Workshops for Sustainable Urban Development

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Traditionally, planners distinguish between substantive and procedural aspects of urban and regional planning. In the 1990s, the two planning approaches came closer to each other. New issues, like sustainable development, ask for an integration of substantive and procedural aspects. Newly emerging approaches among researchers and practitioners, like the communicative turn in planning, underscore the need to link the two aspects. In the context of sustainable urban development, shared understanding of basic common conditions is essential. Drawing on our experiences in research and consultancy, this paper focuses on workshops for sustainable urban development as a tool for planners to enhance shared understanding among the actors in urban planning projects. In these workshops, the first task is designing sustainable prospects for water and traffic networks. There are several reasons to take this point of departure for the workshops. Water and traffic systems are flows with major environmental impacts. Moreover, the two create strong spatial networks that are potentially organising the spatial fabric of land-use functions. The central question is how to improve our work-shop method in order to make actors' issues play a more central role. The paper first discusses the background of this workshop approach and the relevance of the question. Then, we discuss workshops of this kind as parts of regular urban restructuring projects. An analysis of these experiences leads to sugges-tions for improvement that, together, form a new model of

1. Introduction

This paper is about workshops held in the context of urban planning, These workshops bring together the actors in new developments and in transformation projects within the existing city. The aim is to generate structural concepts. More specifically, the workshops focus on the question of how to make these urban development projects more sustainable. Our aim is to improve the communicative and substantive quality of these 'workshops for sustainable urban development' and we draw upon our recent experiences in The Netherlands.

Questions

1. The underlying general question in this paper is how to create basic conditions for sustainable urban development? To move from this general question to more precise research issues our reasoning follows several steps. Firstly: sustainable urban development is not creating a static situation called sustainability, but creating carrying conditions for a dynamic process. Secondly: sustainable water and

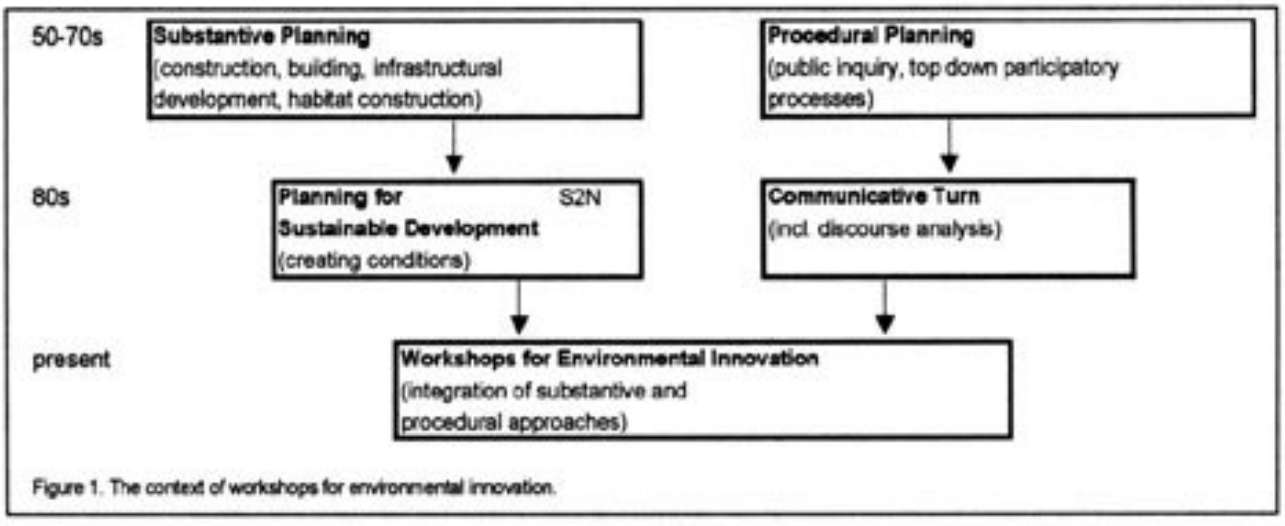


Figure 1. The context of workshops for environmental innovation.

traffic networks are key carrying conditions for dynamic development of built-up and open spaces in cities. Thirdly: hence, a strategy for water and traffic systems and their spatial networks is our starting point for the planning process.

2. At this point, the question that rises in every concrete urban development project is how to stimulate consensus building among the stakeholders about these basic conditions?

3. During the last four years we have sought to answer that question by organising workshops with the stakeholders in a number of projects. The question we are discussing now is how to improve the method of workshops for sustainable urban development? More specifically we would like to reflect on the question how actor issues could play a more important role in the workshop method we presently use.

Actors, stakeholders and participants

In urban planning projects we refer to actors to describe those who play a role in the planning area or planning situation in the present and in the future. Some may live or work in the area, some do not, like developers, planners or residents of a neighbouring district. Actors will be there after the planners have left the scene. If we discuss the interest actors have in planning, we will speak about stakeholders. If we talk about those who actually participate in decision making, we will talk about participants in this process.

Outline of the paper

In the first section we will discuss the backgrounds in planning theory and in the theory of sustainable development. Then, the role of workshops in urban planning practice is illustrated in two Dutch projects: Schalkwijk (Haarlem) and Poptahof (Delft). Finally, weaknesses, dilemmas and options for improvement of the present workshop method will be explored leading to a new proposal for the workshop set-up.

2. Background

2.1 Planning theory

Substantive and procedural

Traditionally, planning theory distinguishes between substantive and procedural aspects. For a critical discussion of this tradition we may refer to Faludi, 1987. Because of several developments, the two planning orientations came closer to each other in the 1990s. Figure 1 graphically demonstrates our view on the two approaches.

From substance to procedure

The world-wide focus on sustainable development has

drawn the attention of planners from substantive to procedural aspects. The Strategy of the Two Networks, S2N, (Tjallingii 1992, 1996, 2000) is a good example of an approach that has its roots in substantive planning, but that incorporates procedural elements. On the one hand, the strategy seeks to make water and transport systems more sustainable by addressing noise, energy, pollution and other environmental issues. (See for an elaborate description of the S2N section 2.) This illustrates the substantive roots of the strategy. On the other hand, in two ways procedural elements come in:

1. The traditional functional approach of land-use planning tends to focus on the claims and targets of interest groups demanding space for agricultural, residential, commercial and other land-use functions. This usually leads to opposite viewpoints and separation rather than co-operation. Working with the S2N invites the actors to start with a focus on common carrying conditions. As a result, the concept contributes to the development of integral designs of landscapes.
2. A second procedural aspect is the focus on a durable backbone for development. The backbone formed by the spatial structures for water and traffic creates a frame that leaves space for uncertainty and flexibility in the plans for functions like housing, industry, agriculture, recreation and wildlife. The flexibility within the frame also leaves space for interactive processes among stakeholders.

In these two ways, the S2N combines substantive and procedural planning approaches and creates a basis for communication.

From procedure to substance

In the 1990s, planners with their roots in the procedural tradition turned to genuine communication and discourse. The procedural tradition was characterised by putting forward planning proposals to a public inquiry before final decision making, but after a long preparation by professionals. By then, the proposal could not be changed anymore. So unless there was massive protest, the proposal was passed unchanged. The so-called communicative, collaborative or argumentative turn in planning (Healey 1997; Sager 1994; Fischer & Forester 1993) was a reaction to this rather top down approach. Healey reports five characteristics that distinguish the collaborative approach from traditional approaches: 1) integrative place making; 2) collaboration in policy making; 3) inclusive stakeholder involvement; 4) use of 'local' knowledge; and 5) building 'relational' resources (Healey 1998). Clearly, these characteristics are found not at the traditional top down procedure side of the participation spectrum but at the opposite side. Healey's characteristics can be used as a frame of reference for the assessment of the participation quality of projects or work processes, but are listed here to typify the 'communicative turn'. They illustrate that proponents of communicative approaches prefer to give impetus to genuine interaction between those who have a 'stake' in the innovation that is to result from the planning process. Substantive issues are not mentioned directly in Healy's five points. Substance seems to emerge with the actors' input to the process and is not a core element of the theory. In urban planning, however, usually actors are brought together by a common interest in the development of an area or by other substantive issues. In our case it is the common interest to make urban development more sustainable.

Some approaches to communicative planning more explicitly combine procedural with substantive elements. One of them is 'discourse analysis' a term used for an analysis of speech, reasoning and argumentation by participants in a planning process (Hajer, 1996; van Eeten, 1999). Van Eeten uses discourse analysis to explore 'crosswalks' in cases of a deadlock between conflicting parties. Understanding discourses means understanding the cultural context and background of the social constructs. The overt and hidden discourse of the actors' languages, narratives and images may provide clues for bringing parties back to the negotiating table or for improving the climate for communication.

Communication

In the context of growing attention for communicative

processes, it is not surprising that workshops became a common and recurring element in planning and policy formulation processes. Workshops are a tool to create a forum in the meaning of Bryson and Crosby (1993), an informal platform that may bring people together to share their perception of what should be done and what can be done. The forum communication is open ended and consensus seeking. In Bryson and Crosby's categories, the informal forum precedes a formal decision-making arena like the municipal council.

Much of the communicative planning discourse builds upon Jürgen Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (Habermas, 1981). Communicative rationality rests on shared understanding and this may develop if a team is making a plan. In an interactive process, step by step, the participants share their views about sustainable urban development and about a physical and organisational structure that will act as a common frame for different interests and values. In our view, workshops for sustainable urban development are useful to stimulate shared understanding and are finally resulting in shared responsibility among the participating actors for the sustainable solutions they generate themselves. The workshop, as a communication tool, facilitates such a process.

Discussions about the role of communication in planning are related to views about the role of knowledge. The traditional view of scientific rationalism is based on instrumental logic: clear cause and effect reasoning that leads to a straight goals and means rationality. In this view, planning starts with the formulation of objectives then proceeds to the selection of means and subsequently goes to implementation and evaluation. There has been a lot of criticism on this linear, rationalistic approach, which does not take into account uncertainties, risks, conflicting interests and diverging values. Most planners share this criticism. For a critical discussion we may refer to planners, like Friedmann (1987) and Faludi (1987) and to systems thinkers like Checkland (1999) whose Soft Systems approach includes a 'consensual debate' that comes close to shared understanding (Checkland, 1999:283). The perception of planning as a 'communicative enterprise' (Healey 1993: 240) is a reaction to the rationalistic vision, often referred to as the policy analysis tradition. As Healey puts it:

> A communicative approach to knowledge production – knowledge of conditions, cause and effect, moral values, and aesthetic worlds – maintains that knowledge is not merely a preformulated store of systematised understandings but is specifically created anew in our communications through exchanging perceptions and understandings and through drawing on the stock of life experience and previously consolidated cultural and moral knowledge available to participants. We cannot therefore predefine a set of tasks which planning must address, since these must be specifically discovered, learned about, and understood through intercommunicative processes. (Healey 1993: 241)

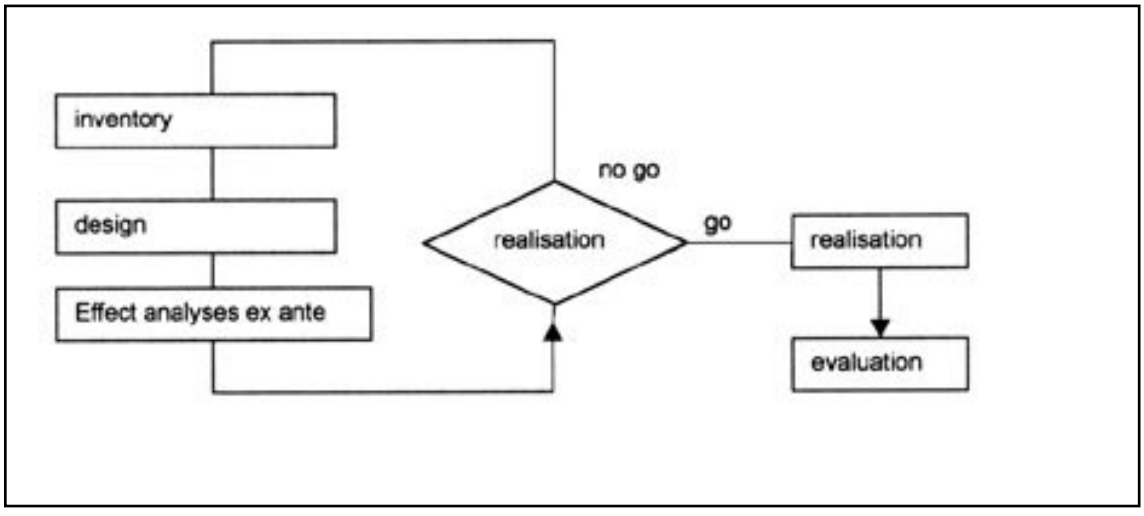
In practice, there are predefined tasks which planning must address. Sustainable urban development is one of these tasks. However, this does not exclude intercommunicative processes. Predefined objectives always frame the interactive process of making urban plans.

2.2 The Strategy of the Two Networks (S2N)

Before we get deeper into the details of the workshops for sustainable urban development, the S2N will be introduced briefly. In the introduction, already, some remarks were made on the way S2N is framing planning processes. But why traffic and water networks?

The role of water and traffic in urban planning

At the level of structure plans for urbanising landscapes, water and traffic networks may organise spatial order. In the making of such a plan it has proved to be practical to take the traffic network as a point of departure to create conditions for economic development. Likewise, the water network (the drainage system, groundwater and surface waters) is a practical point of departure for linking urban development to the local landscape and, more specifically, to create conditions for an integrated pattern of green areas. Moreover, strategies for sustainability, related to energy saving in terms of mobility and the prevention of pollution, may be effectively linked to the planning of water and traffic systems and their spatial networks (Tjallingii 1995). In



the S2N traffic and water networks are looked as the 'carriers' of a spatial organisation that offers a basis for sustaining biological diversity, sustainable use of natural resources, and a good quality of life for citizens.

If we use S2N as a tool in the workshops for sustainable urban development, it means that traffic and water flows are the point of departure for urban planning. Thus, the participants in decision-making are invited to first look at these flows, their spatial networks and to the actors connected to road and water infrastructure. The three perspectives called flows; areas and actors are the 'decision fields' discerned by the Ecopolis Strategy, the conceptual frame in which the S2N was conceived (Tjallingii 1995, 1996).

Strategic principles for water and traffic planning

The traffic principle of S2N is a concentration of infrastructure in corridors. In this way, the strategy seeks to create conditions for efficient use of infrastructure, for public transport exploitation and for joint efforts in pollution and noise control. Apart from these 'flow' directed effects; the traffic principle of concentration in corridors of the S2N seeks to create conditions for 'area' qualities such as a reduction of barriers and less landscape fragmentation.

The water principle of S2N is based on the strategy to keep rainwater clean and to keep it longer, by retention and infiltration techniques. The rationale behind the 'keep it longer' strategy is based on bad experiences with quick removal of rainwater, causing erosion and flooding downstream and decreasing groundwater tables upstream. The 'keep it clean' principle leads to prevention programmes and to the rule that water should flow from clean to polluted. Apart from these 'flow' directed issues; the water principle leads to retention ponds, cascades and other water forms that contribute to the quality of areas. A more detailed discussion of the principles of the S2N and the way they can be used in the process of integral planning and design is discussed in Tjallingii 1995 and 1996.

As both the flow and area principles for water and traffic are well elaborated, the social or 'actor' dimensions were often less well worked out at the workshops. In our search for improved workshop methods therefore special attention was paid to these 'actor' dimensions leading to the central question of this paper.

2.3 Workshops for sustainable urban development

Workshops and communication

Objectives behind the use of workshops are diverse. They are being applied merely to exchange views, to gain support amongst a wide variety of actors, or to set a common agenda. A municipality may organise a workshop to bring stakeholders together for the development of a municipal plan. A municipal service may organise a workshop in a district to offer the possibility to its inhabitants to participate in decision-making on the district water system. An urban planning de-

partment may have a workshop with another department to tune their agenda's to each other. Generally, the term participation is used only to refer to citizen's participation. However, in the context of this paper, participation is the issue of communication between all actors in a planning process. Officials from several municipal sector-departments, for example, often find it difficult to develop a common language for their contributions to an integrated planning process. In the workshops, one of the hot issues in debates between sectors concerns the balance between the role of rational knowledge (calculations, models) and the role of interactive communication in planning processes.

In planning practice the path for decision-making may be organised in cycles in order to do right to both the communicative and the rational elements of planning. Figure 2 illustrates the basic steps. Clearly, the most promising prospects for shared understanding, and therefore for the workshops for sustainable urban development, are in the stage of design that may include scenario development (Mayer, 1997). At this stage the alternatives are generated that can be tested by the rigour of models for effect analysis.

Development of a workshop method

Several studies have contributed to our approach of workshops for sustainable urban development.

Mayer's analysis of scenario workshops has deepened our understanding of communication on environmental issues in a workshop context (Mayer 1997). Teisman (1997) drew our attention to the process of 'enrichment': the evolution of planning proposals through different rounds in workshops. The essential point, he argues, is not to vote away second best ideas, especially not when they contain sound solutions for partial problems. Combination and recombination of ideas in a process of enrichment generates well-elaborated alternatives with more support from different stakeholders. This comes very close to shared understanding in a Habermasian dialogue.

Apart from the influences described above, the concrete starting point for our workshop method is the Environmental Maximisation Method (EMM) (Duijvestein 1996), that will be discussed as a part of the Poptahof case in the next section.

Having clarified the objectives and backgrounds of the workshops for sustainable urban development, we will now turn to experiences with such workshops in Dutch planning programmes for renovation and reconstruction of post war districts.

3. Experiences with workshops in planning for urban renewal

In the beginning of the 21st century, The Netherlands faces urban renewal as its most important task in urban development. The objectives of the renewal projects are 1. Increasing variation in the housing stock, 2. Increasing the quality of the living-environment, and 3. A drastic reduction of environmental pollution. In the last decade, the traditional 'top down' approach gave way to an interactive procedure in which the role of practitioners and stakeholders is essential from the very beginning of the planning process.

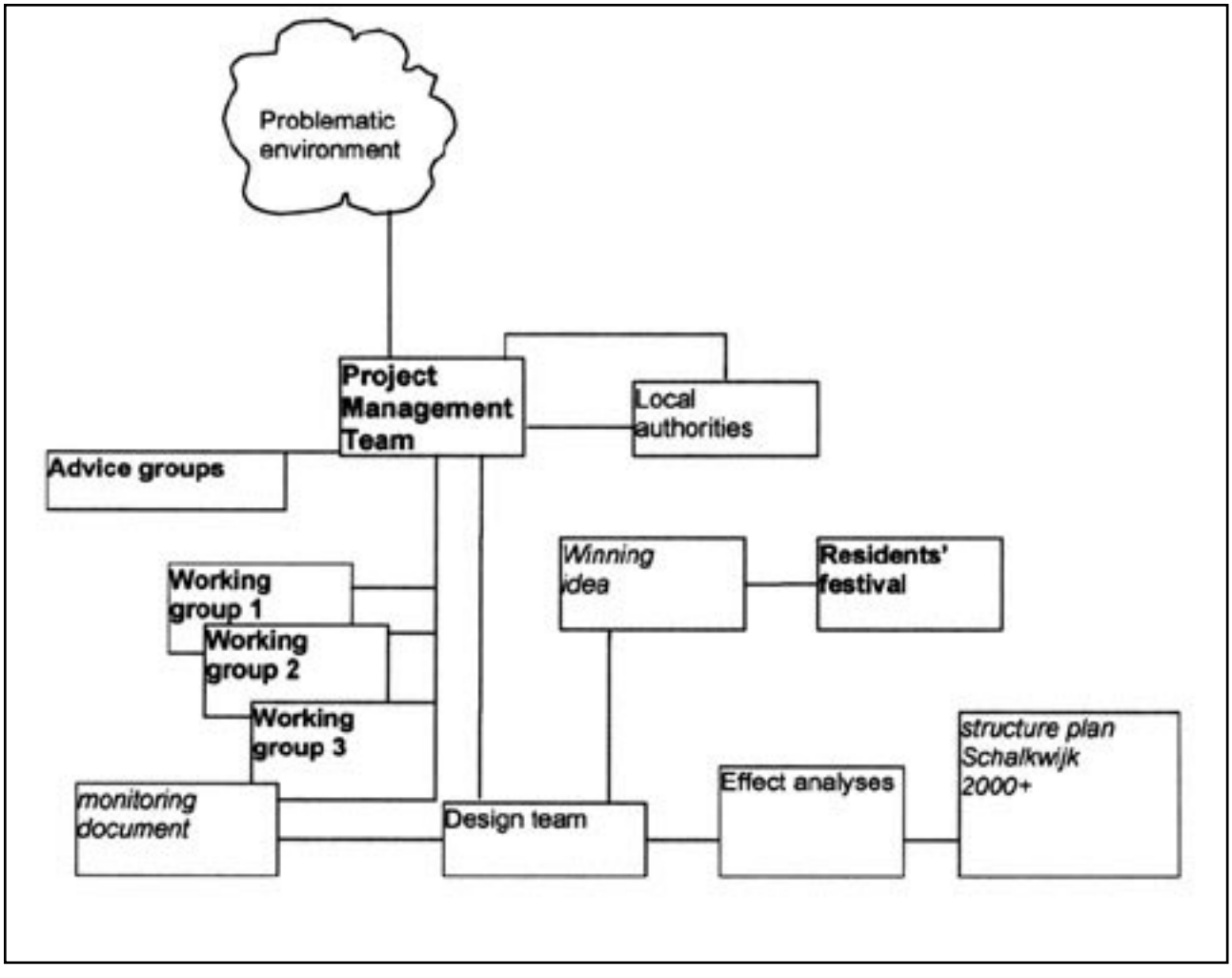
In the past four years, the authors participated in the two Dutch urban projects that will be discussed here. Our research objective was to learn about the use of concepts on sustainable development in the actual context of restructuring projects. Attention was paid to flows, areas and actors but a special focus was on the role of communication.

3.1 Schalkwijk

Workshops in the planning process

Schalkwijk is a district of 730 ha in the southeastern part of Haarlem. It has 14,000 dwellings and 33,000 inhabitants. The average density is 45 people per hectare. Schalkwijk was built in the 1960s. In 1996, the local government started the restructuring project 'Schalkwijk 2000+', with the creation of a differentiated and sustainable living-environment as its main objective.

An open planning process was adopted, in which residents and other stakeholders are invited to participate from the beginning. The Schalkwijk planning process has passed the definition phase in which the approach, the objectives, the spatial structure and the budgetary conditions were defined. The municipal council approved the resulting structure plan. The participants in the process are: the housing corpo-



rations, the district councils, the residents, the water board and the drinking water company, the electricity company, local environmental groups and numerous local government officials from different departments. The organisation of the process is shown in Figure 3. At an early stage, residents participate in the working groups (printed in bold). The 'products' are shown in Italics. The project-management team (PMT) and the local authorities are responsible for final decision-making.

Workshop settings

The planning process included approximately 35 workshops over a period of three years. The goals of the workshops were: information/education, creating support and commitment, determining the (environmental) ambition level, pointing out bottlenecks and generating ideas (for example the residents festival), design at the district level, testing of the design suggestions, and finally the modification of the designs through formal reactions (involvement/participation procedures).

Three working groups elaborated key issues and targets for 1.environmental quality, 2. spatial/physical quality and 3 social quality. These key issues had to guide the planning process. The workshops of the working group 'environmental quality' and the design team will be briefly discussed here.

In the course of five workshops, the working group 'environmental quality' discussed and formulated environmental ambitions in the fields of water, traffic, green, waste materials & cleaning, and construction materials & water (Van Eijk 1997). During the workshops, a three-step strategy was used (Duijvestein 1997: 16). The three steps, aiming at a reduction of environmental pressure, ran as follows:

1. prevent unnecessary use,
2. use alternative resources,
3. use finite resources wisely.

In each step, specific measures were formulated.

In addition to the use of the three-step strategy, the working group chose to use the S2N to create an integral and sustainable restructuring concept for Schalkwijk. Besides municipal practitioners local residents participated in the workshops. Other participants were the water and energy supply companies and the regional water board.

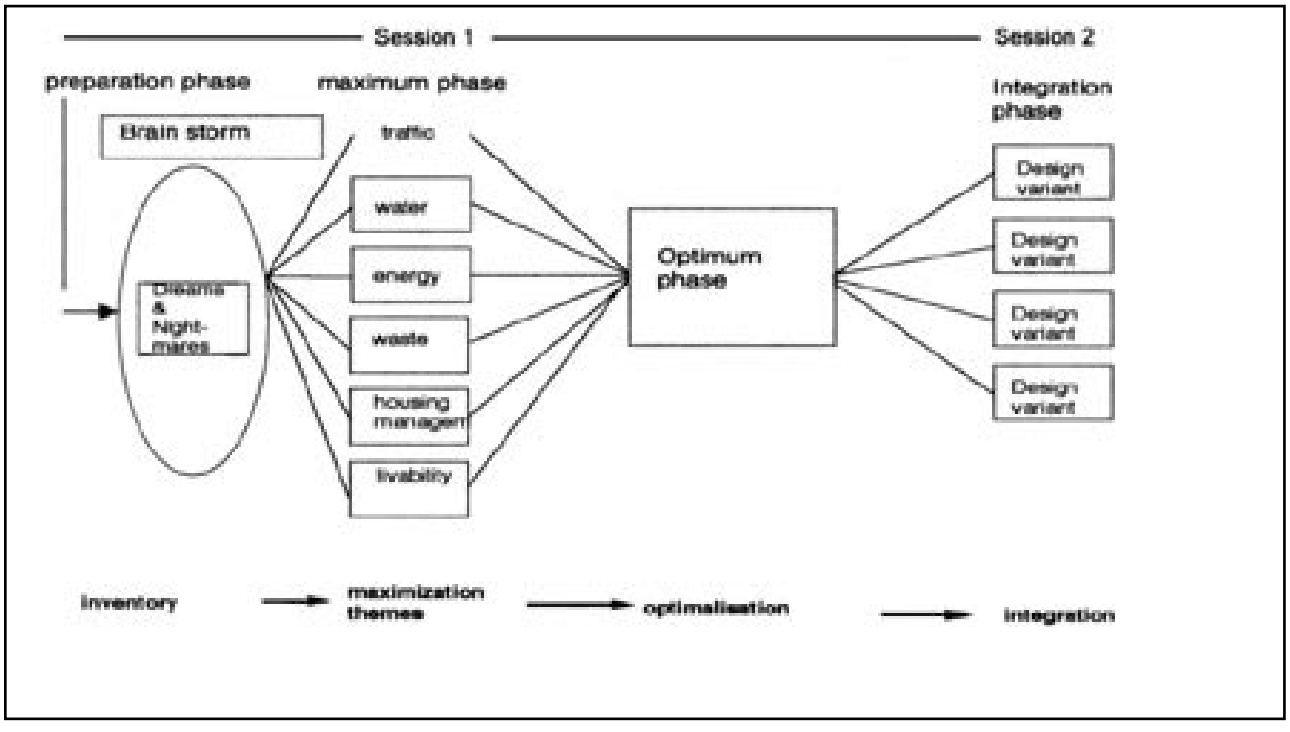
In conjunction with these workshops a residents' festival was organised, aiming at an increased commitment of the residents to the planning process by inviting them to join the process of generating ideas. In support of the residents' festival, four information meetings (urban planning, traffic, environment, and living conditions) were held, where external professionals presented the future possibilities for Schalkwijk. Residents submitted seventy ideas. A children's' play-island, the winning idea, will be realised. Other ideas, such as the construction of a mosque, will be incorporated in the planning process.

In 1997 and 1998, an interdisciplinary design team made a draft structure plan during two series of workshops (10 in total) using the documents from the working groups and the results of the residents' festival. In both series, the S2N was the leading strategy for the spatial organisation of Schalkwijk. The first series of workshops was about Schalkwijk as a whole, while the second series was organised in the four per sub district. The workshops had an 'open' and a 'closed' structure. In the 'open' part of the workshop, the residents identified problems during a walk through the area. In a 'closed' part of the workshop, the design-team elaborated the proposals. Subsequently, following the session and consultations, the residents gave their reactions to the design results. The Project Management Team (PMT) presented design decisions to the local authorities. These results were then communicated to the residents. The final structure plan with 27 projects was presented and went through a public enquiry procedure including an open discussion with the residents. The open discussion was visited by 2500 people and yielded 1500 written comments. After this procedure, five internal workshops were organised to elaborate the 1500 reactions and to advise the local authorities.

A discussion of Schalkwijk experiences

A comparison of nine recent urban renewal projects in The Netherlands showed that the Schalkwijk process (with the S2N) is the most integrated and has the highest ambitions concerning sustainability (Hal & Sylvester 1998; van der Wal 1998). From the start, environmental issues were discussed interactively with participants. However, using the S2N and setting up an interactive process appeared not to guarantee the commitment the PMT was hoping for. What significant lessons can be learnt from the Schalkwijk case in order to find answers to the main question of this paper?

- The S2N is a promising approach, in terms of shaping the decision fields and of shaping the design of the district as well. The new structure plan concentrates traffic in a central axis with connections to all parts. Water is concentrated in the urban fringe. However, traffic and water networks are still rather abstract for residents. Most of them find it difficult to imagine what a large-scale structure plan implies at the scale of a house or a garden. The number of negative reactions on the traffic network proposals illustrates this.
- Collaboration in policy-making and the organisation of a public enquiry procedure do not automatically lead to support for a plan in the final stage. The fact that more than 50 formal meetings between the local government and the residents (including workshops) had been organised did not change this. In the public enquiry procedure it became obvious that it was unclear to the residents how the visio-



nary master plan relates to operational projects. This is especially the case because there is a lack of information regarding the way in which the participation process will continue in the next phases of the project.

- Many residents have difficulties with the complexity and large scope of the project. Sometimes, it is hard to see how long-term sustainable development of a larger area relates to short-term nearby interventions. (Van Eijk 1999). Should the S2N be communicated in a more illustrative way with participating residents or would it be more appropriate to restrict resident participation to issues concerning the neighbourhood itself? In that case, decisions about structures for the whole district could be prepared by a forum of stakeholders including some representatives of the residents with knowledge and commitment at the more abstract structure plan level. At that level the professionals and politicians would be responsible for setting out the broad framework that creates enough space for local decisions.
- Traffic proposals, especially plans to concentrate car traffic in some zones and to reduce it in others, met with resistance that was not easily resolved by workshops. Besides the 'not in my backyard' syndrome of residents, there were objections from the traffic department of the municipality. They had 'doubts about the feasibility of the traffic proposals'. Also the social housing corporations objected because they found it 'hard to conform to spatial interventions of which the effects on the micro-scale were uncertain'. Additionally, a local political party expressed 'doubts about the feasibility of the traffic interventions proposed'. The experiments with interactive planning of infrastructure works (Wolsink 1999) show that this is not a new phenomenon. The formal reason given for these objections against limitations to car use is often uncertainty. Behind this, however, there may be more or less justified fears for damage to vital short-term interests. It is obvious that mere workshops would not offer the one and only answer.
- Urban restructuring processes go beyond the municipal elective term and need (inter) active participation of the policy makers, the city council and non-governmental organisations. In the case of Schalk-

wijk, partly due to elections, the participation of sitting politicians in the urban planning process was not sufficient to gain commitment of future politicians. For example, unlike other actors, politicians did not participate in the workshops. Consequently, in the end much energy was needed to gain political support.

The Schalkwijk structure plan case shows that the participative planning process (including workshop sessions) did contribute to shared understanding and broad support for the resulting structure plan. However, the visionary and comprehensive character, the large scale and the complexity of the structure plan made it difficult for residents in particular, to share the ideas of the plan. This leads to the question in what stage of the planning process active residents' participation is essential.

The attitude of professionals and interest groups towards proposals for concentrating car traffic shows that uncertainty about the structure plan's effects on vital interests may pose challenges to the support for the plan. How can we deal with these kinds of dilemmas and what can be the role of workshops? Against the background of these questions we will take a closer look at the workshop-method that has been used in a case study on the restructuring of the Poptahof in the municipality of Delft.

3.2 Poptahof

Workshops in the planning process

The Poptahof in Delft is a town centre neighbourhood typical for the urban districts built in the sixties. About 2400 people live in the Poptahof, an area of 18 ha with a density of 133 people per hectare. A housing company (social rent) owns the dwellings.

At this early stage of the renewal project, the main objective of the municipality of Delft in collaboration with the housing-companies, is to create a concept for a sustainable (spatial) organisation of the Poptahof. The intention of the project management is to involve the residents at a later stage.

The Poptahof workshops are based on the Environmental Maximisation Method (EMM) (Duijvestein 1997: 35). This process-oriented design method was used in the context of several new housing projects in The Netherlands (see Figure 4).

Two on-location workshop sessions took place in which 30 professionals and politicians participated. The project management decided to select the actors on an ad hoc basis. Most of them work for the municipality or the housing company. Some external experts were invited because of their innovative ideas. Unlike the Schalkwijk case, no residents participated in this stage of the project.

The goal of the first workshop was twofold:

1. to become acquainted with each other and with the issues and options for sustainable urban development;
2. to stimulate creative thinking without the limitation of day-to-day practice, in order to formulate innovative options for a sustainable spatial organisation of Poptahof.

The goal of the second workshop session was also twofold:

1. to elaborate a number of alternative integrated plans based on the outcome of the first session;
2. to enrich a number of these plans and to gain support and commitment as a basis for the subsequent stages in the planning process.

The first workshop session was about environmental maximisation, to create good conditions for all kinds of urban functions. Before the participants went out in working groups, everyone's dreams and nightmares (brainstorm), with respect to the urban innovation of the Poptahof, were itemized and discussed. Subsequently, questions had to be answered in mono-disciplinary working groups regarding sustainable management of flows (such as energy, waste, water and traffic), sustainable management of areas (items like green areas, liveability of open space, buildings) and sustainable involvement of actors. The working groups were invited to answer the following actor questions:

1. Which parties are financially involved in the project?
2. Which actors are involved in the making of plans

and in decision-making at what moments?
3. Which user group is the plan for, and what is the relation between public and private activities?
4. How will management and maintenance of buildings and open space be organised? And who participates in that process?

Between session 1 and 2, the housing companies and the municipality both participated in a 'home-work group'. This group of six persons formulated design principles for the move from the maximised single-issue plans of the first session to the optimised planning proposals for the whole in the second session.

In the second workshop session interdisciplinary working groups elaborated and presented several alternative variants on the basis of the design principles. In this workshop themes were related to water, traffic, green areas/nature, and built-up areas (blue, grey, green, and red on the workshop drawings and maps). Following the S2N, water and traffic were approached as important carriers for spatial qualities and for reducing the environmental impacts: environmental strategies for blue and grey create conditions for green and red.

A discussion of Poptahof experiences

- Dilemmas between the spatial themes (traffic, water) are brought to the surface at an early stage in the process when this workshop method is used. The S2N proved to be fruitful in this respect.
- Unlike the Schalkwijk case, active involvement of local politicians stimulated the participation of other actors. The responsible alderman participated himself and by doing this he showed strong commitment on behalf of the municipality. Other participants could therefore expect that the outcome of the process would not be without obligations for the municipality.
- The dreams/nightmare brainstorm works reasonably well; participants find it hard, however, to feel free from day-to-day practice.
- Some administrators point out that they have trouble with innovations, which do not fit into current policies.
- The workshop participants were unable to answer sufficiently the actor-oriented questions that have been referred to above. Apparently, the actors participating in the planning process had difficulties in describing the needs and options of the actors in the stages of realisation, use and management of the area. Would it have been different if other actors had been present?
- The two housing companies involved in the project have different opinions about the participation of residents. One organisation prefers to consult them in the end, the other prefers to engage them in the process at an earlier stage.
- Involving residents at this stage is difficult. There are 33 nationalities/ethnic groups living in the area and, at this stage, plans are still abstract. The present strategic stage of planning may set the frame for concrete operational proposals that directly affect residents. At that concrete proposal stage where wishes are translated into actual possibilities, it will be essential and realistic to get residents participate in the process. Yet a need is felt to involve residents in some way at an earlier stage. The workshop method is only an instantaneous exposure within the whole course of the project, which could take 12 years, as in the Schalkwijk case. The Poptahof case shows that the workshop is an important tool to bring actors together in the planning process. The role of the workshop is not just to determine what everyone wants and what is possible, but also to discuss innovations at an early stage and to get commitments from all the actors.

4. Discussion

The workshop experiences in the Schalkwijk and Poptahof projects illustrate our approach to combine substantive and procedural elements in the communication process of urban planning. Before we turn to our concluding new proposal for the workshop as a communication tool, some more general issues for discussion emerge. They all circle around the central question of this paper about the role of actors.

1. Substantives frames and open communication. There can be a tension between substantive planning

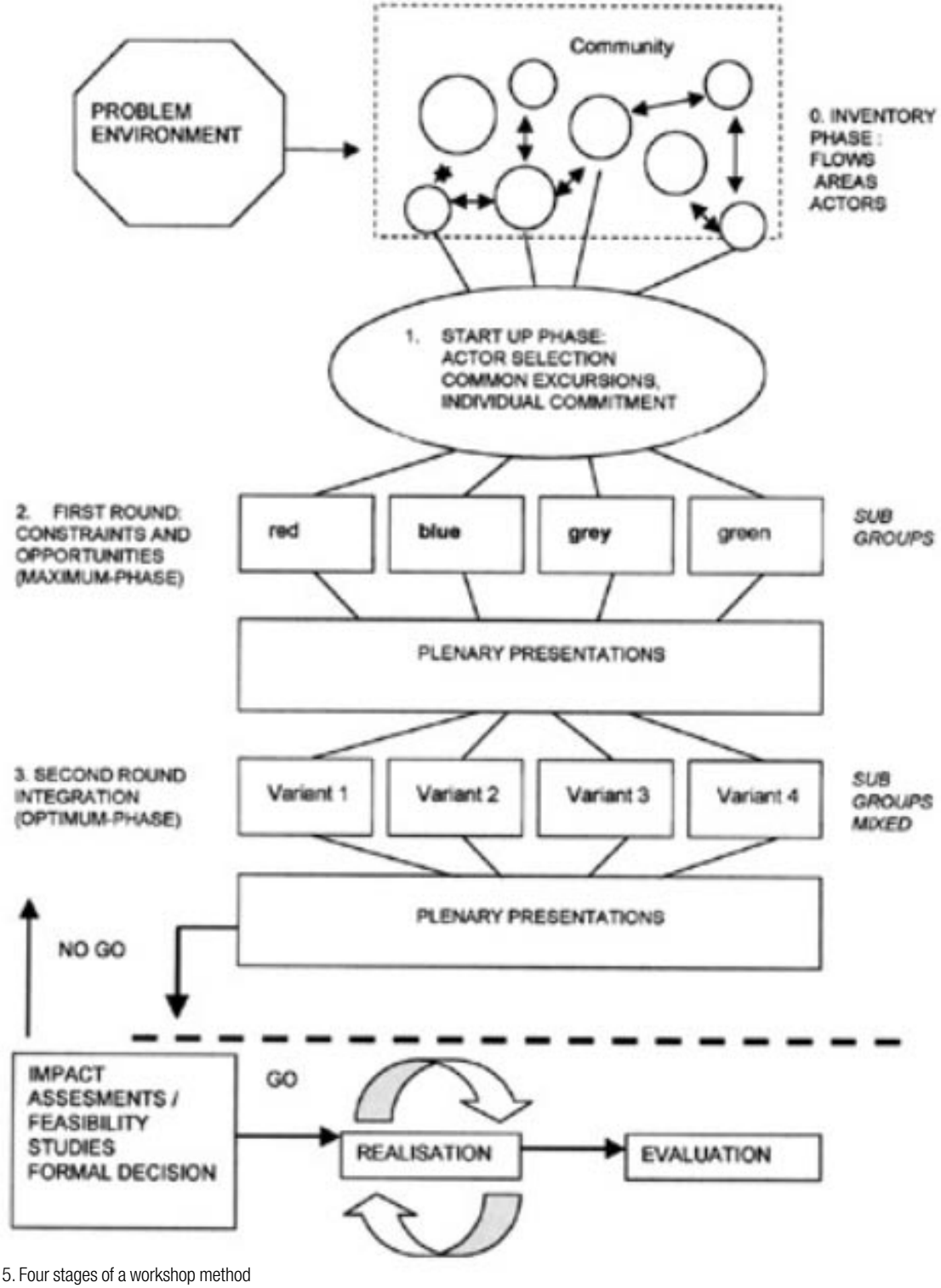


Figure 5. Four stages of a workshop method

concepts like S2N, adopted at an early stage and an open procedure, inviting stakeholders to participate in the process. This tension arises when the adopted concept offers no room for local differentiation or for adaptation of the concept. The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy discussed this issue in a recent report (WRR 1998: 133–139). The WRR describes some promising cases. Crucial is the open, yet challenging nature of the initial concept, and the selection of stakeholders. Workshops with S2N as an initial concept are an interesting tool in this context. They provide a forum to test the initial concept's capacity to act as a frame for design solutions tuned to local needs. Both the Schalkwijk and Poptahof cases illustrate a planning process that may called strategic. Political objectives and general concepts are formulated in an early stage. Then follows an informal workshop-supported process of plan and coalition forming and this process eventually produces the structure plan or master plan, that is formally adopted by the municipal council. The S2N acts as a conceptual frame for strategic planning. Once the strategic plan is adopted, this plan is the frame for operational performance.

2. Sharing a design process. Actors are mostly individuals representing a particular community (group) or organisation (van Loon 1998: 307). In the workshops for sustainable urban development discussed here, the actors are invited to share a creative design session. Van Loon stresses the importance of, what he calls an 'inter-organisational' design process, defined by him as

> a process in which several actors, operating within a particular community (group) work jointly on a plan (through a design process and with help of professional designers) to improve or change that community (or some aspect of it). Besides striving for this common goal, each actor (and each designer) seeks to achieve his/her own (individual) goal during the process, and has his own image of the community (or particular aspect of it) and his immediate environment
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> (Van Loon 1998: 308).

As the Schalkwijk and Poptahof cases demonstrate, sharing a design process is conducive to shared understanding.

3. Conflicting interests. As participants in a planning process, actors can influence the substantive concept in a negative way (e.g. by putting forward private benefits at the expense of public benefits), but the planners may also try to impose technocratic concepts in the name of the 'general interest'. Actors seeking their own interest may deliberately distort documents, perform backstage negotiations and use all sorts of manipulation and rhetorical persuasion (Flyvbjerg 1998). In Habermas' terms this is strategic rationality that may, at it's best, lead to compromises. The workshops discussed in this paper are not magic solutions, but tools to explore escapes from the deadlocks that may result from conflicting interests. As a face to face forum, apart from the battlefield, a workshop may stimulate steps towards communicative rationality. In the context of urban planning the focus for sustainable development may contribute to a certain detachment from the immediate short-term functional interests.

4. Selection of actors and innovation. In strategic planning, one of the first key issues is the selection of actors. Obviously, the participation of key actors that hold political, technical and financial power is crucial. However, as sustainable urban development calls for innovation, it is important to analyse the social network in which environmental innovations take place and to engage the potential carriers of innovative practice in the process. Here, the workshop approach to urban development might learn from experiences in agricultural development schemes in different countries (Pretty, 1995; Engel and Salomon, 1997). Both in the Schalkwijk and in the Poptahof cases, external experts with innovative ideas were invited to participate in the workshops, but there was no deliberate attempt to analyse the existing innovative practice in the area.

5. Residents' participation. The importance of residents' participation in operational planning that directly changes the neighbourhood or the street, is not

disputed. However, how residents can participate and whether they should participate in strategic planning, as in the Schalkwijk and Poptahof cases, is less evident. The Schalkwijk project invites residents to take part in meetings, working groups and a residents' festival and there is a lot of publicity about the planning process. Quite understandably, however, the majority of residents are not really interested in joining a process that is only generating abstract maps. According to formal democratic rules the residents have elected politicians to represent them in strategic planning matters. The planners, however, feel they need to have a direct indication about public support. Politicians too, like to know how people in the area feel about the plan before the formal vote in the council. In this perspective, the Schalkwijk approach is successful. The planning process is known in the area, there are ample opportunities for residents to participate and there is a reasonable response. Moreover, the structure plan leaves space for a variety of operational options for residents in concrete projects close to their door. Creating a strategic frame for operational choice also characterises the Poptahof process at this stage although residents do not yet participate directly.

Workshops in strategic planning process should be open to actors who want to participate. These workshops, however, can not and should not necessarily involve all actors. In a democratic perspective this is not problematic if the strategic frame creates enough options for choice at the operational level.

5. Conclusion, a new workshop model

The practical experiences in the two cases and the reflections and discussions lead us to a new, improved model for the sustainable urban development workshops. The scheme has to be seen as a general tool, to

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be adapted to the individual planning situation. Figure 5 presents the model that can be described in the following way.

0. Inventory phase

The initiators collect the relevant information about flows (e.g. energy, waste, water, traffic), areas (e.g. buildings, open spaces, green areas) and actors (e.g. actors in the stages of planning and realisation and actors in the stage of use and management)

1. Start-up phase

The actor selection step requires more attention. Our experiences clearly demonstrate this point. The S2N approach suggests that in strategic planning first the stakeholders committed to water and traffic should be selected together with those for built-up and open spaces. The participation of financial, technical and political key actors is essential but equally important is the role of actors with innovative ideas. Public meetings and publicity may offer a chance to interested residents to join the planning process. Then follows a first step towards shared understanding of the decision situation. We have good experiences with joint excursions to the planning area and to other similar projects. The next step aims at increasing individual commitment and awareness. This step may assume the form of a session at the start of the workshop that invites individual participants to be clear about their dreams and nightmares or about their expectations.

2. First round, maximum phase

The first round of subgroup discussions aims at generating thematic proposals using all the available professional knowledge. For that reason monodisciplinary subgroups are formed. In Figure 5 the case of four subgroups is represented. Two groups focus on generating solutions for the issues related to water (blue) and traffic (grey). Here, flows are the point of departure; area and actor aspects are derived from the flow perspective. Two other groups focus on built-up (red) and green areas (green). Here area qualities are the point of departure; flow and actor aspects are derived from the area perspective. Another option is to have three subgroups all starting with water and traffic questions, one starting with the actor perspective, the second with the flow perspective and the third with the area perspective. A plenary session with presentations from the subgroups concludes the first round. It is important that there is no vote. The proposals must have the opportunity to get enriched by the discussion and by a confrontation with other ideas.

3. Second round, optimum phase

Then follows the second round of subgroup discussions. At this stage, the aim is to generate integrated planning alternatives for flows', areas' and actors' issues. Therefore, multidisciplinary groups are essential. Again, the results of the second round are presented in a plenary session.

Subsequent phases

The subsequent phases of the planning process are not elaborated here. Naturally, the results of the workshop sessions will be passed to professionals for impact assessment and feasibility studies. Following this closed part of the planning process, there will be an open but formal discussion leading to the formal decision. The operational phase of realisation includes other more concrete circles of participation, in which the direct users or residents may play a major role. Eventually there will be a stage of evaluation that may lead to a new planning process.

The workshop model presented here, as a tool for communication is not a magic solution. Like all models, it can only work if it is carefully tuned to local conditions and the planning situation. Like all tools, a workshop model asks for skilful hands.

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