

PLANNING VISION AND THE SERVICE OF SPATIAL PLANNING

DOI: https://doi.org/10.18485/arh_pt.2024.8.ch73

_ Ivan Stanič

PhD, Senior Lecturer, New University, Faculty of Law and management of infrastructure and property, Nova Gorica, Ljubljana, Slovenia, e-mail: ivan.stanic@epf.nova-uni.si

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the particular phases of the spatial planning process, which is described as a service. Whichever the agent commissioning the service is, a private investor or a public body, the service is generally delivered through particular phases, differing in complexity, level of elaboration, level of detail, measurability of achieved results and accountability. With brief digressions into past spatial planning practices, the paper questions the position of the service in contemporary society.

KEYWORDS _ *spatial planning, urban management, sustainable development goals, green economy*

INTRODUCTION – THE SERVICE OF SPATIAL PLANNING

Spatial planning is traditionally considered a public service devised for spatial performance of common goals concerning spatial development and management, as well as accelerating or enabling commercial activities concerning spatial uses. It generally takes onboard societal values, whereby these are most often conditioned by political circumstances. The purpose of spatial planning is to codify possible actions in the physical reality that deal with development, to safeguard generally accepted and acknowledged societal and spatial values and to provide a legal framework, mainly about rights and responsibilities in the enjoyment, efficiency, and use of one's property, whether in the sense of gaining or maintaining its value or for compensation for loss of value, when this is the consequence of recognised public interest. Besides the mostly physical aspect of spatial planning the latter implies an adopted legal basis for performing acceptable actions in space.

As any legal framework, whether adopted by parliamentary procedure in elected democratic bodies or in the contractual sense, when it comes to private investment bodies, the legal setup and adoption follow specified procedure. The paper deals with the position of spatial planning as a service in contemporary society.

SPATIAL PLANNING PHASES

Particular phases of the planning process relate to the level of detail and particularity. For the purpose of this discussion, they are described as:

- Vision – “as it should be...”
- Strategy – elaboration of goals, based on “as is” ... and what could be.
- Tactics – elaboration of passage to achievement – as it can be, where and when.
- Operation – getting it done – “as it will be”!

VISION

The ideal future is the vision. In the famous painting by Luciano Laurana, the ideal city is depicted by buildings, open spaces, and several images of people. However, spatial planning goes beyond the physical aspect. It implies adopted formalised documents. Yet, a legal document, adopted without a vision, is nothing more than a regulatory paper.

Gobekli Tepe is an archaeological site in southeastern Anatolia. It is the remains of a building more than 15,000 years old. In 1996, the site was explored more thoroughly by the German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt. So far nothing comparable, similar or of the same age was discovered in archaeological strata anywhere in the world, except for one younger site in present-day western Syria. Scientists explain that it is probably a religious centre of Stone Age hunter-gatherers, or the first possible sign of a permanently inhabited space. The first permanent building erected by our ancient ancestors was a temple. It consists of twenty circles of six-meter-high columns carved in the shape of the letter T. Many bones of various wildlife and none of the later domesticated animals were found on the site. There are no human graves, at least they haven't been discovered so far. In much younger archaeological strata, bones of already domesticated animals and various cereals were found, meaning that the construction of the temple may have run parallel to some kind of proto-urbanisation with early agriculture and animal breeding. Western science has long argued that our ancestors settled permanently in organized communities only after mastering farming and animal breeding. Schmidt argues quite the opposite, the need for permanent settlement followed the task of building a community building, today it would be called social infrastructure. To build such a building with the technological capacities of the time, it was necessary to have, feed and care for many people

on the site for a long time. Moreover, such a building could not have been built by a spontaneous group of hunter-gatherers, but only by a multi-layered community with a vision that had the time, power, and wider support to do so.

15.000 years later Rousseau coined the idea as common vision.

A spatial planning vision relates to goal, policy, recognised deficiency of service, whether related to utilities, transport or required standard of delivery or any other structure, needed to fulfil the demands/requirements/desires of a given society. It can also relate to the old term “public pride”, prestige on the global, national, or regional level, economic precondition to take a particular economy forward or to maintain its position and vitality. It can also be a political statement, backed by ideology.

Examples of historical visions:

- Palmanova, Karlovac – new frontier cities, built as “ideal cities” on the northern boundary of the Venetian Republic and the southern boundary of the Habsburg empire to hold back the Ottoman empires excursions northwards and westwards,
- New cities in Great Britain and France – new cities and estates built on principles of an enlightened capitalist premise of humane industry and post-war recovery after the 2nd world war.
- Nova Gorica – the new regional centre, built as a regional centre after the 2nd World war to service the regional towns for the western parts of Slovenia, after the border between Italy and Yugoslavia was drawn, whereby the former regional centres Trieste and Gorizia were given to Italy. The new city was also a beacon of socialist ideology, built in the modernist-functional style. Velenje, another new city in Slovenia, was envisioned to accommodate a growing mining and industrial city and also designed in the modernist, functionalist style.
- Belgrade – the new part of national capital city of Yugoslavia, built on the north banks of the Sava River after the 2nd world war, which was triggered by the idea of national metropolis of a modern socialist country and a polygon of the ideals of the time: brotherhood and unity. Building the city was started already before the war, but as a major post-war redevelopment project started with so called “voluntary students brigades” draining the marshes and then building the first building of the student’s accommodation.

The visions were further elaborated in strategic documents, tactical action plans and particular developments, relating to buildings, infrastructure etc.

Modern examples of visions, which are coupled with strategic goals are for example:

- Millenium and sustainable development goals in the Habitat III Quito declaration.
- Green and circular economy in the European green deal.
- The urban agenda of the EU and New Bauhaus

STRATEGY

A vision is achieved by following pertaining goals, elaborated as strategic goals. These are embodied in strategic documents, where strategic goals are set to be elaborated further in implementation phases all of which the spatial planning service provides, giving it a physical dimension.

After successfully surviving the spring of nations, the young Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph ordered the demolition of the walls of Vienna (1860-1890). He supported the demolition with a *lex specialis*. The preamble states: “It is our will to tear down the walls... signed Emperor FJI” (1857). These were built in the 14th century out of ransom for King Richard I of England, the lion-hearted. Fears evaporated: the Turkish threat was gone, the Napoleonic order was over, the man himself was

already deceased, his united Europe collapsed, the Prussians were rapidly uniting Germany, while the Russian Empire was busy in conquests in the Caucasus. As the strategy of war changed, the city walls, as objects of threat and fear, imaginary or real security, had also become unnecessary. Moreover, the emperor had to somehow approach his new supporters, the young capitalist elite of the empire, which, in the flow of national emancipation, itself accelerated social tension with the gradual abolition of feudalism and old aristocratic rights, while at the same time pronounced centralization of the empire and concentration of power in the capital city. There was hardly anything in the treasury, but there was an abundance of imperial land, especially in the so-called *Glacis* – a 500-metre strip of land, the shooting range beyond the walls, where there were neither buildings nor trees. The walls also constituted a traffic barrier since the City of Vienna had already integrated the surrounding neighbourhoods into city management as early as 1850 (quarters 2 to 9). Emperor Franz Joseph I also wanted a boulevard, as was designed in Paris, but in the case of Vienna, these were not planned as firing lines for anti-revolutionary artillery, as was the case in Paris, but as a circular shaded alley for the proud citizens of the monarchy. The earlier Paris model of Napoleon III and Baron Hausmann (1853-1927) was somewhat different and with a more sinister agenda.

With the execution of the Vienna ring, the city became the centre of the whole empire. The city's Empire-operated expansion fund unleashed unprecedented forces of capital, created thousands of jobs, sparked a real estate and investment explosion and technological innovation, e. g. the introduction of a tram. The multiplier effect of the decision to spend state money and release private capital was also a public benefit: a multitude of new buildings of national pride – the face of the empire for all the subjects of the Habsburg Monarchy.

After the earthquake in Ljubljana in 1895, at the time a small provincial town in the Austro-Hungarian empire, the architect Max Fabiani copied the main architectural motif of the Vienna project and proposed a ring around the city. However, in Ljubljana there was no wall to demolish. It was completed in 2013 as a utilitarian transport corridor around the city, which allowed pedestrianisation of the city centre of the present national capital city.

Nevertheless, another wall in Ljubljana was demolished half a century later. During the occupation of Ljubljana in the 2. World war a fence, a wall was built encircling the city, to prevent contacts between the resistance in the city with the partisans in the forests. As most walls even this one didn't fulfil its function. After the occupiers left, the fence/wall was torn down. The space of the torn down wall didn't become an investment polygon, but an historical memorial and a 33 km long, 40 m-wide recreational park. It is probably the longest park in the world. It is circular, it is endless.

Almost 150 years after the walls of Vienna were torn down, a world leader ordered another world leader to tear down the wall between West and East Berlin. Fukuyama claimed that history had ended, upon which Baudrillard claimed the opposite. What the first saw as victory of neoliberal economy over collectivism, the other saw as a possible new beginning. As it appears today, the first was probably right. The tearing down of walls seems to be a common manifestative description for triggering changes.

TACTICS

Spatial plans as a rule generally carry the spirit of the time and the current urban theory. The plan as such is also an aesthetic scheme, including engineering precision, which should also be sufficient for other purposes of public benefit, such as standards, which evolve with available or newly acquired knowledge.

The contemporary spatial planning service however goes beyond the practicality of a drawn scheme. It goes beyond the limitations of the definitive object, the building. The subject of urban regulation is the establishment of a framework for long term construction of the whole in which individual cities – buildings and open spaces – are directly realised, whereby at least some buildings can also be built

for the public benefit (schools, kindergartens, health, and social care facilities, etc., transport and economic public infrastructure, etc.). Urban regulation can also produce indirect effects to achieve public benefits. For this purpose, the framework scheme should be equipped with programmes, action plans and, at least at the level of public finances, items in the city budget. Only in this way is it possible to achieve the public benefits identified in time and space, such as improvement of the state of the environment (cleaner air and less noisy living environment), controlled physiology of the city (discharge and purification of wastewater, provision of safe drinking water, waste management), safety of people and property (flood protection measures, prohibition of construction on unstable terrain, seismic construction), investment safety etc.

Examples:

- The new silk road from China to Western Europe – a railway corridor, with a maritime branch.
- King Abdullah port near Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the new logistics and industrial hub on the Red Sea.
- The European green deal – a strategy to transform the industrial rationale of the European Union and serve as the backbone for changing life patterns.

OPERATION

Operation relates to a particular project: a building, a neighbourhood, an element of infrastructure etc. Its main characteristic is materialisation, meaning the shift from adopted decisions to physical acts. Here the key objective is the physical manifestation of a particular intervention – getting the project completed in the physical dimension.

CONCLUSIONS – THE SERVICE OF SPATIAL PLANNING

Spatial planning is a complex process of objectively and optimally formalising social and development goals in space that are above all in the public interest, with the aim of rational and effective operation. A (strategic) spatial plan is a regulatory framework, which is a policy document with technical, economic, social, and legal content, which is adopted as an act in representative bodies through a democratic process. It contains a set of guidelines and operations (projects). The public interest in a democratic society should not be a manipulated will of an individual or a closed group, but an elaborate and democratically validated scheme, which takes onboard the widest possible circle of interests, aiming to be universal, but also viable. The public service is the formulation of individual identifiable and tangible elements of such a scheme, as well as the passage to completion. This also implies, that the achievement of the scheme however must be measurable through numerical and qualitative indicators.

Given the original societal character of the scheme, it is certainly more important to achieve proven and demonstrated overall social satisfaction. A completed project is a success, but in the spatial planning context it is not just the single achievement which counts. The more important question is whether a set strategic goal, stemming from the vision, and following the optimising procedure, that ensures viability and feasibility, has been achieved.

To conclude on a lighter note, the passage of spatial planning as a service through history has transcended.

- From... **The divine vision:** “Joshua marched seven times around and the wall came tumbling down”.
- To... **The imperial vision** “It is our will to demolish the wall”.
- Followed by... **The ideological vision** “Show the beauty of the new wall to the other side”.

- And... **The neo-liberal, conservative vision** "President G., tear down the wall".
- The present... **The new age resilient vision** "Keep the wall, but green it!"

An old, nowadays politically incorrect image of world order from the town hall of Sienna in Tuscany, shows what government, of which the planning service is an integral part, is about: satisfied people.

Spatial planning is a complex process of objectively and optimally formalising social and development goals in space that are above all in the public interest. The aim of rational and effective operation, whereby the public player is the facilitating, controlling, and enabling player. The public service is the formulation of individual identifiable and tangible elements of a larger scheme.

REFERENCES

- Baudrillard, Jean. *The illusion of the end*. 1994. Cambridge: Polity press.
- Blagojević, Ljiljana. *Novi Beograd – osporeni modernizam*. 2007. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike.
- Cinar, A. (ed.) and Bender, T. (ed.). *Urban imaginaries: Locating the modern City*. 2007. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Di Sopra, Luciano. *Palmanova – Analisi di una città-fortezza*. 1983. Milano: Electa.
- Eco, Umberto. *Kultura, informacija, komunikacija*. 1973. Beograd: Nolit.
- Fogarassy, Alfred et al.: *Vienna's Ringstrasse – The book*. 2014. Vienna. Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2014.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The end of history and the last man*. 1992. [Free press], London, Penguin books.
- Kavaš, Damjan (ed.), Koman, Klemen (ed.): *Strategija prehoda LUR v pametno regijo*. 2022. Ljubljana: Inštitut za ekonomska raziskovanja.
- Korpnik, Nande. 2008. *Architectural narrative of Velenje*. Oris, Zagreb, No. 53, 164–178.
- Košir, Fedja. *K arhitekturi: Razvoj arhitekturne teorije* [1. del in 2. del]. 2006. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za arhitekturo.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The production of space*. 1991. Oxford: Blackwell publishers.
- Rotar, Braco. *Pomeni prostora: Ideologije v urbanizmu in arhitekturi*. 1981. Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost.
- Roth, Martin, Sabine Schorman et al.: *Planet of visions*. 2000. Hannover: Expo 2000.
- Vuga, Tomaž. *Projekt: Nova Gorica*. 2018. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za kulturne in spominske študije, Založba ZRC.