

BROADENING THE SCOPE OF PLANNING

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At the outset it was not my intention to link this article to that of the Theunissen in the September 1982 issue of the Journal for Town and Regional Planning ("Mr. Town and Regional Planner, I presume?"). But as it turned out, it does in fact, to a degree at least, expand on the same theme. As far as *planning* is concerned, it is basically in support of both standpoints, but as regards *the planner* and the town and regional planning *profession*, it is in support of Theunissen number Two, i.e. of specialisation in the profession.

THE SCOPE, PRESENTLY

Rightly or wrongly, (the majority of) town and regional planners in South Africa (and elsewhere) were basically trained to do physical planning and not "comprehensive" or non-physical (e.g. economic and social) planning. It is understandable that there are not many "comprehensive" planners around because it would be impossible to train such animals in the limited timespan of a university course and for a planner of above average intelligence, it will take the best part of a lifetime to become one through experience and self-training. The shortage of specialist planners, other than physical planners, is harder to explain. Perhaps there is *not* a shortage of these types of planners: they may just not be so "visible" because they are *de facto* planners by virtue of the positions that they occupy and they may be in professional and other groupings with people of the same basic training and not by reason of them being planners. The only planning grouping that I know of in S.A., other than those who are practising town and regional planners, is the Long Range Planning Society of Southern Africa.

The generalist/specialist distinction in planning is not a clearcut one because a basic common characteristic of all planners, to my mind, is that they must not think and work in compartments but inter-disciplinary. To a greater or lesser degree, therefore, both in training and

in practice, physical planners are made sensitive to the fact that physical planning has very important economic, social and political determinants and effects. In fact, the objectives of physical planning are now largely non-physical. In the days of the industrial revolution in England the objectives were largely physical (insofar as health objectives are physical) in that control measures in the construction of buildings were devised and "incompatible" land uses were identified, largely with health considerations in mind. In the meantime, however, most of the problems which made these control measures necessary, were either resolved or diminished and the emphasis in planning goal formulation shifted to other fields. But this does not make the physical planner a generalist, because having the degree of knowledge of related subjects that allows him to take cognisance of those fields when performing his physical planning duties, is not enough for him to be able to actually plan within those related fields.

In fact, I would say that most physical planners do not have adequate knowledge of related fields to allow them to perform even the physical planning function properly. For this they are largely dependent upon specialists from these related fields.

The situation, therefore, is that whilst the scope of planning is comprehensive, including physical and non-physical fields, the scope of the individual planner's training and experience is by necessity comparatively very restricted.

PROBLEMS

This situation led to problems. To follow but one line of argument: many plans in the past were insensitive to and unrealistic in terms of economic, social and political issues. On the other hand, probably because of a lack of understanding of the professional abilities of town and regional planners, the larger community sometimes had unrealistic expectations of their abilities to do

"comprehensive" and non-physical planning. In some cases, this resulted in physical planners taking up the opportunities resulting from these expectations (or fell before the temptations!) and embarked upon comprehensive and/or non-physical planning tasks. Inevitably, planning failures followed: mostly in terms of non-achievement (plans could not be implemented) but also in that planning sometimes achieved negative results. Added to the proportion of failures that would have occurred in any case, this led to a growing disillusionment with planning. Which resulted in a notion in some (even planning) circles that traditional planning is a failure – throwing the baby away with the bathwater.

A NEW PLANNING TRADITION?

For a number of years now, therefore, there have been efforts to move away from the old planning tradition of focusing on the organisation of space and the allocation of resources, to a new approach of a concern for human needs: economic, social, cultural, environmental and political needs. Apart from its concern with human needs, the new approach concentrates on the implementability of plans even before the actual planning process starts. Factors such as the availability of financial, technical and managerial resources and skills, whether there are suitable organisations with the capacity to implement plans and what plans are likely to be feasible and credible in the light of given social and political circumstances, are given prominence. Especially in Third World situations, these are very important considerations.

When propagating a new idea proponents tend to make use of cover-statements. Thus, what is really in my opinion a new emphasis (representing normal development in the art) is presented as a new planning tradition. And what can legitimately be referred to as mis-

takes that were made in past planning, is called the failure of the old tradition.

Conceptually overstated or not, it should be conceded that mistakes *were* made, and repeated, in past planning and that new emphases *are* necessary. The mistakes should be studied and put right where possible. At the same time more aspects of the wider field of planning should be explored by people suitably qualified (through training and/or experience) to do so.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

A more comprehensive approach to planning-in-practice is needed – an approach in which a clear distinction is made between planning, which I want to define as the synoptic way of looking at things and determining future action, and the town and regional planning profession, which represents a particular specialisation within the wider field. The wider concept of planning clearly requires a multi-disciplinary, multi-professional approach, the scope of which

should be determined by the particular job on hand and not by the limits of one or other profession.

It will require all planners, to whichever profession they belong (physical and non-physical) to get together more frequently, even on a permanent basis in government planning offices and possibly also in private consortiums of some sort. This team may include the physical planner, but the physical planner will not be the only participant, many times not the most important one and sometimes he will not be a participant at all.

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