its progress. We looked at the plans as the operators in the field did: as hurdles to be overcome in solving immediate and pressing problems. We began to see plan departures, not as violations of principles enshrined in grandiose documents, but as reasonable adaptations to the exigencies of situations. In other words, in the tussle between implementing the plan and promoting development, we sided with the operators who seemed to have good arguments on their side. What point would there have been, for instance, in insisting on high-rise development for the sole reason that the plan drawn up some years before foresaw in such development? Consumers in an emerging buyers' market preferred low-rise development, and so developers were unwilling to build high-rise, and, plan or no plan, that was the end of it.

The main focus in interpreting such experiences has been, not on the lack of implementation (an age-old complaint of planners) but on flexibility, hence the title of the book: "Flexibility and Commitment in Planning" (Thomas et al. 1978). By that time, I had re-appraised Friend and Jessop (1974, first published 1969) and the "I.O.R.-school" (after the Institute for Operational Research). Other than what the name suggests, they were advocating a "soft" approach paying attention to processes and to imponderables in decision-making. Above all, they propounded a radically new philosophy which I have emulated ever since. It is that planning is not primarily about making plans but about improving day-by-day decisions. I sense an affinity with Friedmann

(1993) where he portrays planning as connecting knowledge and action in the public domain. However, he tends to deprecate the role of plans. I maintain that plans have a role to play. It is to provide frameworks for decision-making. Sometimes, we are also saying: plans are investments in improving day-by-day decision-making. However, plans need not be implemented to be effective. All that we ask is that they be referred to during decision-making.

Unfortunately, this pits you against the planners of most countries of the world, where (on paper, if not in practice) planning evolves around binding plans. These plans seem to connote power for the planners. In actual fact, binding plans are counterproductive. The exception to the rule of binding plans dominating the thinking of planners is Britain where until not long ago development control decisions have been taken on their merits, thereby paying regard to the plan, no more. Even now that the British planning system is said to be "plan-led", my British friends assure me that this means no more than a presumption in favour of the plan.

Since then, Van der Valk has taken this reflection on the role of plans further⁸. He takes his cues from the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy formulating two ideal-typical approaches to planning. They help in interpreting the insistence of Dutch planners, shown by Van der Valk to be the common thread in the development of planning ever since the late nineteenth century, on a pivotal role for plans. The first approach is the technocratic approach. It assumes a strong role for authorities in safeguarding the public interest. As the experts, planners are called upon to articulate this public interest. Everything evolves around the Plan. There is a twofold assumption underlying: (a) allowing only such development as fits into the Plan will make developers fall into line, and the desired end-state will be approximated; (b) the Plan caters to scientifically established needs. To reveal them, much energy is spent on surveys and forecasts, as if they could reveal the one and only form of the Plan. It follows also that those implementing the Plan require no discretion. The Plan has taken care

of everything. The technocratic approach leads to a plan-led system.

The sociocratic approach pays attention to the views of others. Authorities are not the only ones who are able to act in terms of the public interest and not above other actors either. This leaves room for negotiations. The role of planners is less central than according to the technocratic view. This view is more amenable to flexibility, meaning that the plan can be reconsidered.

Van der Valk has identified two forms of plans complementing each of these two approaches, project plans and strategic plans. (See also Faludi 1989, Faludi & Van der Valk 1994:11) Project plans are blueprints. Interaction between those concerned focuses on plan adoption. Once adopted, it forms an unambiguous guide to action. Adoption implies a definite image of the future. Consideration of time is restricted to the phasing of works. A project plan is expected to lead to results specified beforehand. Strategic plans, on the other hand, deal with the coordination of actors, each making decisions of his or her own. Since all actors want to keep options open, timing is crucial. Rather than a finished product, a strategic plan is a momentary record of fleeting agreements reached. It forms a framework for negotiations and is indicative. The future remains open. Action never flows automatically from a strategic plan. Each decision needs justification in its own right. It will be clear that after the Leiden-Oxford study, I prefer plans to be of this kind.

Second Encounter: Planology

By the time the Leiden-Oxford project drew to a close, I had taken up my Amsterdam appointment. My predecessor, Willem Steigenga, the first holder of a chair in planology⁹, had been one of the founding fathers of the discipline. I began to explore the origins of planology and the state which the discipline and practice were in.

In Dutch, the term is "planologie". In a paper explaining this concept to an international audience, Needham (1988) Anglicizes it as planology, and

in our English-language text book on Dutch planning in English (Faludi and Van der Valk 1994), we have followed his lead. What the term stands for is a social-science approach to planning.

The term as such has probably been coined by the now largely forgotten pioneer J de Casseres lecturing on the "Foundations of planology" in 1929¹⁰. In 1944, P and F Bakker Schut published the first book under the title "Planologie"¹¹. But what is it? An authoritative academic committee has defined planology as involving "... scientific and methodological reflection on spatial ordering and planning, forming -- on the basis of empirical research ... descriptive, explanatory and normative theories"¹², and this is the definition that I subscribe to.

Engineers and not social scientists have been the first to advocate scientific planning. They were later replaced by geographers providing the knowledge base for planning¹³. In fact they regarded planning as applied geography. They had a tradition of making regional monographs. Based on detailed surveys, these monographs enforced the engineering ethos of exactitude and comprehensiveness. On this basis, as long as they were given the opportunity to do research, geographers were content initially with the division of labour under "survey-before-plan". Over time, they became restive though. It was my predecessor Steigenga who articulated this by focusing on the step from knowledge to action, defining it as a constructive task, culminating in political decision-making. A geographer himself, Steigenga had been doing planning research at Rotterdam before being appointed a professor in 1962. A Labour member also of the Provincial Legislature, he was concerned with rendering political decisions more systematic. A programmatic paper on "Social-science research and physical planning" written as early as 1956 marks him as a representative of modern planning thought concerned with the organization and procedures, but above all with the methodology of planning. In this paper, he saw planning as "... the sum total of decisions aiming to create the conditions for a particular type of social development ..."¹⁴ This implied "social engineer-

ing", a task fitting for social scientists.

The but of his criticism was of course the pre-eminent designer role in planning. Rather than relying, as designers did, and to some extent still do, on the creative leap, Steigenga recommended the development of models of spatial structure to provide the basis for publicly accountable decision-making. In this way, he surpassed the positivism of classic Dutch planning trying to derive policies straight from surveys of the "facts".

Steigenga passed away in 1974. The year after that, Van der Cammen published a paper on the process approach which marked him as his disciple. Van der Cammen showed the two sides to it: planning as a cyclical process, and planning as a social process. He took note also of the demise of blueprint planning¹⁵. A paper by Kreukels gave an overview of new methods, categorizing them into formal and behavioural. His concern ever since has been the integration of planning theory with the behavioural sciences¹⁶. A group from Nijmegen University discussed similar themes around an exercise in their region¹⁷. There are frequent references to procedural planning theory, but soon the latter began to evoke unease¹⁸. Of course, Dutch academics also partook in the grand Marxist-inspired debates of the seventies, but without making an original contribution.

This was the state of the art when I joined the University of Amsterdam. I did not have a strong sense that I was expected to continue the work of Steigenga (of which I myself was only vaguely aware at that time). Rather, as indicated, debates focused on procedural versus substantive theory. To those who were brought up in the tradition of survey research, procedural theory was threatening, especially since its protagonists laid claim to the core of the planning curriculum. There was concern that this would be to the detriment of substantive theory and research. Often, this concern was couched in terms of theories about the object of planning being equally important as theories about the planning process.

In this atmosphere, I recast procedural

theory in the form of my present decision-centred view of planning. (Faludi 1982, 1986, 1987) I built on the "I.O.R.-School" which I had invoked in interpreting the findings of the Leiden-Oxford research. This school is best known for its "strategic choice approach", and by that time I was also engaged in research relating to the application of this approach in the Dutch context (Faludi and Mastop 1982).

The intention behind advancing a decision-centred view was to clarify the issues in the proceduralist versus substantivist debate. By that time, there were already two sides to this debate. One related to a misconception about the intention behind procedural planning theory, as if the emphasis on procedures meant lack of appreciation for substantive knowledge. The other related to the Marxist-inspired challenge to planning theory.

I was trying to overcome the misconception as regards the role of substantive knowledge by formulating what I was really against. Now, this was of course not the formulation of substantive knowledge about the object of planning. Rather, it was against the misconceived idea, implied in "survey-before-plan", that doing research was all that there was to planning. Classic planning thought has always suffered from the positivistic idea that action springs directly from thorough research. The corollary is that policy should be left to experts. After all, they are the ones who know best.

I dubbed this the "object-centred" view of planning and characterized it as technocratic. It was a deliberate challenge to "substantivists" to spell out the nature of their claims about theories of the object of planning as forming the basis for planning.

A third view which I formulated in response to Marxist challenges I called the "control-centred" view. This was based on the conviction that Marxist debates were mainly about control, or rather the lack thereof, in planning. Thus, many of the studies concerned sought to demonstrate that planning was an epiphenomenon and that - irrespective of whether they were aware of it or not - planners were

following the logic of capitalist accumulation. The implication was that planning in any real sense of the word would have to wait until after the revolution, and that until then debunking of existing planning was the only worthwhile task for researchers.

The modest intention has not been to do justice to the Marxist-inspired literature as such, but to reconstruct fundamental views or, as I started calling them, paradigms of planning from it. I concluded that the albeit implicit assumptions about planning held by the authors concerned came down to the equation of planning with control over the means of production, hence "control-centred paradigm". This paradigm focuses attention, not so much on planning as such, but on its preconditions in terms of the exercise of power.

The decision-centred view is different in that it assumes there to be a sufficient level of intervention in the environment to warrant thought being given to how proposals for action are being formulated. According to the decision-centred view, planning then stands for rendering decisions meaningful by analyzing them in their wider context of choice. In the past pride of place has gone to plans, and practical decisions have been expected to follow. The decision-centred view puts the onus on planners to make plans relevant to ongoing decision-making. It will be evident why, after the Leiden-Oxford study, this appealed to me. It follows that plan-making must take ongoing decisions as its point of departure.

A focus on implementation was of course not new. However, in the past, the problem had been defined from the point of view of planners as that of overcoming obstacles in the way of rendering beautiful ideas enshrined in plans operational. Now, the issue was defined in a radically different way. Since operational decision-making was central, the role of plans was that of helping the decision makers.

This has implications for plan-evaluation. Departures do not necessarily indicate failure. That would only be the case if we thought that plans embodied superior wisdom, so that the need for their implementation was a

forgone conclusion. If, as the Leiden-Oxford research teaches us, this is not the case, if, in other words, we take seriously the contention that plans should be aids to decision makers rather than straitjackets, then all that needs to be insisted upon is that each decision must be well-considered, and that plans should help with doing precisely that: considering all the ramifications of decisions. Such issues have been thoroughly explored, leading to a distinct Dutch line of evaluation research concerned with the performance of plans in assisting with day-by-day decision-making (Faludi 1989, Alexander & Faludi 1989, Faludi & Korthals Altes 1994).

I was content with the three paradigms as a framework for organizing planning thought and started to further explore the decision-centred view of planning as the heir apparent to procedural planning theory. A whole series of studies of Dutch planning since has been based on this view, and in the meantime important additions and modifications have occurred. At the same time, I had to contend with the fact that, with many others, the key authors belonging to the I.O.R.-school from which I had drawn inspiration were weary of rationality, a concept central to my "Planning Theory". I started exploring the notion of rationality as a decision rule in planning, analogous to Popper's rules for accepting or rejecting scientific hypotheses. The analogy runs like this: each decision of a public authority must be well-considered. To this extent, the decision-centred view shares in the spirit of science. After all, the methodology of science evolves around well-considered statements about reality. Like in scientific methodology, the search is for a demarcation criterion and a rule for when a decision may be considered justified. In "Critical Rationalism and Planning Methodology" (Faludi 1986) I submit that rationality is precisely this: a rule for identifying whether or not decisions may be deemed to be well-considered.

A comprehensive statement of the decision-centred view in Dutch is by Mastop¹⁹. Defenders of substantive planning theory at Nijmegen University responded with an "action-oriented approach". This approach is not,

however, the same as the "object-centred view of planning". It does not cling to the positivism of classic planning thought saying that planning requires nothing but the thorough study of its object of concern, after which action, design, or policy, springs from the minds of planners ready-made.

In describing the action-oriented approach, we follow Needham (1988) in the same paper in which he Anglicizes "planologie". Like the decision-centred view, this approach does not start with the making of plans, and this is another common denominator. However, unlike the decision-centred view, the action-oriented approach does not focus on the operational decisions of the planning subject either. Rather, its starting point is the bringing about of change, primarily via the spatial actions of others, hence "action-oriented" approach.

The Nijmegen School has spawned three books²⁰. The confrontation, such as it was, with the decision-centred view, more particularly with Mastop, took place in 1985²¹. It has laid the foundations for the now prevailing consensus²². Both approaches focus on social interaction around public decisions and action concerning the environment that follows. Both appreciate that the addressees of the planners' messages interpret them in the light of their own situations as they perceive them. Lastly, both understand that, as human actors, these addressees are in principle free (albeit perhaps to their peril) to negate, subvert, and/or contravene plans. This not only forms the common basis, it also provides an entry point for grounding planning thought in contemporary social-science thinking.

The same proceduralist versus substantivist debate has prodded me to specify also how, from a decision-centred view, we might conceptualize the object of planning. I concluded that the object of this type of planning are land decision units, or parcels of land. More specifically, this object is the set of conceivable measures taken with respect to the land decision units within the jurisdiction of a planning authority. In the first instance, we are talking about the measures of public authorities, but in the second instance

of course also about the measures of private actors in their various capacities relating to land and resources (Faludi 1985, 1987). Such measures are in need of coordination, and this is the ultimate aim of planning.

This accords well with the consensus between protagonists of the decision-centred view and the action-oriented approach. What this means is that, lamentations about the state of the discipline in general and of planning theory in particular notwithstanding, a discipline is within grasp, and we in the Netherlands have made progress in formulating it. It partakes in the family of policy sciences and as such it relates to action, more specifically action in what Friedmann (1987) describes as the public domain, with all the implications which flow from this. At the same time, planology is firmly rooted in an understanding of its object, and of the essential features of the types of action that flow from it, including appropriate types of planning.

Third Encounter: Planning Doctrine

From the beginning of my stay in the Netherlands, my ambition has been to engage in research, not only on local, but also and in particular of strategic planning. This was based on my perception that strategic planning, and more specifically national planning in the Netherlands has something unique to offer.

Initially, the Leiden-Oxford Study absorbed most of my energy, and attention to national planning was limited to student projects, first at Delft University of Technology²³ and later at the University of Amsterdam. Thanks to De Ruijter, who had joined me at the University of Amsterdam²⁴, the concern broadened to include the history of the Dutch planning profession. Joined in my explorations by Van der Valk, I have concerned myself with this field ever since. However, it was only in 1983 that I embarked on the first research on strategic planning of my own. This concerned an evaluation of the Urbanization Report, being part two of the Third National Physical Planning Report, published in 1976 and officially adopted as a so-called Key

Planning Decision in 1978. The Urbanization Report presented a growth-management package by articulating an image of a desirable future, together with a way of reaching it. At that time, planners (in particular of an urban design-bent) argued that plans should do precisely this: package attractive images, thereby ensuring plan implementation. This I found had been more or less what the Urbanization Report had done. The report was one in a chain of documents. Between them, they had generated a definite view of what the country should look like. Decision makers were imbued with this view, and they acted accordingly. That which provides such self-evident guidance is now being described by us as "planning doctrine."

This has set me on a course of systematically studying Dutch strategic planning throughout this century. Such research would have been impossible without a fairly substantial investment in the Netherlands in the education of Ph.D.-candidates. Most academic research is now done by such candidates employed for a period of four years. Their supervisors are required to develop programmes of research in which to accommodate them. This has given an impetus for the cumulation of insights. The professionalization of planning in relation to planning doctrine and to the discipline of planology has been the theme which we pursued. The studies have culminated in an overall evaluation of the Dutch planning system, including the philosophies behind it, the view of plans and of planning on which it is based, and the performance of plans (Faludi & Van der Valk 1994).

One of the first studies in this series concerned late-nineteenth century planning in Amsterdam²⁵. It is the study which has resulted in the identification of the technocratic and the sociocratic views of planning discussed above. The author, Van der Valk, did not limit himself to studying the various plans and how they were invoked in day-by-day decision-making. Rather, he analyzed the substantive and procedural ideas held by professionals. These ideas form the mainspring of professional strategies. The study introduced the notion "systematic town expansion" to refer to the complex of such ideas. Systematic

town extension encapsulates expert thinking about planning. It signifies intent to do away with chaotic nineteenth-century development. Systematic town expansion relates to the shape of development as well as to the manner in which order should be achieved. The quest for systematic town expansion was the driving force behind planning strategies and action. As such it makes us understand the development of planning.

Another study, by De Ruijter, concerned with the setting up of the Netherlands Institute of Housing and Planning introduced the concept of a programme "for housing and planning"²⁶. "Programme" stood for that which bound the coalition forming the Netherlands Institute for Housing and Planning together. The study was the first but not the only one to take its cues from the history and philosophy of science, especially Kuhn and Lakatos.

For instance, Zonneveld, in a study of planning concepts invoked since the twenties²⁷, traced patterns in their formation, Zonneveld identified a "hard core" and "positive heuristics", together with "explosive issues", analogous to Kuhn's "anomalies". They cause fundamental change in the dominant "conceptual complex", a notion comparable to that of a paradigm.

All this relates to a theme in current discussions about policy-making, which is the importance of overall frames in consensus-building. The formulation of such frames is a key to political effectiveness. Hajer (1989, see also Hajer, 1994) picks up this theme, introducing the notion of hegemonic project. A hegemonic project consists of a discourse, a system of positions and practices and strategic action. A discourse serves a specific cause, is related to a specific alliance and forms the basis for strategy. The struggle between discourses is the fight between groups "... to get their interpretation of the state of affairs dominant. It cannot be discussed usefully in terms only of discourse: it is basically a struggle for hegemony which involves more than ideology alone. It concerns the fight against a dominant hegemonic project, the emergence and formation of alterna-

tive projects and the transformation of existing alliances to keep in power" (Hajer 1989:41).

My own term for what Hajer calls a hegemonic project is planning doctrine. Planning doctrine delineates an arena for discussion and action. Herein lies its importance. By performing its framing role, doctrine enables "normal" planning. "Normal" planning involves primarily professional, administrative, and bureaucratic actors. Within the context of agreed-upon values and a generally imaged principle of spatial organization, professional-bureaucratic debate and political discourse can produce a succession of planning concepts to respond to changing situations. A benefit of having a doctrine is therefore to reduce the burden of planning. Planning becomes cumulative and progressive. This may account for the effectiveness of Dutch planning.

Now, planning doctrines (such as the Dutch) that have lasted and which have been successful have at times displayed significant changes. At the same time we are saying that these are the same doctrines throughout. How do we account for this? Alexander and Faludi (1990) invoke the analogy between doctrines and paradigms. Lakatos (1974) makes a distinction for paradigms (which he calls: "scientific research programmes") between negative and positive heuristics. By a negative heuristic, the "hard core" of a research programme cannot change. The positive heuristic encourages development of a "protective belt" of theories, models and observations elaborating the core; these may change.

In planning doctrine, the same distinction can be made. Various concepts may be replaced throughout the lifespan of the doctrine. Thus, in the Netherlands the emphasis in strategic planning has gone from concentric development around towns and cities to a policy of controlled dispersal and back to what is called the "compact-city" policy, all within one and the same doctrine evolving around Randstad and Green Heart. However, the doctrine itself, with its mobilizing metaphor as its hard core, is replaced in a different kind of discourse, one even more political and value-oriented.

Thus, if ever the Green Heart was abandoned, the reasoning goes that this would amount to a doctrinal revolution, analogous to a scientific revolution, and the dissolution of the planning community arraying itself around the original doctrine.

The notion of a planning community has a bearing also on considerations of how planning relates to wider concerns so that it can generate societal consensus. It would be preposterous to assume that the planning community, through the medium of a well-considered doctrine, could generate consensus where it does not exist. That being said, it is possible to argue that Dutch planning doctrine has played a part in specifying pre-existing societal consensus in the Netherlands by outlining an attractive manner of conceptualizing the shape of the country, and by framing Dutch policies accordingly.

The ultimate challenge is, of course, to turn the new understanding of how doctrines are being shaped, and how they in turn shape action, to good use. Are there such things as discourses on doctrines? The notion of Rein and Schön (1986) of "frame-reflective discourse" suggests that there are. Can we reasonably expect, as experts, to shed light on intensely political matters as the choice of doctrine? Or are, as Kuhn would no doubt argue, doctrines incommensurable, and thus beyond expert judgment? To put it another way: what is the developmental pattern of doctrine? Are periods of "normal" planning, as Alexander and Faludi (1990) have put it in analogy to Kuhn's normal science inevitably followed by doctrinal revolutions? Certainly in the Netherlands with its well-developed doctrine this is an urgent question. A study, to be completed in 1995²⁸, focuses on the dynamics of doctrinal development, using the Dutch Fourth National Physical Report as a case study. (See also Korthals Altes 1992) It explores the implications of more recent literature, in particular Laudan (1984). This suggests a pattern of doctrinal development which is more evolutionary than revolutionary. The study puts flesh to the bones of an idea which Alexander and Faludi have explored: that of an "open" doctrine. The analogy between planning and science continues to provide fodder for

thought.

The Lessons?

To reiterate, the Dutch context is such that no direct lessons can be drawn. However, there are three indirect lessons which I venture to draw, and they relate to each of the encounters above.

One is to be humble about planning, and even more about plans. Plans do not always embody superior wisdom. Having said that, let me hasten to add that plans add an essential element to decision-making which is an awareness of some of the wider ramifications of action. However, this is all that there is to plans. Day-by-day decision-making remains supreme.

The second lesson is encouraging. It is that town and country planning, urban and regional planning, physical planning, environmental planning, or whatever you would like to call our field, does have the makings of a discipline. Far be it from me to advocate that the world adopts the term planology to refer to it. With the exception of recent attempts in Italy to introduce the term²⁹, nobody uses it. However, it might be useful to pay attention to the conceptualization of the field and the approaches taken by Dutch academics.

The third lesson is that, to gain a comprehensive understanding of planning, in other words, to fulfil the promise of planology, academic researchers need to do what the Dutch committee has demanded when defining planology: reflect upon planning and implementation. This needs to be done in a historical perspective to understand how issues have been framed and how debates and approaches and concepts have come to be sustained over time and what a determined planning community can achieve. Such academic research does pay a dividend in heightened understanding. For instance, in the face of the facile demand for wholesale change, we are now recommending to Dutch strategic planners to stick to their guns. Without the sustained effort of documenting past planning efforts and their successes, we would not have dared suggesting that existing

approaches should be maintained.

Of course, we would not dare doing so for any other context where we have not done this groundwork either. The research necessary for arriving at a deep understanding of planning is inherently context-specific, and it needs to be done locally. Occasionally, somebody coming from the outside, like I have been to the Netherlands more than twenty-one years ago, is permitted to join the fray, but then he or she needs to get totally immersed in the local context. Encounters of the third kind are a condition, therefore, of reflecting upon, let alone pronouncing upon, planning in any particular context. You cannot do with less.

NOTES

- 1 Paper for the conference "Planning and Planning Education at a Time of Change", 27-29 June, 1995, East London, Republic of South Africa. Unless otherwise indicated, translations from the Dutch originals are by the author. For the convenience of readers who have no command of Dutch, references to Dutch sources have been relegated to footnotes.
- 2 These courses combine a B.A. degree with a diploma in town and country planning. In the Netherlands, however, there are no diplomas as distinct from academic degrees, but the courses giving a planning degree are four years even so.
- 3 By that time I was unaware of Pressman and Wildawsky, 1973, whose work has spawned a whole implementation literature.
- 4 The project was financed by the then Centre for Environmental Studies in London.
- 5 The Delft team consisted of Steve Hamnett, now a professor at the University of South Australia, who had joined me after receiving his graduate diploma from Oxford Polytechnic, a number of Dutch research assistants and myself. There was a team of four involved at the Oxford end.
- 6 The findings in both countries are well-documented in the volume published by the two teams jointly; see Thomas *et al*, 1983.
- 7 In albeit modified this act is still operative.
- 8 Van der Valk AJ (1989). *Amsterdam in aanleg: Planvorming en dagelijks handelen 1850-1900 (Planologische Studies 8)*, Institute of Planning and Demography, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, p419.
- 9 Unfortunately, I had made his acquaintance only briefly before he passed away in 1974.
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