17. CONTINUING THE CONTRIBUTIONS: THE FUTURE

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"Can we develop theories and practices of provisional agonistic pragmatism which rely less on closure and more on discovery, which reveal potentialities and opportunities and which work with differences and ambiguities?" (Hillier & Healey 2008; with reference to Ploeger 2009)

As this collection of texts and viewpoints demonstrates, planning has come a long way, and not only in Nijmegen. Fifty years development in one place can, in the context of a university which itself has a history of only ninety years, be considered both short and long. The fifty years posed many challenges, including two threats of being closed. As dramatic as those two instances might have been at the time, in hindsight these bi-furcation points (to use a concept from future studies) certainly have had an impact up to today. And in general, the framing and re-framing of planning as an academic and professional activity continues.

As we all know, history is made by people, but not always under conditions of their choosing. As we all know, a path develops partly as a sequence of coincidences and episodes. Often, such an emerging path presents itself only in hindsight as an appropriate line of knowledge, which almost naturally characterises the place in which it grew. And this makes it difficult to write a text about the future.

In terms of present research strands, as the previous sections outline, the planning group is well positioned to research highly relevant issues in the field of real estate markets and property development; in the field of water management; in the field of mobility research; in the field of comparative views on planning systems. This marks out the larger lines of research within which issues like spatial justice, 'spontaneous' city development, networks and institutions form the more articulated research perspectives, and where diverse theories and methods are explored and experimented with. All of this is a reaction to current challenges faced by our cities and regions, and to the question, how planning can help find the required and appropriate solutions.

Now, with the precaution formulated by Nils Bohr, who said "prediction is very difficult, especially about the future", what might be the path of planning in the next fifty years? What are likely developments, for which we have to prepare our research and education? In principle, two basic perspectives are relevant here: that of the spaces that require to be planned; and that of the planning perspective, namely what should planners actually do?

In terms of the spaces, the past decade has seen a recurrence of major visionary exercises. Irrespective of whether they are inside Europe - like most prominently the exercise 'Le Grand Paris' - or outside Europe - like the concrete utopia of Masdar City in Abu Dhabi - all those visionary exercises speculate about emerging urban form and function. The research programmes of the EU, from FP7 and JPI UE to ESPON, explore the future of cities and regions with time horizons to 2030 or 2050. All those exercises make clear that we are going to see the emergence of large-scale metropolitan regions with complex socio-economic and concomitant spatial structures. In the best case, those are the new social silicon valleys of the Urban Millennium, where the needed innovative and creative approaches to solve our problems will be created. In the worst case, they constitute a 'planet of slums' (Davis 2004).

With the case of Masdar City, a stepping stone from vision to reality is already placed. Companies from the ICT sector and from other advanced technologies, especially regarding sensors, are teaming up with energy providers and other utility companies to create smart cities. Those smart cities are seen as a trillion dollar market propelled by the growing populations in the metropolitan spaces, especially of the south, creating a market for 'turnkey cities', where the urban setting is engineered as a kind of optimized living machine. This new format includes also 'turnkey' governance, i.e. the optimum management of a 'club good' financed by entry fees. We are almost back to classic formats of cities, like the company towns of the industrialisation age. The difference

between the two is that in a 'turnkey metropolis' there is a shareholder interest, not a Victorian Utopian Entrepreneur. The technology behind such a scenario is communication (in fact, rather basic but amplified by ICT to 'real time'), big data, and an enhanced understanding of the networked world. Earlier ideas of systems thinking receive a fresh input from advanced network models, up to the point that social interaction comes under the magnifying glass formed by advanced mathematic modelling and real time data production by social media (Watts 2004), in the attempt to create new social engineering models. If Masdar City does in fact represents the future, the metropolitan region of the next half-century will be a complex management operation, with the citizens being consumers of various customized pieces of this living machine.

Overall, such a scenario sounds eerie, at least to the ears of someone my age and background, who was socialised in a workingman's region. And many questions are linked with those visions: Where are the 'social silicon valleys' in such a scenario? Where is the opportunity for participation or inclusion? Are 'turnkey' cities blind to spatial justice?

And, in terms of planning as a professional activity, what does this mean for planner? As planners we are hopefully still part and parcel of a process that creates the necessary 'social silicon valleys' of the future. Planners hope to be able to support the society to prosper and flourish in a wider sense: this is the enlightening element of planning. However, in all the scenarios talked of above, this element is in need of

strengthening. Planners need much more strongly to give visions to society, and the famous quote by Burnham comes back again: we need to stir the blood of people, with positive ideas about the future. Of course, the warning function of planning is needed as well , but we need even more to concentrate on positive visions; 'if we cannot imagine, we cannot manage' (Neuman & Hull 2009).

Fifty years of planning in Nijmegen includes also a variety of approaches to planning education. What has been said above implies that the production of hope, the inspiring element, the thinking outside the given boxes, needs to be reinforced in our planning education. The availability of new technologies will help us; augmented spaces, such as digitally enhanced environments, create new tools to experiment with endless mutations and to 'assess' solutions in a formative way, allowing solutions to be created as we progress over time through space.

How do those future opportunities relate to the last 50 years? Some common elements can be identified: The ultimate purpose of planning is the creation of liveable places, for citizens or more generally for the people. The planner is not the exclusive holder of all knowledge required to do this. Planning is as always part and parcel of a larger management process in a setting of distributed resources and responsibilities, even inside 'turnkey' cities. The key word is process, and planning keeps its process orientation. The perspective regarding the main objects of our desires - the places or spaces or territories - changes from a

perspective of dividing and allocating, to one which strives for integration. The metropolitan regions of the future will depend on an integration effort, coordinating the various demands and complex structures.

What are the more specific research tracks, which are laid out by current and continuing research? The complexity of urban systems – also on the regional scale - and the ways planning should deal with them is certainly one important field. With the economic analysis of land and property markets and with the IMR (Institute for management Research) expertise in modeling, this research aims for a better understanding of collective decision-making processes within urban systems, particularly (but not exclusively) with regard to metropolitan governance, land and property development, infrastructure planning, and value capturing mechanisms. Increasing our understanding of collaboration, stakeholder participation, negotiation processes and the constellation of networks should help to develop potential innovations in governance and in financial approaches to complex urban systems.

In the more sector oriented research, transportation planning based on principles of justice and normative lines of reasoning is another important feature of the current research. Based on philosophies of justice, the question is asked: what is a 'fair' transportation planning and a fair transport and land use system? This approach is normative in essence, and is very relevant scientifically. The ability to delineate a fair transport system will redefine transport

problems, and the research questions, analyses and methodologies will have to be reformulated. From a societal perspective, the approach is highly relevant as governments spend large amounts on transport infrastructure and services, with profound and multiple impacts on people's lives. At the moment, considerations of efficiency are dominant, and although justice and fairness concerns do play a role, these are not based on systematic moral inquiry.

The group's research on water governance, another sectoral line, aims for a better understanding of stability and change in water governance regimes, their interaction with spatial planning regimes, and how these regimes contribute to adaptive water management. Given the overexploitation of water resources and climate-induced changes in water systems, such as more frequent water scarcity and floods, knowledge of possibilities to (re)design institutions for adaptive water management is of high societal relevance.

Finally, the European spatial planning research has the ambition to contribute to a better understanding of European spatial planning and territorial cooperation, reflecting on the changing context of new EU policies and programmes. In particular, processes of Europeanisation of spatial planning systems and policies is a major interest, and the research includes a focus on the governance arrangements of transnational spaces and macro-regions.

Clearly, the work of the planning group will help to explore futures in many different ways and degrees. Writing this text

for a publication from a university with a Catholic 'signature' gives an opportunity to refer to Augustine, the religious scholar who lived between 354-430 AD. His insights are still interesting, more than 1500 years later. Augustine wrote in his Confessions (397-401) about the issue of time and the future. He acknowledges that there are three conventional times, called past, present, and future. But, at a deeper level, he suggests changing that common sense view into three different forms of a 'presence'. Augustine speaks about this as "praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio". In translation this means the presence of recollection, the presence of actual perceptions, and the presence of future expectations.

Our task as planners is to create such a presence of future expectations. In a positive version of the quote by Neuman & Hull (2009), if we can imagine, we will be able to manage. This new 'line of knowledge' will focus on the presence of future expectations and how those shape our cities, regions, or metropolitan spaces. Concretely, the idea is to establish an 'Urban Futures Lab' in order to analyze the developments outlined above. The ambition is to search for 'presences of expectations' and how they might create different futures, which give us the needed answers to the complex problems of current times. This builds on existing knowledge in various research areas, and extends it with a specific perspective on futures and future actions. Returning to the opening quotation, the contribution specific to Nijmegen will be an attempt to develop theories and practices which rely less on

closure and more on discovery, which reveal potentialities and opportunities, and which work with differences and ambiguities, in the creation of metropolitan futures.