

Performative Planning as a Method of Initiating Change

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Abstract. In compliance with the necessities of sustainable development, planning tools have to integrate qualitative criteria for development and pursue a new, collaborative decision-making logic. Performative planning as an action-oriented method is introduced here as an instrument of collaborative planning. It derives its concepts from the performance art movement initiated by John Cage in the 1940s. Considering the example of the experimental planning project for revitalising the city core in Dessau, a shrinking city in Eastern Germany, the possibilities and limits of such an approach are discussed.

Keywords: Reflexive Modernisation, sustainability, performance art, performative planning, reurbanisation.

INTRODUCTION

The quest for sustainability calls for new models and instruments of spatial development. Development in its current form may be understood as a reflexive modernisation, in that contemporary societies have to deal with the ecological consequences of industrial modernisation and a growing civic concern about its impact on the quality of life. Accordingly, planning tools have to pursue a new, collaborative decision-making logic that includes citizens' engagement on a sub-national government level. Performative planning as an action-oriented method is introduced here as an instrument of collaborative planning.

REFLEXIVE MODERNISATION

Our contemporary spatial structures are the remnants of industrial modernisation, built on the belief that an economy based on growth would entail an increase in the quality of life for all, guaranteeing universal participation in technological progress, wealth and welfare. But as the German sociologist Ulrich Beck states, the process of modernisation created unintended consequences that turned the promises into risks [1]. The urban sprawl not only enables an individualised way of living with all the available technological amenities, but also results in the sealing-off of vast tracts of land, an increase in traffic, the expenditure of energy and global warming. The adaptation of urban spaces to the necessities of individual motorised transport not only accelerated the shrinking of spatial distances and enhanced the accessibility of places, but also turned the cities into uninhabitable environments, – noisy and polluted, with monofunctional streets that prioritise motorised traffic, – while pedestrians, cyclists, children, the elderly and the handicapped became endangered species. The spatial structures that evolved with the processes of modernisation are deeply rooted in our way of living and consuming, in our economic and leisure lifestyles;

they are reproduced habitually on a daily basis. Thus, with global warming, not only the regionalised cities, but also the planet in general, is gradually transformed into an inhospitable zone. According to Beck, it is no longer the industrial and technological progress, but the management of its consequences determines the dynamic of development. Likewise according to Beck, the concept of reflexive modernisation explains the current forms of development, in that the risks and problems created by industrial modernisation are now becoming the subject of research and innovation. The recent and recurring ecological catastrophes, such as the damages of oil drilling platforms or the breakdown of atomic power plants, are tragic confirmations of Ulrich Beck's analyses. These propose that the current threats that must be managed are no longer posed by nature, but are created by the industrial methods of production and scientific research, by our lifestyles and patterns of consumption. But although our knowledge of the limits of natural resources reaches back forty years to the Club of Rome's famous study in the 1970s, and although the first conference on sustainability took place in Rio de Janeiro as early as 1992, the process of finding alternatives and achieving sustainable change is quite laborious.

One way of supporting the realignment of development involves looking for indicators for welfare other than the GNP, because the GNP measures only quantitative growth, and is indifferent to the quality of development. Economists are therefore endeavouring to develop new forms of measurement that include aspects of social and income equality, environmental regeneration or energy use. A recent study of the Schleswig-Holstein region of northern Germany attempted to apply a new welfare model that included such indicators. Accordingly, the study found that, in terms of quality of life, Schleswig-Holstein went from being a region with one of the lowest growth rates to being the region with the highest growth rate in Germany, because the income disparity is rather low and the amount of energy generated by regenerative resources is rather high [2].

COLLABORATIVE FORMS OF PLANNING

We need to invent not only different models and criteria for development and welfare, but also innovative approaches to urban and regional planning, that is, planning methods that meet the challenges of a reflexive modernisation and are able to support the change from quantitative growth to qualitative growth. We therefore need a political structure that reflects a multi-polar world, which delegates some of the decision-making processes from the national arena to global agencies

and local and regional groups. "...it develops its activity from activity, pulling itself up by its own bootstraps out of the swamp of routine; (...) it practises and struggles for spaces, forms sources and forums of styles and structure formation inside and outside the political system" [3].

Such approaches to planning invite stakeholders to represent the interests of various regional or urban groups, addressing them as the experts of their case histories, in order to include them into the process of change. These methods of renegotiating the future of a region were called collaborative forms of planning by Patsy Healey [4]. These not only permit a balance to be achieved between the various and often conflicting interests, but also allow deadlocks to be resolved. They also ensure that urban and regional actors identify with and support the aims and processes of regional and urban development. Since the 1970s, various forms of collaborative planning have been conceived [5]. Here, I would like to introduce performative planning as a method of managing change. Unlike communicative forms of collaboration, performative planning eases the integration of groups that are otherwise marginalised in communicative planning processes (children, migrants and people without higher education); performative planning does not rely on rhetorical skills or competences in public representation [6].

Performative planning gets involved with the practices of everyday life, which have a stabilising and creative potential [7]. Both of these aspects are valuable and can be productively employed in the planning process. They stabilise in the spatial patterns that are lived and reproduced in everyday routines, in the ways people organize their lives, in how people move, consume, shop, work and live [8]. These daily practices are, moreover, innovative; people do not necessarily live routine lives, but invent diversions, frequently finding new pathways or routes to deal with an old problem. They have, as Michel Certeau states, a subversive potential. This subversive potential of changing places and their spatial relations was especially developed through art [9].

ART IN ACTION

It was John Cage who discovered the creative potentials of the practices of everyday life. In developing performance art, he revolutionized the concept of art. His intention was to update the leitmotiv of modernism, that is, that art should transgress its exclusive borders and become part of everyday life. Art should no longer be situated beyond space and time, excluded and guarded in the museum in order to demonstrate its eternal perfection. Essential to Cage's revolutionary impact was that he liberated the performance arts, such as dance, music and drama, from the prescriptive texts, notations and rules. He thereby opened up a space for free creation of an event. His performances took place in public space and focused on concrete actions and objects. In his interventions in public space, performative art interrupted the flow of habitual perceptions and practices to question, reflect on and reinvent them. Art was opened up to coincidences, the concurrences of everyday life, the sounds and noise of the environment, to the

reactions and movements of the passersby, the audience [10]. The audience becomes part of the artwork and, by virtue of participating in the act of its creation, coauthors the event. Here, it is not the result, but the process of creation and alteration that dominates; it is a process where the outcome is unknown.

One example of the subversive potential of change is provided by a performance staged in Kassel in the late 1980s. Here, students organised a stroll through the city to call attention to the vehicles that dominate our cities. The students carried a portable zebra crossing with real zebra stripes with them. Everybody they passed on their way was invited to come along. Wherever and whenever they wanted to cross a main thoroughfare, they rolled out the black and white striped carpet across the road so that the cars had to stop and the rally could cross. Thus, they created a new space and enhanced the pedestrians' range of action. By inventing a flexible zebra crossing, they adhered to the rules while simultaneously subverting them. The performance made it clear that the implementation of traffic regulations depends on the compliance of pedestrians. There is a choice, and it is possible to alter the situation, because after all, both traffic regulations and the road network are the result of political decisions [11].

The urban stroll through Kassel with a portable zebra crossing gave impulses to a broader movement, questioning the functional compartmentalisation of the street. Finally, after twenty years, traffic concepts such as shared space have evolved, where traffic regulations are abolished and all the road users have the same rights. Cyclists and bikers, car drivers and pedestrians negotiate the urban space while they use the street. In this way, a public experimental performance contributed to the development of innovative traffic concepts.

THE EXPERIMENT

One example of performative planning is the revitalisation of the city park in Dessau thanks to a collaborative project of the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation and the city of Dessau. This was financed by the German Federal Government research programme Experimental Housing and Urban Development (ExWoSt). The aim of the project was to revitalise the city park as a central public place for recreation, festivals and sports, a place that connects the inner city neighbourhoods. A sharp decline in the city center population due to migration to the peripheries and suburbs meant that the park was deserted; it was a hotspot for criminal activities and had lost all its functions. The intention of the experimental project was therefore to contribute to the strengthening of the inner city area and to counter the migratory shift to the suburbs and the dispersion and dissolution of the urban fabric. The project was developed as a model for a participative, open planning process. It also offered an opportunity to study how the creative and stabilising potentials of everyday practices could be applied to transform current forms of urban development [12].

The experimental process consisted of three phases. Firstly, the project gave an impulse that interrupted the established

daily routines and initiated a process of change. This was followed by a process of action and reaction, creating new spaces. In the final phase, the experiences were evaluated and collated for use in a dialogue-led planning process. The project began with a call for the people's memories of the park, so that they could assess the park and identify with it. The park was therefore filled with pink balloons, with flyers affixed asking people to send images of the park. In a subsequent public exhibition, these images were posited at the places where the photographs were taken in former times, so that it was possible to make a direct comparison between the park's past and present condition. In this way, the exhibition created a space for reflection and for historic research. The inhabitants became increasingly aware of the positive potentials of the park. In the next step, the neighbourhood, its clubs and societies, shopkeepers, residents and housing associations were invited to participate in the reinvention of the park. They tried out the possibilities of the site by organising summer events in the park, such as tango dancing, audio plays, games for elderly people and children, Tai Chi, readings and lectures, puppet shows, bowling and so on. In this way, new spaces were temporarily activated and the various atmospheres of the park were explored. People reclaimed the park with their activities; they could experiment with the possible future of the park and find out what they would like to do there.

The experiences gained over the summer were then evaluated in workshops. Various groups were set up according to age and culture: children, young people and elderly people, migrants, local shopkeepers and cultural institutions came together throughout the summer to discuss their experiences in the park. Together with landscape architects, they then worked out the criteria for the park's new design. The architects then incorporated the people's experiences in a master plan. The resulting concept proposed the actualisation of the modernist idea of a people's park with several meeting places, activity areas and playgrounds.

The project not only resulted in a highly-frequented and revitalised park in the middle of the city, but also, even more importantly, its realization meant that the people now knew how to improve a deserted urban area and how to bring about change. What's more, the method spread and was imitated in various other city centres. Therefore, the aim of triggering a process of reurbanisation, where urban development focuses increasingly on the urban core, was indeed accomplished. It had been a start, igniting other projects in support of this direction.

The performative intervention not only mobilised the neighborhood and renewed the people's interest in the site, but also initiated a reinforcing dynamic whereby more and more people joined the activities. This is the strength of performative interventions: they have the potential to attract attention and to generate stimuli, to address different groups and to integrate their activities in the planning process. It thereby strengthens the people's belief in their ability to change things for the better. It is therefore an important

instrument for capacity building and developing cooperation networks geared to a process of change. Nevertheless, the changes would have remained temporary had the artistic interventions and the performative planning not been completed by a phase where these changes were institutionalised. The results of the experimental planning process must be integrated into the urban fabric and urban life. While it was certainly important to build a new structure and reconnect it to the city, it was equally important that the newly built structure became embedded in the neighbourhood networks. To accomplish these aims, new institutions were created: the neighbourhood citizen and social organizations became the caretakers of the park, attending to the park's pathways and public furniture and convening for regular meetings in spring and autumn. A further institution was established with the appointment of a park manager, who coordinated the people's activities, the park events and the marketing of summer activities. The park manager acted as a mediator between the interests of the citizens and the necessities of the municipality. Such agents are important, stimulating and giving continuity to the engagement of the citizens and acting on their behalf in contact with the municipal authorities. Thus, performative planning helps to establish new forms of governance that turn the process of modernisation into a reflexive form of development. These forms of sub-national politics are important, so that such structures are not only built, but also used.

CONCLUSION

Performative planning is a collaborative method that integrates everyday actions and citizens' engagement in the planning process. It derives its concepts from the performance art movement initiated by John Cage in the 1940s. With performance art, Cage aspired to update the leitmotiv of modernism, that is, that art should become part of everyday life.

By employing everyday practices, it is possible to include all the diverse groups of a neighbourhood in the planning process, because no special rhetoric competencies are required.

With events and happenings, new spaces and spatial images are created. These allow the temporary exploration of the possible futures of a place. In workshops, the experiences gained can then be evaluated and fed into an architectural design.

Performative planning is especially appropriate for initiating a process of change and for capacity building, e.g. networking the various groups and resources of a neighbourhood. However, the process has to be completed by a phase whereby these changes are institutionalised. Agents that mediate between the citizens' networks and the municipal authorities are therefore required.

These forms of governance, where some parts of the decision-making process are transferred to a supra-national or sub-national government level, are characteristic for processes of reflexive modernisation. Reflexive modernisation,

understood as a process that responds to the contemporary ecological challenges, needs such processes of change, in that the halt or even the reversal of energy-consuming spatial structures, such as suburbanisation, are essential to the success of a sustainable future.

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Elizabeta Kremera. Performatīva plānošana kā metode izmaiņu iniciēšanai

Ilgspējības meklējumi prasa jaunu modeļu un instrumentu izmantošanu telpiskajā attīstībā. Attīstību pašreizējā formā var saprast kā reflektīvo modernizāciju, kurā mūsdienu sabiedrībai jātiek galā ar rūpnieciskās modernizācijas ekoloģiskajām sekām un pieaugošām pilsoniskajām bažām par tās ietekmi uz dzīves kvalitāti. Tādējādi plānošanas rīkiem ir jāintegrē ne tikai kvantitatīvie, bet arī kvalitatīvie attīstības kritēriji, jāveic jaunu, kopīgu lēmumu pieņemšanas loģiku, kas ietver iedzīvotāju iesaistīšanos vietējā pārvaldes līmenī. Performatīvā plānošana kā rīcību orientēta metode tiek aprakstīta rakstā kā sadarbības plānošanas instruments, kas ļauj iedzīvotājiem iesaistīties plānošanas procesā. Tā iegūst savu koncepciju no „performance” mākslas kustības, kuru uzsācis Džons Keidžs 1940. gadā. Ar šo koncepciju Keidžs tiecas atjaunināt modernisma vadmotīvu, tas ir - māksla ir daļa no ikdienas dzīves. Pielietojot ikdienas praksē, to ir iespējams iekļaut visās dzīvojamo rajonu grupās plānošanas procesā, jo īpašas prasmes nav nepieciešamas. Caur pasākumiem un notikumiem tiek veidota jaunā telpa. Tie ļauj realizēt pagaidu izpēti par iespējamo vietas nākotni. Darbnīcās gūtā pieredze var būt novērtēta un tālāk iemiesota arhitektoniskā risinājumā. Performatīvā plānošana ir īpaši piemērota izmaiņu procesu uzsākšanai un kapacitātes palielināšanai, piemēram, veidojot dažādu grupu un resursu saites dzīvojamā rajona teritorijā. Tomēr process ir jābeidz fāzē, kurā šīs izmaiņas tiek institucionalizētas. Tāpēc ir vajadzīgi aģenti, kas būtu starpnieki starp pilsoņiem un pašvaldību iestādēm. Šīs pārvaldes formas, kur dažādi lēmumu pieņemšanas procesa posmi tiek nodoti uz sub-vietējo pārvaldes līmeni, ir reflektīvajai modernizācijai raksturīgi procesi.

Елизабет Кремер. Перформативное планирование как метод инициирования изменений

Стремление к устойчивости требует новых моделей и инструментов пространственного развития. Развитие в его нынешнем виде может быть понято как рефлексивная модернизация, в том, что современные общества должны иметь дело с экологическими последствиями модернизации промышленности и с растущим гражданским беспокойством о его влиянии на качество жизни. Соответственно, инструменты планирования должны интегрировать не только количественные, но и качественные критерии развития и проводить новые, совместные принятия решений, которые включают вовлечение граждан на суб-национальном уровне управления. Перформативное планирование как метод, ориентированный на принятие мер, рассматривается здесь как инструмент совместного планирования. Он интегрирует граждан в процесс планирования. Оно берет свое начало из движения исполнительского искусства, иницированного Джоном Кейджем в 1940 году. С помощью исполнительского искусства Кейдж стремится обновить лейтмотив модернизма - искусство как часть повседневной жизни. Используя концепцию в повседневной практике, можно объединять различные группы жителей жилых районов в процессе планирования, так как никаких особых знаний не требуется. С помощью мероприятий и событий создаются новые пространства и пространственные образы. Они позволяют временно исследовать возможные варианты будущего для определенного места. Накопленный в семинарах опыт затем может быть оценен и передан в архитектурный проект. Перформативное планирование особенно подходит для инициирования процессов изменений и наращивания потенциала, например, для создания социальных и не только связей различных групп и ресурсов жилого района. Тем не менее, процесс должен быть завершен фазой, в которой эти изменения закреплены институционно. Следовательно, требуется агенты, чтобы быть посредниками между гражданами и муниципалитетом. Эти формы управления, когда некоторые части процесса принятия решений передаются на национальный или суб-национальный уровень, характерны для процессов рефлексивной модернизации.