

WHY CAN'T THE FUTURE OF PLANNING EDUCATION BE MORE LIKE THE PAST?

Andreas Faludi, Delft University of Technology

"Why can't the future be more like the past?" is the title of the 2009 AESOP congress to be held on the occasion of the centennial celebration of the first planning department in the UK, quite likely the first in the world, the Department of Civic Design at the University of Liverpool.

Why should one want the future, particularly of planning education, to be more like the past? The answer depends on context and on personal appreciation. Having been exposed to planning education in Austria, my experience of teaching in the UK and subsequently in The Netherlands forms the background to the reflections which follow. This is because teaching in the UK has led me to appreciate the model of a "generalist-with-a-specialism" built around a strong planning core. As far as that core itself is concerned, at the time the US literature on planning theory of the 1960s and early 1970s was without comparison, and like no other academic establishment, the Chicago School of Planning (1949-1955) was responsible for its growth, mainly in the pages of the then Journal of the American Institute of Planners.

Indeed, the staff of the Chicago School formulated ideas with continuing relevance, like that of a generic planning theory and of skills common to planners wherever they happen to work. My other heroes are the members of the Schuster Committee in the UK publishing a report on the qualifications of planners in 1950, as well as those "generalist planners" who, in what has subsequently been dubbed the "generalist versus specialist" conflict in the UK in the 1960s, revolted against a renewed effort by the Royal Town Planning Institute to reassert the position of predominance of what was called the "parent professions" – architects, engineers and surveyors – in planning. This revolt led to an explosion of undergraduate courses for "planners only" – people with only one professional qualification, i.e. in planning – in the 1960s and 1970s, with the commensurate expansion of academic employment (of which I was a beneficiary). Subsequently, planning academics were fascinated enough by this model to try and transfer it to the Continent of Europe. They included me amongst their numbers. By that time I had started my career and set up home in The Netherlands

The paper comes in three parts. Part one is about the heyday of planning education until the 1970s, identifying its lasting achievements. It will state the case for the future of planning education to be like the past, based on a profile of the planner as a "generalist-with-a-specialism". Contrary to the insistence in many quarters on a disciplinary base in a field other than planning, it will reveal my predilection for free-standing courses for "planners only", and also for the core curriculum to include planning theory.

Part two outlines the challenges. The conclusions to this part look forward to the decades to come, but the reader should be warned: I have very little knowledge of the Australian planning education scene, so my conclusions remain on a general level. However, this draws on experiences of the 1960s to 1980s. Can planning education in the 21st century continue along the same, well-trodden paths? The kind of planning education provided for by state-funded institutions of higher education prepared for a form of public planning that is now being challenged. In particular, it was prefaced upon a context of well-defined jurisdictions within which public authorities were held responsible – or held themselves responsible – for the optimal allocation of land uses. So the second part of the paper states the case against planning education to continue as before.

Part three focuses on Europe more in particular by outlining the specific challenges that emerge in the multi-level governance of the European Union. The conclusions argue that the existent model of planning education can continue to be of relevance, but it will have to be adapt to take account of the fact that the scope of planning less well defined.

Part 1: The case for business as usual

As indicated, the course at Liverpool set up in 1909 which AESOP is going to celebrate was about 'civic design'. The Graduate School of Design at Harvard University set up in the 1930s was another example and is still primarily a design school, with its counterpart at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology down the road at Cambridge MA much more like the social-science based and policy-oriented planning courses that are common nowadays.

In the Netherlands, too, design was dominant. However, there were two related developments, not only in the Netherlands: the need for survey research for which social-scientists were better equipped than designers, and the emergence of planning on a larger scale, both before and after World War Two. Two examples are the Chicago School and the Schuster Report laying the foundations for a new type of planning education in the UK.

The Chicago School

Rooted in the New Deal, the Chicago School of Planning was set up in the late-1940s. It gave an enormous stimulus to planning education and research by formulating the "generalist-with-a-specialism" model, thereby articulating a lasting solution to the problem of unity-in-diversity in planning education. In the wake of the Chicago School came also trail-breaking publications in planning theory. Thus, the "Chicago-School" laid the foundations also of contemporary planning thought, in particular as regards the "rational planning model".

"Chicago-School" refers to the Program of Education and Research in Planning offered at the Social Science Division of the University of Chicago. It was a meeting ground of pioneers in the application of the social sciences and city and regional planners trying to broaden the foundations of their professional expertise. It was in the United States, rather than in Britain with its well-developed planning system, that this synthesis took place. Some social scientists found their way into planning a long time before the same happened in Britain. Sarbib (1983) describes the roots of the Chicago School in the New Deal and World War II. The famous Chicago sociologist Louis Wirth suggested training staff for agencies like the Tennessee Valley Authority. In the Netherlands, the draining of polders and the purposeful development of what during the course of time was to become a new Dutch province similarly attracted social scientists interested in what they unabashedly called social engineering. (With public investments envisaged to combat the current crisis, the term may once again become fashionable!)

Wirth succeeded in interesting Rexford G. Tugwell, ex-governor of Puerto Rico, in chairing the program. His vision was one of "(...) people of science contributing to guide societal choices and to curb the irrational decisions of politicians" (Sarbib, 1983, p. 79). He conceived of society "(...)" as a complex organism and of planning as a central function - similar to the brain and central nervous system in the human body - specifically concerned with co-ordinating its diverse elements for the benefit of the whole" (Friedmann, 1973, p. 46).

Soon, Melville C. Branch, Martin Meyerson and Edward C. Banfield amongst others joined in various capacities. Thus, Chicago became the "(...) pioneering locus of the use of social science techniques for the analysis of and attempt to solve planning problems. And the war and the immediate post-war period were fertile in technical advances (...) These advances encouraged a kind of scientific optimism which became the hallmark of the rational planner" (Sarbib, 1983, p. 79).

The program laid the basis of planning as a separate discipline. Sarbib (1983, p. 79) describes the uniqueness of planning as having been defined as "(...) the process by which a team of planners was able to assemble and to reduce to reciprocal relatedness the materials furnished by the ordinary techniques of political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, engineering, and architecture, and by which it could project a composite future". It was applying the "(...) methods and results of science in order to achieve group or social purposes". Planners were not to make social decisions, but they could "(...) help verify values, and to make purposes definite." Decision makers confronted with "(...) inescapable facts or trends (...)" would be "(...) much less likely to act on the basis of caprice".

"In this conception, planners came close to representing the free-floating intelligentsia which played such an important role in Karl Mannheim's writings. Their social science training would establish a basis of a scientific kind of politics, but their personal qualities (...) would prevent them from usurping the traditional decision-making functions in a democracy on the basis of technical expertise" (Sarbib, 1983, p. 80).

With hindsight one may argue with the idealism underlying, but one has to agree that Chicago defined main themes of planning-theoretical discourse ever since.

With his experiences at Puerto Rico, Tugwell favored central control, but his successor as course director, Harvey S. Perloff, rejected central planning. Responding to the challenges that, if planning was identical to wisdom, then everybody could have a share in it (like Wildavsky, who was to quip in the title of a famous 1973 paper: "If planning is everything, maybe it's nothing"), he defined planning as the "(...) activity by which organizations decide what must be done and how resources must be used if designated goals are to be achieved with maximum effectiveness..." (Sarbib, 1983, p. 80).

Banfield took over the planning theory course from Tugwell. Friedmann (1973, pp. 3-4) has fond memories of his teaching, but his "early flirtations with planning eventually gave way to a deep pessimism about man's condition and the ability of society to deal with its problems through purposeful intervention by central authorities. Nevertheless, his openness to the ideas of his students, and the rigor he demanded of their presentations, contributed to making his seminars among the most memorable in the program and the study of planning worthy of the student's best efforts." His lasting contribution was to have adapted the economic paradigm of rational choice under scarcity, thereby creating the rational planning model. Let it be noted, though, that Banfield was only too well aware of the limitations of that model and in particular – he was, after all, a political scientist – of the political dimension of planning.

In 1955, the "Chicago-School" closed. By that time, for the first time, there was a planning curriculum which drew on the social sciences. The core curriculum was based on the assumptions (1) that planning is a generic term; (2) that it includes decision-making, as well as implementation; and (3) that it relates to public policy. Chicago offered specializations in regional and "underdeveloped-area" planning as well as city planning, with the city of Chicago the laboratory. This led to the publication of the foundational planning theory text, "Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest: The Case of Public Housing in Chicago" (Meyerson, Banfield 1955). Also, it is hard to overestimate the impact of the "Chicago-School", through the work of students such John Friedmann, John Dyckman and Ira Robinson, to name but a few.

The Schuster Report

In the UK, unrelated to the Chicago School – there was little cross-Atlantic exchange at that time – the Schuster Report of 1950 articulated a comparable paradigm of planning and planning education informed by the social sciences, leading to the admission of, in particular, geographers into graduate planning education. Planners with a base in geography eventually changed the makeup of the planning profession and of planning education in the UK.

This Schuster Report was produced by the Committee on Qualifications for Planners set up to make recommendations on how to meet the need for qualified staff for the planning machinery emerging in the UK at around the end of the Second World War. It pointed out that the town planning profession “was founded when the conception of planning was mainly local and restrictive, and when the main skills required were those of the architect, engineer and surveyor” (p. 12). A new conception of planning was built on two principles:

(1) that for nearly all its activities the community depends on land and that land in Britain is severely limited in relation to the demand made on it, and

(2) that the location of development, particularly industrial, can have a profound effect on social, economic and strategic issues. (p. 13)

Thus, control of the use of land must be based on national policy, and there was a need for positive planning – the well known example being the New Towns. Planning authorities thus had a dual function:

(1) the determination of policies – social, economic and strategic; and

(2) the preparation and carrying through of a plan for the use and development of land in conformity with those policies. (p. 15)

“It is this, with all its social and economic implications, which has more than anything raised the question of the qualifications required by those engaged in town and country planning” (p. 15).

The Committee faced the question of “...whether planning is to be regarded, primarily as a ‘social activity’ or as a matter of ‘design’” (p. 19) which the Committee understood to mean the setting out a pattern of physical features, thus implying a fixed pattern, whereas the “process of arranging a pattern for communities must be continuous and constantly adapted to changing conditions” (p. 20). The essence of this was to arrive at synthesis. The Committee regarded design as secondary to formulating this synthesis.

As is common practice, the Committee heard evidence. The Town Planning Institute insisted on planners being skilled in design. Other evidence was altogether opposed to the idea of planning being a separate profession, but the Committee concluded that this view “often emanates from professional bodies which may be felt to have some vested interest in arguing that their members are qualified to hold the highest planning posts...” (p. 35). It pointed out that there were alternative views to the effect that a wider range of educational disciplines should be included as basic training for a postgraduate diploma in planning, a view which the Schuster Committee accepted, recommending that the basic educational discipline could be in any subject and that even the chief planning officer needed no qualification in architecture, engineering or surveying. However, it did not encourage planning education other than by way of postgraduate courses, even though a five-year undergraduate planning course had been established immediately after the war at the Newcastle Division of Durham University – now the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Australian readers will be interested to hear that Tom McKenna and Brian McLoughlin were graduates of that course. However, apparently this new venture did not find favor with the Schuster Committee, which stated in its recommendation 29 that “the most helpful contribution in the educational field toward producing the best potential planners is not to devise a new basic discipline, but to ensure that students of recognised disciplines appreciate the planning significance of their subjects”. The Committee also recommended that the composition of the education committee of the TPI should be changed to allow for more university representation and that the provision that the majority on the Council should be architects, engineers or surveyors be rescinded.

As a consequence of some of these recommendations being implemented, the 1960s saw a new generation of social-science based planners (mainly geography graduates having qualified through a postgraduate planning course) assert the independence of planning and of planning education from the 'parent disciplines' (architecture, engineering, surveying). This conflict, described by myself as the “specialist” versus “generalist” conflict (Faludi 1978), led to a vast expansion of four- and five-year undergraduate planning courses – now taking the form of “3+1” courses, i.e. a three-year bachelor followed by a one-year diploma or specialized masters – offering professional qualification. The ensuing demand for planning academics, themselves often with a social-science background, led to much reflection on the nature of planning. In the absence of much relevant literature in the UK, the planning theory courses were drawn to literature from the USA where, thanks to the influence of the Chicago School, a social-science discourse on planning, often with an activist note (remember Paul Davidoff’s paper of 1965 on “Advocacy and pluralism in planning”), had emerged. With its policy of recognizing planning schools to give exemptions from its Final Examination on condition that they meet prescribed standards, the now Royal Town Planning Institute offered an arena for debate on the core

curriculum. Inevitably, this led to a debate also on planning theory, with once again the US literature as almost the only example to go by. Fortunately, soon planning academics started to engage in much research on planning practice on their own, so much so that thirty years on the relevant literature emanating from the UK is of world class.

The UK model of free-standing planning education has been followed in at least a few cases on the Continent of Europe, with the Dortmund School in Germany (probably the school with the largest number of planning students in the world) as well as those at Amsterdam and Nijmegen in The Netherlands providing examples. The details of why and how they came to emulate the model of independent, single-degree planning courses are less relevant than the fact that there has been a strong influence from the UK and that this confluence of ideas has led to the establishment, on the initiative of Klaus Kunzmann, then at the University of Dortmund, of the Association of European Schools of Planning in 1987. AESOP is now a strong and lively institution representing over 150 members. It is the only representative body which brings together the planning schools of Europe. Given this unique position, AESOP is busily strengthening its profile as a professional body. It promotes its agenda with politicians and all other key stakeholders in place development and management across Europe.

With over 150 members, AESOP brings together the planning schools of Europe. It takes a leading role in ongoing debates and initiatives regarding planning education and the planning qualifications of future professionals. One of the challenges is the introduction of the “Bologna Model” across Europe, i.e. a uniform structure of bachelor followed by masters courses agreed by the education ministers in Europe. This may be a challenge, in particular to free-standing planning courses. For reasons of cost-savings, educational administrators may be inclined to roll back the independent planning courses and to re-integrate them, either with design or, in the case of The Netherlands, with geography. In some countries of Europe, the hold on planning of what in the UK context were described as the “parent professions” is still strong, and they have efficient lobbies where the mutual recognition of professional qualifications is concerned – a precondition of the functioning of the Single Market in Europe.

Part 2: The case against

So we are beginning to appreciate why the future of planning education cannot be more like its past; why we cannot simply continue with the generalist-with-a-specialism model built around a core of planning theory and generic skills of a planners.

To start with, the tertiary education delivery model has changed. Once again, context and personal appreciation is important, but the emergent model seems to be universally detrimental to independent planning schools and/or courses. For reasons of cost-efficiency **and**

the ease of university management, courses have been modularized and turned into trade goods to be exchanged between schools, faculties, or “profit centres”. So academic staff teach more varied courses to a more varied group of students, and students are no longer studying in cohesive and manageable groups at self-contained planning schools. The effect is that the social fabric of staff and students that underpins the identity of courses has been fragmented. The planning education sector as such, too, is being challenged, with schools having to operate – to the extent that they are allowed to operate as independent units – in multiple arenas simultaneously.

An added factor is the market-orientation of planning education and research, the former leading to a great influx of foreign students, with universities in English-speaking countries more successful in this educational market than universities elsewhere. To redress the disadvantage of speaking a language other than English, Delft University of Technology now offers all masters in English, and all information is available in Dutch and English.

The market orientation of research works out in ways that are very much context-dependent but can lead to less emphasis on academic reflection. Thus, the measurement of “output” in terms of numbers of publications per annum, of research grants received and commissions acquired privileges individual articles or special issues/readers and conference proceedings over monographs offering broader and longer-term perspectives. Countries differ, but publications in English are generally in the ascendancy – with France holding out staunchly against *les Anglo-Saxon*. Note, though, that the current French administration promotes bilingual secondary education for the sake of improving France’s competitiveness, and this cannot fail to have an effect on academic life. Anyhow, young French researchers are already beginning to publish in English.

Needless to say, the practice of planning is also changing. There is a greater market-orientation here also; there is the shift from government to governance, involving stakeholders, and there are new issues emerging, like climate change and - in Europe very much a focus of discussion - demographic decline. Some of these issues are being invoked to bolster the position of planning, but some, like the concern for the competitive positions of cities, regions and even macro regions like Europe as a whole, cast a shadow over planning which is being identified with a conservative approach, something to do away with in the interest of promoting innovation and dynamic responses to modern challenges. Planning is thus unpopular, not only with right-wing governments but with the advocates of market liberalism generally. So the times are not always propitious for planning, and this necessarily has an effect on recruitment for, and the content of, planning education.

Part 3: Message from Europe

In Europe in particular, planning education and planning academics, and also some circles of planning practitioners, have responded enthusiastically to the coming of the European Union. Thus, although formulated in a closed shop, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP; CEC 1999) prepared jointly by the, as of then, fifteen member states of the European Union and the European Commission, being the executive of the EU in 1999 was closely watched. There are also tens of thousands of participants involved in hundreds of international partnerships sponsored by the EU. There is also a European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON; see www.espon.eu) involving in the first of its multi-annual programs no less than 600 researchers, and there are specialized masters courses on European spatial planning at various locations throughout Europe, with more specialised modules included in general masters programs.

On some of these programs, I myself have lectured and am continuing to do so. In fact, for the past 15 years, European spatial planning has been my area of research, and in the remainder of the paper, I will reflect on this and what it may mean for the future of planning education:

1. AESOP puts a brave face on it, but in Europe there is great diversity of forms of planning education. This reflects the diversity of planning practice. In parentheses, diversity is a general feature of Europe and, seeing it as a competitive advantage and a cultural asset, it is the EU's policy wherever possible to sustain it.

2. So we distinguish four views of planning - a comprehensive integrated approach, a regional economic approach, a land use management approach and an urbanism approach, each with its own educational requirements (CEC 1997). The urbanism approach, popular in countries around the Mediterranean, requires a design input and so education continues to veer towards architecture and engineering. The regional economic approach, in which French national planners excel and which is the form of planning practiced at EU level, requires much economic and financial expertise. The comprehensive integrated and the land-use management approach – common in Northwest Europe and the UK respectively, both focus on land-use, the difference being that the former relies on statutory plans, whereas land-use management is more discretionary. Note, however, that the Euro-English concept of “spatial planning” is making an impact, broadening the ambition of UK planners to include, much as the Schuster Report has been reported as demanding, all relevant issues (Davoudi, Strange 2009).

3. When it came to formulating the ESDP in 1999 (see Faludi, Waterhout 2002), it transpired that the existence of these approaches caused many misunderstandings and ill-feelings. Now the dust is settling, with a consensus emerging that the EU and the Member States should

pursue policies to sustain and improve 'territorial cohesion' forming a complement to its well-established policy of pursuing economic and social cohesion. This does not include land-use regulations but should involve formulating spatial strategies or visions to underpin the efforts to render various EU-policies, including regional policy, more coherent. They should form an input into the multi-level governance arrangements under which EU regional policy is being conducted.

4. Land-use planning in a more narrow sense of the term, and, in particular, land-use regulation continues to be a matter for the member states and/or sub-national authorities. This is fundamental to what the Americans call the policy power of the state and what is also described as 'territoriality', i.e. the control over, and the responsibility for a given territory, being a defining characteristic of the nation-state.

5. With this we are touching upon the nature of the European construct, at first sight an issue strictly for Europeans. However, although not conceived as such, the EU is increasingly seen as an exemplary response to globalization, and the construct is thus being compared to other regional or even global arrangements dealing with trans-national issues. Three issues emerge:

what is the meaning of "regional integration", and what does it mean for the nation-state – presently seemingly the measure of all things?

what do the changes in the reach and character of the nation-state mean for its territoriality – as indicated one of the defining characteristics of the nation-state?

what are the implications for planning, rooted in the idea of public control over land?

6. Basically, the trend, certainly in Europe, is towards more fluid arrangements, towards multi-level governance, and towards a form of spatial planning beyond territoriality. Rather than the control of a specific and closely guarded territory, spatial planning may become the engineering of connectivity on various scales and in often overlapping manner. The future of planning, and of planning education, will become no simpler for that, but then, nobody promised that things will become easier!

Conclusions

However, not all is lost. The investments of the past are paying off.

Planning academics are a lively crowd. They have organized themselves on a national, continental, transatlantic and even global scale. AESOP has already been mentioned. Its US sister organization, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, is another force, and AESOP and ACSP have organized joint conferences. These cross-Atlantic links have been topped

by two World Planning Education Congresses at Shanghai (2001) and Mexico City (2006). These academic networks, no longer limited to the Anglo-Saxon world (but essentially still being sustained by the use of English) are a source of strength.

Indeed, planning academia has changed beyond recognition, especially since, as indicated, universities in some – but not all – countries outside the English speaking world have become bilingual to keep up with the US and the UK. At the same time, as any visitor to academic conferences will discover, academics in the trans-Atlantic heartland of planning education have become diversified, with many scholars having gravitated from the periphery to the centre.

Through the networks emerging, enterprising students and staff are becoming mobile. Exchanges, foreign field trips and studios in exotic places are becoming standard elements of the planning curriculum. The European Union, for one, promotes the exchange of students, and there is hardly a planning school that is not part of one or more networks, co-funded from the EU headquarters at Brussels, encouraging students to study abroad. Planning schools are becoming very multi-cultural places open to the world and concerned with global issues.

Planning and planning education have also strengths to bring to bear to the handling of the management of the emergent, more fluid arrangements beyond nation-state territoriality. They are spatial analysis and imagination, pointing out where connections can and must be made, connections that often crisscross administrative borders, just as we in Europe where most national territories are small crisscross borders. We are already living in a world vastly different from a world consisting of sets of nested, mutually exclusive containers in which conventional planning is caught. It's time for planning and planning education to catch up with this reality and to adapt our tools and approaches. However, I am convinced that this can be done by building on the existing model of planning education with a strong core, including planning theory, and with specializations. So in this respect the future can – and maybe should! – be more like the past.

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