

50 THE MAKING OF GOOD PLACES TO LIVE - Summary

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The process of urban transformation and extension starts usually with social, economical and cultural needs for space in or around cities. Space for new or renovated homes, urban facilities, shops, working space, leisure, parking space and mobility.

The urban planner is a professional who makes interdisciplinary and future oriented work possible with all parties and interests involved in the spatial planning. The urban planner does, in the even more restricted definition of *Jo Schrijnen* (Professor TUD), the planning of the spatial mix of functions.

As an urban planner I advise public and private clients in the process of master planning. When the vision on the urban development is accepted by the city council, citizens and interest groups the next phase of urbanisation starts: the implementation of the vision. This is the core business of Gideon Consult, the firm that I started 10 years ago.

My job as project director in complex urban projects is to define clearly the direction of the transformation and extension of cities to people and parties involved in order to realise the vision of my clients.

This job asks more than good management.

As a leader you have to earn the cooperation of your own people and all external parties involved. And you will get this only by really knowing what should be done, by convincing people that the chosen direction is the right one and by focussing the energy in the right direction.

Convince by performance!

To overcome counter pressure and resistance is part of the work - change is often not in everyone's interest. As a good leader you have to be professional in defence and attack: inventive, active, caring but also dauntless. (*Xenophon*)

My goal is the making of good places to live.

What is a good place to live?

It is a place where you can meet and recognise other people.

A place that will provide a safe and attractive place to live, work and play notwithstanding the hazards of life.

It is a place which offers opportunities for the unexpected.

It is a place that will age beautifully.

A place that is flexible enough to adopt economical and functional changes.

As a result a good place to live is an place which offers a good investment and good benefits over the long term.

In the Netherlands the best example of such a place are the canals in Amsterdam : the inner city is since it has been planned and build an extremely popular place to live and since 400 years an extremely good investment for real estate owners.

In my opinion a good place to live has not much to do with architecture. Each style of architecture can provide good places.

However the planning of the public domain is essential for all the qualities I mentioned before.

Well designed and managed public space is the stage for a good urban life.

Good urban planning is necessary to provide a healthy and safe environment, with enough possibilities for future change of demands.

Another important aspect of the public domain is a robust and efficient infrastructure and urban facilities in time (schools, kindergarten, shops, sport facilities, health centres)

Urban Planning can also contribute to favourite conditions for urban growth. The competition of urban areas is growing and cities can strengthen there position by deliberate urban planning.

What is necessary for a good, deliberate urban planning?

First of all it you need to be aware of the genius of place (genius locus)

The condition of the soil, hydrological regime, history of the land use and planning, present land use and existing qualities in the area. Presence and possibilities of existing infrastructure.

In the second place you have to deal with the present population and the own identity and strength of the local community.

In urban planning the soft-ware and org-ware is of more importance than the hard-ware. Urban planning is about the needs of the end-users and their satisfaction with the environment offered. Because needs in our volatile society are changing so fast, urban planning must provide for a maximum of flexibility within the framework of a good and robust public domain.

This means actually that it doesn't make sense to draw precise urban plans more than 3 -5 years before this plans are realised. It also means that urban planning is about reducing the time-to-market.

In my ideal planning this time to market is not more than 3-4 years, which is fast for the average Dutch practice:

Year 1 : urban planning and agreements with real estate developers

Year 2 : real estate development; marketing

Year 3 : building permits and preparation of building sites; start of sales

Year 4 : building of the real estate

Year 4/ 5 : new space available for the end-users

In the work of Gideon Consult professional knowledge of urban planning in all its aspects is combined with a hands-on mentality and management consultancy in making business plans, and various types of temporary management (programme-, process- and project-management).

We often design temporary organisations and effective processes to meet the demands of our clients (mostly municipal executives and public-private enterprises). In the design special attention is made for the risk management and planning and control. This means that in all phases of the planning process urban and infrastructure design, programming and calculations have to be done at the same time. Special attention has to be made to the risk management in all kinds of agreements made with private developers.

When our proposals are accepted we are willing and able to direct the urban planning process and organisation in the first phase, till the client is able to take over. Mostly this will take 2 - 4 years time depending on the complexity of the project and the competence of the own organisation.

I will illustrate our work with two cases: Utrecht Leidsche Rijn, the largest extension of a Dutch city in the last 20 years and the redevelopment of Enschede Roombeek after the firework disaster at the 13th of May 2000.