

**Methods of communication in urban planning and development – a research project**  
Lubomir Kostron, Ladislav Lakomý, School of Social Studies, Masaryk University Brno,  
Czech republic

***1) The introduction.***

The goal of a research grant, which was already approved and is being presently developed into more details, is to learn about the process of the vision's transformation into urban plans by means of a simulation model. The target of this project is the city of Brno, Czech republic. The project seems to be two-folded: first, we are interested in the process of the vision's emergence itself. Under what conditions new ideas originate, how partial private initiatives get transformed into a growth potential of a more general meaning and become a matter of a public interest. Our thinking will be focused upon what is being labeled as emergent phenomena, the transformation of tacit (private) knowledge into an information, the climate of learning organizations (learning regions), networking and knowledge management. Second, we will think of how to communicate visions efficiently, to choose adequate modes of communication to various target groups. This aspect resembles what is being understood as the „city marketing“. Finally we attempt to build a formal model, which will indicate how to communicate an urban strategic vision to be spread effectively, to grow and to develop.

The preliminary hypotheses are:

- a) the formulation of a long range vision, preceding the process of urban planning negotiation, will make the zoning negotiations easier,
- b) The construction of a dynamic model will enhance our understanding of key levers and barriers in the process of an emergence of civic leaders and negotiations among relevant agents,
- c) the form of a visual presentation will be more effective than only written strategic papers in the above mentioned processes.

***2) Do we have a vision?***

At the present time no, we do not have one. However, the city of Brno has an approved of urban zoning plan (as a matter of fact, there is a decades long tradition to approve of zoning plans). This document is done by professional urban planners and includes a set of specific maps and plans.

Moreover, there is a new strategic developmental plan, in a major part an analysis of the city's potentials in respect to the future and results into a complex SWOT analysis as well as a formulation of a very general goals. This document was composed by groups of volunteering professionals headed by a manager of a City Council and resembles studies, done usually by specialized developmental agencies.

Both documents were developed independently, they are of a very complex nature, hard to understand and use very specialized languages, based upon specialized knowledge. The result is, that they attract only very limited, highly interested and mutually isolated professionals. The zoning procedure is very slow and discouraging, since the sense of long range „mission“ (serving as a criteria for a decision-making) is absent. The zoning plan is required by a law and thus, when approved of, it has to be respected, the strategic document seems to be nobody's baby by now.

According to our understanding, the city lacks a vision of what it wants to be in a distant future and a political will to have one. Both of these documents do not meet the characteristics of a vision.

The vision has the following characteristics:

- is personal and total

- for now and tomorrow
- is courageous and autonomous
- is metaphorical and material
- influences the inside and outside

Functions of a vision:

- provides a goal
- mobilizes
- unifies
- co-ordinates

The vision answers the questions of why?

The strategic goals answer the question of what?

The policy answers the question of how?

The operative aims answer the question of what now?

### **3) Methodology**

So far we are not very clear in the ways how to proceed. We feel we need to formulate a content of an alternative short visions ourselves, meeting the above stated criteria, based upon all the existing documents, as to be able to test its understanding by potential stakeholders (target groups). Also, we need to consider the form of how to present it (the form of communication – written documents, graphs, animated models, video-clips, slogans, combinations of, etc.). We know, that some of the processes were originated „from the top“ (city regulations, governmental decisions, EU initiatives), some are rather spontaneous and local by their nature (neighborhood activities). We have to choose and monitor a samples of both, to obtain „a story“ to be written and transformed into a model of their dynamics.

The relevant dynamic models of J.W.Forrester (urban dynamics) and P.M. Senge’s „limits to grow“ version of archetype applied to the vision already exist. Our goal is to adjust and apply the existing models. To identify and to include growth feedback loops into the „vision decline“ of Senge’s model. Also, the actual agents identified will be included and delays considered. Finally, the resulting model should include various forms of the city vision communication among particular agents, to test and identify the best possible forms of communication among agents.

### **4) Who are the key agents involved?**

Who are (were) the visionaries? The wealthy and influential landowners/manufacturers in the past (we are not much aware of any significant local civic leaders). During less recent times the one party government. Presently, the investments, financed through public funds, meet the competitive interests, frequently contradictory, of a number of a local (also foreign) investors. We are in classic situation of competitive x cognitive conflict, in which the long range public interests are hard to be obtained and paid attention to.

Who are the authors of strategic planning documents and what professional language they use? What are their interests and can they understand each other? What role is left for the public, in the very end of the process? How to increase the role of public hearings (the „communicating city“ types of projects) by means of an appropriate forms of communication?

To reduce the endless number of questions alike, which may be generated, I would like to focus upon one particular example. During the history, the city of Brno profited much from the industrial era development. So much, as to be a site of six universities, totaling about 50

thousand students and staff compared to its about 400 thousand population at the present time. The industrial wave seems to flow away. The crucial task is – how to increase the city's „absorption of graduates“? How to enable them to get jobs, to open businesses, to house their families? So far the crucial institutions (universities, banks, employers, the political representation in the city hall) follow their separate and immediate goals – to survive (to expand), without much considering the synergy effects of a joint policy with others. We need to have a convincing model, which like J.W. Forrester's „urban development“ might help to change the behavior of the key agents.

This summer we plan a summer school focused upon the „urban vision growth“ model. Presently we seek all available inspiration and advice within the SDS community.

Literature we know of presently:

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