Planning method and participation
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INTRODUCTION

Besides moving into a more democratic planning environment in South Africa, there is a definite move away from the blueprint nature of planning and to a lesser degree, away from procedural planning. At the same time, there is a shift away from non-participation and/or token processes to more inclusive and interactive planning processes. The current trend in planning is largely based on the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, as stated in Chapters 2 and 3. Accordingly, the “human scale development planning method” is advocated. The form of public participation proposed is that of partnerships as a form of citizen empowerment. This chapter takes the following into account as its points of departure:

- That there is current approved planning legislation such as the Development Facilitation Act (No 67 of 1995) which emphasises a planning framework and process based on need, integration and community participation.

- That current and/or new planning legislation does not exclude existing planning legislation and reference to previous legislation such as guide plans, zoning schemes, ordinances, and so on.

- Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of planning it must be accepted that there is a tendency in planning practice for planning and development to be managed by project managers who are not necessarily professional planners. The specific role of the planner in the planning process has shifted from purely technical to that of mainly a technical expert, coordinator, facilitator and advocate.

- While the role of theory in understanding method and participation is very important, context and realistic circumstances prevailing in South Africa must also inform method and participation.

- In the past, communities did not play an important role in planning and development. However, communities have a wealth of local knowledge that they can offer as well as a natural understanding of their needs, requirements, local conditions and relationships. This knowledge is a vitally important part of planning and development.

- There is a place for procedural planning methods, albeit not in the form that it was practiced in the 1970’s, but in a more appropriate and relevant form.

APPROPRIATE NATURE OF THE PLANNING METHOD

Human scale development “is focused and based on the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, on the generation of growing levels of self-reliance, and on the construction of organic articulations of people with nature and technology, of global processes with local activity, of the personal with the social, of planning with autonomy and of civil society with the state” (Max-Neef 1991, p 8). These pillars must be sustained on a solid foundation of creating conditions where people are the protagonists in their own future. The focus of planning method and participation should be on the response to basic human needs. Human scale development assumes a direct and participatory democracy that nurtures those conditions that help to transform the conventional, paternalistic role of a state into a role that encourages creative solutions flowing from the bottom up.

APPROPRIATE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

Governance is a term that encompasses the relationship between civil society and government. It should create an environment in which there is representativeness, legitimacy, accountability and transparency. The achievement of sustainable development within cities is impossible without competent, effective and representative city and local government that works in partnership with citizen groups, business, societies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Global Forum ‘94 Conference 1994).

One of the fundamental sources of conflict is the competition for scarce resources. Development in South Africa very often introduces scarce resources into resource-starved communities and therefore focuses on the existing power struggles in these communities, because individuals and organisations controlling resources command political allegiance (Hindson and Swilling 1995). Power structures in divided communities are part of reality and means of dealing with them must be incorporated in any development process.

At the one end of the participation spectrum, recipient communities are not involved at all in the decision-making process whereas at the other end of the spectrum, more radical planning processes such as that advocated by the organised homeless in the country, essentially find little need for government and professional input into their planning processes. Rather than any of these two extremes, a partnership approach to planning is advocated in these guidelines.

Partnerships provide the integrated planning framework within which development initiatives occur. Partnerships also ensure cooperation among stakeholders as the parties
“agree to share the planning and decision-making responsibilities through structures such as joint policy boards, planning committees and mechanisms for resolving impasses” (Arnstein 1996).

Partnership-based planning processes provide more than a mechanism for public participation. They mobilise community expertise, commitment, and resources for joint action. It is agreed that there is no single correct way to create a partnership planning process, but trial and error and reviewing success stories offer some useful guidelines.

The focus of participation is on delivery and not on ideologies and/or political power; accordingly, a public participation process is required that is flexible enough to address the realities of the stakeholder participation and community dynamics, while keeping focus.

ROLE-PLAYERS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

The “role” of each group involved in the partnership, being the community, the local authority (or decision-makers/politicians) and the professionals is as follows:

- The community has a wealth of local knowledge that it brings to the project as well as a natural understanding of the local conditions and relationships. The community can identify needs and measure improvements. One of the important roles of community representatives is to disseminate information into the broader community. Professionals can also benefit from community representatives, as they collect and bring socio-economic and demographic information and personal experience from the communities, which can be used to inform the planning process and strengthen the community’s case during negotiations. When the community is involved, proposals or plans are more likely to be acceptable.

In a greenfield situation, “the community” includes surrounding stakeholders and/or potential users of a settlement. In most instances, potential users are known, whether they are on a waiting list or waiting to be housed in public housing or private developments. There is always a sense of “the potential users”: Other stakeholders include interested and affected parties such as developers, local authorities, etc. In in-situ or renewal situations, “the community” is usually already resident.

- The decision-maker (or government organisation) has power by virtue of laws - laws that ensure implementation. The local council can also provide the information centres required by all parties, including staff, financing, and other resources to encourage and improve public-participation programmes.

- The professionals have technical expertise and experience in land delivery. They can also fulfil various roles, such as that of facilitator, coordinator, advocate, etc. Included in this group is the developer who could be a private developer or the local authority.

ROLE OF THE PLANNER IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

The traditional role of the planner is that of principal coordinator, project manager and technical professional in the settlement-development process. The planner operates within the realm of legal requirements for township establishment, rezonings and consent uses, and his or her technical role is in motivating the changes in land use. In motivating the land use change, the planner needs to consult widely with other professionals from other disciplines, and the ability to think holistically and integrate various inputs is essential. The traditional role of the planner remains. However, with the involvement of the community in the planning process, additional skills are required. These skills do not necessarily reside within a planner or any other one professional. If the planner does have the necessary additional skills, such as conflict resolution and negotiation, his or her role can be expanded. If not, the additional required skills can be brought in as part of the project team, and the planner co-operates and co-ordinates with all members of the team.

THE PLAN-MAKING PROCESS

Other than the broad directive that the plan-making process should be centered on human needs and driven by a partnership between the community, the professionals and decision-makers, these guidelines are not intended to suggest a step-by-step plan-making process which needs to be strictly adhered to under all circumstances, but rather to outline typical actions necessary in plan-making, which can be adapted, ordered and applied under various conditions and contexts at the discretion of the partnership team. In addition, the dynamics brought to the process by including the community cannot be predicted or stifled and the plan-making process needs almost to unfold as the process progresses, appropriate to that group of participants, at that point in time, and for that particular set of needs and circumstances. Despite this requirement for flexibility in the process, there are a number of common key actions which are typically followed in plan-making. Broadly, the actions stem from two kinds of decision sequences: those concerned with making the plan and those concerned with administering it.
Identification and notification of interested and affected parties and other stakeholders

Partnerships work most effectively where there is an organised power-base in the community to which citizen leaders are accountable (Arnstein 1996). Effective participation can be obtained if representatives, who have been elected through democratic structures, are involved. It is, however, extremely difficult to develop and operate an organisational system that reaches the majority of citizens; therefore one must use existing institutions and their networks to achieve what needs to be done, for example local councils, residents organisations, business organisations, NGOs and civic organisations, etc. As community-based organisations (CBOs) and NGOs are not always well resourced, it is important to build up capacity in the communities one is working with, so as not to put resources solely in the hands of professionals and have the government merely be a facilitator (Schiceka 1994).

The NGOs require particular consideration on the issue of how people need to be represented at local level. The NGOs are recognised as having an important role in initiating, facilitating and sustaining community action. However, while promoting the initial steps in democracy and participation, they can also be counter-productive if they become self-serving and compete for resources themselves. Communities should both value and capitalise on the inputs from NGOs. Representatives of communities should be elected democratically to prevent misrepresentation; however, the initiative should come from the communities.

The means of notifying stakeholders is through
- press releases;
- scheduled meetings with representative bodies;
- pamphlets/photos;
- telephone calls; and
- mail drop.

Negotiation of a participation strategy

Once the groups have been identified, the public participation requirements or strategy need to be negotiated with all parties including communities. One must not merely inform the community of its role in a specific project. It is very important to set ground rules for participation where all the roles, responsibilities, participation limits and rights, as well as the process, are understood and agreed upon up-front.

Careful consideration should be given to the design of the consultation process, as the players could change and then the only “fixed” issue is the agreed-upon participation process. As there are various levels of participation, active and passive, the interested and affected parties should not necessarily be the focus but rather the proposed participation process. There should never be a barrier to participants’ joining at any stage during the participation process, but the rules for joining should be specified in the participation strategy.

Once the participation strategy has been agreed upon, it should be documented and signed as a partnership agreement which can be referred to at any stage in the participation process. The fundamental purpose of the partnership agreement is to facilitate the process of bringing together all stakeholders, for them to agree on the details of the type of development to take place and establish what each party has to offer the development. Stakeholders should enter into a partnership agreement to establish a decision-making forum directed at creating an environment of cooperation, in addition to obtaining the commitment of all. A partnership agreement should also be a dynamic agreement, which should permit additional stakeholders to become signatories at any point during the process. It is the document that formally records the content and terms of this agreement. Thereafter projects should be implemented, monitored and evaluated in terms of the abovementioned agreement so that the objectives of this agreement are met.

Local councils and decision-makers should have strategies that outline their commitment to working in partnership with communities. Such strategies should be defined and have measurable objectives, promoting an interdisciplinary culture that values community participation. Examples exist in the Local Agenda 21 programme. Depending on the way institutions are structured, their interactions will either facilitate or obstruct participation and partnership. It is vitally important for members of communities to be able to meet members of government, the decision-makers, in order to facilitate participation. Institutions may need to alter their structures and modes of operation in order to promote appropriate interactions.

Mediation skills and mechanisms need to be built into planning and reconstruction because the possibility exists at almost every stage of the development process that negotiations will break down. The approach to development is therefore the formulation of partnership agreements as a framework for conflict resolution. In order to reduce conflict it is important for the client to attend public meetings in the plan-preparation process, in order to be exposed to communities’ needs and perceptions.

A forum or steering committee should be established by the partners to ensure that adequate and appropriate planning occurs, that a process of participation is established, and that a mechanism for management of the project is created, as well as to ensure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project in terms of the negotiated agreement.
Needs identification and prioritisation

The identification and prioritisation of needs is best informed by the people whose needs are to be fulfilled. This action can be coordinated and facilitated by a planner, a project manager or any other person with facilitation skills. The community needs to be the main role-player and take the lead where possible and necessary. Essential tasks in this action involve the following:

Capacity-building and empowerment

If required, capacity-building must happen prior to setting goals, objectives, etc, for the project. The community needs to be aware of its minimum rights, responsibilities, technical considerations and the options available to it. In addition it needs to be aware of the operations and decision-making processes of the client (local authority, government or a major developer).

Sustainable development cannot be achieved unless problems and issues are addressed in a cooperative and interdisciplinary way. Structures and channels of communication that promote this should therefore be created (Global Forum ’94 Conference 1994). The degree to which citizens are actually placated depends on two factors: the quality of technical assistance they have in articulating their needs and priorities, and the extent to which the community has been organised to press for those priorities (Arnstein 1996).

Disseminating information

Successful sustainable development programmes depend to a large extent on the ability to make wise decisions on options and actions. Wise decisions can be made only if good quality information is available. It is thus very important that such an information system be put in place. Such a system could include resource and information centres, with appropriate technological and human-resource back-up (Global Forum ’94 Conference 1994).

Choice of living conditions

The best settlements are created when people have a wide range of choices in relation to living conditions. Each new development should therefore contribute to broadening the range of choices. A basic decision is whether the range of choices is created on-site, or whether development on the site provides one option in a range of choices over a larger area. As a general principle, the larger the site, the greater the choice of living conditions becomes an issue.

Site assessment

In this action, the planner takes the lead as coordinator and facilitator. Assistance from communities is encouraged. Other professionals (such as engineers, environmental planners, etc) will gather the data necessary to undertake their specialist tasks. All relevant information necessary to undertake a detailed site assessment or analysis of context needs to be acquired. The site assessment needs to occur within the context of the identified needs, from a number of perspectives.

Site potential and relationships

Each land parcel has unique relationships with other land parcels, each with their different structuring elements and relationships. The potential of each parcel in terms of these relationships, and uses which could be accommodated on it, need to be discovered.

Site integration and/or discontinuity

It is essential to integrate the site with other land parcels. The principles of achieving continuities and discontinuities are central to the integration process.

The natural system

Each land parcel is unique in terms of the natural system (geology, soils, topography, hydrology, climate, flora and fauna) which gives it its character. These features need to be carefully understood to determine the following:

• The presence of important ecological systems, which should be protected to ensure their continued functioning.
• The appropriate approach to development. There are two basic approaches. The first relies on a strong, imposed geometry to create place. The other, which is a more organic approach, gives less direct direction and is usually more responsive to the natural landscape. The chosen approach is usually a combination of these basic approaches.
• The orientation. This is informed by aspects such as views, wind protection, the need to optimise light and shade, shelter from the elements, and so on.
• The engineering constraints. Natural conditions can play an important role in determining which engineering technologies should be used.
• The availability of resources. Sites may contain resources, such as building materials, which can
be used in a development and which contribute to a unique sense of place.

- The potential of natural place-making features. Water bodies, for example, be used as place-making elements.

See also Sub-chapter 5.8.2 for further elaboration regarding ecological considerations.

**The higher-order planning system**

The site must be contextualised in terms of higher-level existing requirements of integrated development plans (IDPs)/local development objectives (LDOs)/spatial development frameworks, integrated transport plans, local economic development and environmental plans applicable in the area.

**Setting of goals and objectives**

This phase requires the translation of needs into goals and objectives that are realistic, given the nature and conditions of the site, parameters of the brief and financial and time constraints. It is important for the planner to introduce and debate the performance qualities to be achieved in the development of settlements, and for technical professionals to ensure that stakeholders understand all aspects of the site assessment. The participation process should focus on

- enabling interested and affected parties and authorities to bring to the attention of the project team their concerns, attitudes and perceptions about the project and related investigations; and

- ensuring that the interested and affected parties’ concerns, attitudes and perceptions are addressed by the project team.

**Establishment of a crude land allocation budget**

Having assessed the site and needs and set broad goals and objectives, it is useful to calculate a coarse land-allocation budget, which includes

- a determination of what activities and land uses should be accommodated on the site; and

- a determination of the approximate land areas required for the various components of the settlement.

Although the land budget cannot be calculated precisely, it is useful in that it establishes a general sense of scale and it identifies the public and institutional elements that are appropriate to the site, over which the planner has relative control.

**Preparation of a conceptual plan**

This action involves the formulation of a conceptual spatial ordering system for the settlement. It requires the articulation of the main principles and ideas informing the plan. The conceptual plan, which is an abstract device, has the following purposes:

- it ensures clarity by enabling the idea to be questioned and taking plan-making out of the realm of simple intuition;

- it enables continuity by ensuring that the relationships between ideas are addressed;

- it serves as a management tool by providing the framework to which plan-makers can refer in searching for solutions to particular problems and in the making of the formal plan itself; and

- it provides the basis for discussion and incorporation of stakeholders views and inputs.

**Preparation of a framework plan**

The framework plan is made by refining the conceptual plan. This is the design stage of plan-making, and consists of a number of components:

- The first involves working with nature. The specific site conditions will mould the plan and suggest new possibilities and options for the settlement-making process.

- The second component requires the refinement of the “land budget” and identifying those parts of the framework plan about which there is some certainty, such as the investment of public resources.

- A third component is closely related to the above and requires the inputs of a range of experts involved in the settlement-making process. This includes a range of fields including engineering, urban design, ecology, demography, economics, finance, and so on.

- The fourth component is involving stakeholders in the plan refinement process. In some instances, trade-offs will need to be made and this must be discussed and worked closely with stakeholders.

- The last component consists of obtaining the required approval of the local authority and relevant government agencies before proceeding with the implementation plan.
Costing and budgeting

The cost of implementing the framework plan needs to be determined. An important part of this is determining who pays for different elements of the structure envisaged in the plan. At this stage, the financial viability of the plan is tested by considering the availability of resources and by comparing expenditure with the expected return on investment. This process may result in further refinements and adaptations of the plan.

Preparation of an implementation process plan

The “Process Plan” is an action or implementation plan and is concerned with ensuring an efficient implementation process. If the site is relatively large, an important part of the settlement-making process is ensuring that a wide range of implementing agents, including local and provincial authorities, individuals, communities, housing utility companies, small and large developers, etc., is involved in the settlement-making process. Where appropriate, local labour needs to be identified and invited to work on development. Tender documents need to be simplified to make them understandable by local entrepreneurs. The process plan should incorporate a land-release programme, a detailed management framework (incorporating institutional arrangements), and a financial plan.

Applications for land use changes and amendments to higher order plans such as IDPs, LDOs or spatial development frameworks, need to be made if and where necessary.

The management framework should incorporate land-use management recommendations, concerned with the definition and application of appropriate rules to the settlement-making process, including:

- land use or zoning restrictions, specifying the types of activities permitted on the land;
- coverage, height, density, floor area and access restrictions for specific sites; and
- site layout and landscaping requirements.

Land-use controls need to be applied cautiously, as they are by nature cumbersome. The pre-determination of land uses often reduces flexibility, thus mitigating against spontaneous settlement-making. The primary form of land-use control - at least during the initial stages of development - should be the logic of the framework plan itself. Land uses will commonly respond in a predictable way if the settlement structure is clear and easy to read.

In the South African situation, particularly where rapid settlement-making occurs, consideration should be given to a system where land uses acquire post hoc rights; that is, legal rights are established after the particular use is developed, and subsequent changes in land uses are handled on the basis of impact and nuisance.

Implementation

A dynamic project manager plays the leading role in the implementation phase. The project manager plays a key coordinating function. The planner’s role becomes one of monitoring, along with the other stakeholders. Other key players include training and development facilitators and administrators. Implementation includes the following actions:

- Preparing tenders;
- Awarding tenders;
- Site plans and preparation;
- Building plans;
- Beginning construction and development;
- Managing and coordinating construction and development;
- Financial management;
- Landscaping; and
- Provision of movement networks, engineering services, public facilities and utilities, and open space.

Administering the plan

It is the primary responsibility of the local authority to ensure that the desired performance qualities of the plan have been met but it is recommended that when people become resident on the site, a sub-committee should be formed in conjunction with representatives from relevant authorities to monitor and evaluate development progress, performance and sustainability of the local area and fulfillment of basic needs.

Since there is no one ideal form of plan, the administration process must be a reactive one. Ideally, the process should be creative and interactive, allowing for adaptation of the plan as and when circumstances may require, and where community support for such changes exists.

ADAPTING THE METHOD AND THE PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The proposed methodology was specifically designed for the planning and development of greenfields areas but is applicable to all development situations with certain minor adaptations and changes in emphasis at certain points in the process. While the methodology and generic guidelines are similar for in-situ upgrading and renewal circumstances, some differences do exist, particularly relating to the process of participation, site-assessment, and implementation.
In the case of upgrading and renewal, the stakeholder-identification step is easier, as the primary stakeholders are physically resident in the area. The actual participation process is likely to be more complex, however, due to the fact that the specific community already has a history at that location, together with existing problems, issues and politics. The design and implementation of the participation strategy and the setting of ground rules is of particular importance to ensure that focus on the pertinent issues is maintained, and that only the relevant issues and problems are considered.

The degree of participation will vary according to specific circumstances and particularly according to the willingness and desire of the particular community to become involved. Existing provincial town planning ordinances, in terms of which many land-use changes are still applied for, have specific requirements regarding advertising and informing the public of the proposed development. These and other applicable provincial legislation, should be regarded as the minimum requirements. The recently promulgated environmental legislation, requires a greater degree of stakeholder identification and involvement. The methodology proposed in this chapter accommodates the entire range of degrees of participation, but it is in the hands of the practising planner to decide, in terms of prevailing legislation and specific circumstances, what degree of participation is appropriate to each situation.

Regarding site-assessment differences, in the case of greenfields development the emphasis will be on the natural and physical characteristics of the site, whereas with upgrading and renewal the emphasis will be on social aspects and the limitations and opportunities provided by the already built physical environment. A socio-economic survey is likely to be an important component of upgrading and renewal developments (Behrens and Watson 1996).

The implementation process for renewal and upgrading is also more complex than for greenfields developments as it may be necessary for people to temporarily move out of the area, be accommodated elsewhere, and then move back into the area once the upgrading has been completed. The logistics of managing this process are significantly more difficult than in the greenfields situation.
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