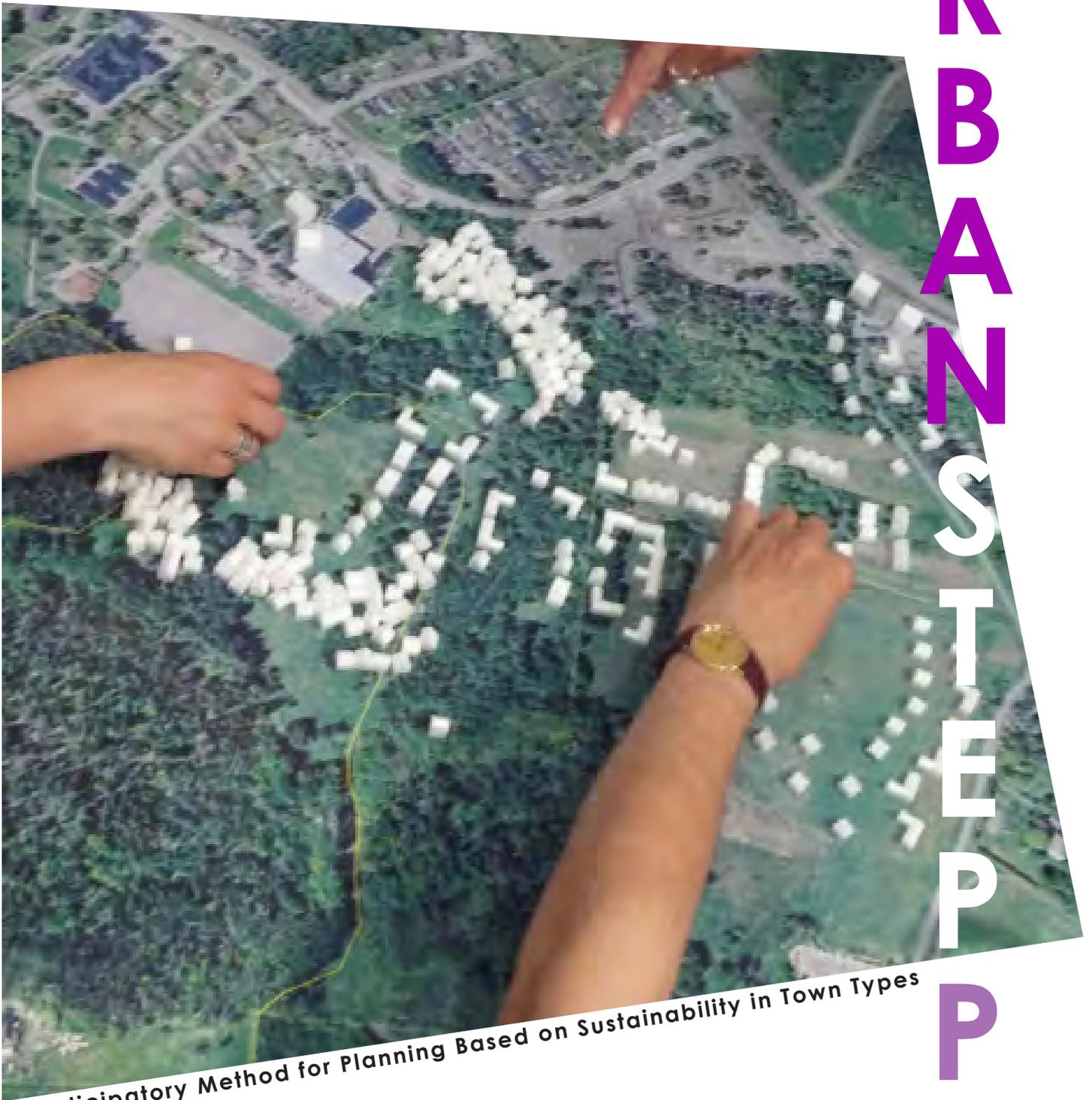


U R B A N S T E P P P P



A Participatory Method for Planning Based on Sustainability in Town Types

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URBAN STEP PPP

- a participatory method for planning based on sustainability in town types

The key elements, or corner stones in the STEP concept are:

S	Sustainability
T	Town, village & settlement Types
E	Evaluation / Experience - Evidence-Empiricism based
P	Proven
P	Performance in a
P	Participatory
P	Process



Figure 1: Participation needs tools. Laymen and professionals work hands-on with models representing blocks or houses on top of aerial photos. This has turned out to be more efficient and more creative than regular workshops or charrettes with pencil and sketching-paper, 3D modelling etc...

URBAN STEP highlights how you get better results by going via "attraction planning" rather than via "restriction planning". The Step Method can be described as a development of charrettes and workshops, it makes planning more participatory and bottom-up, more hands-on and more based on and emerging from local settlement types and cultural context.

The method is an experience-based approach that not only underlines the qualities gathered in our built heritage, it also encourages people to trust their own experiences and dreams. The focus on settlement types as opposed to discussing house types and restrictions offers a vocabulary that makes STEP easily understood by people of all walks of life.

The method has been used for designing villages, towns and regional patterns. The Urban STEP Method has proven to bring seemingly opposing parties closer in creative dialogue. The vocabulary and imagery makes the method into an open arena for laymen and professionals of different trades. The tools encourage all to take part, hands-on, in dialogue and in shaping plans that bear the fingerprints of many. STEP has often meant the end of receiving angry letters "finding faults" when plans are distributed for consultation. Deadlocks of NIMBY can often be dissolved. Real cooperation with real people tends to turn the co-authors into ambassadors of a mutual future.

The three vital tools are the Round-Table, the Matrix of Town and Village Types and the Value Rose that assesses sustainability in a broad sense, both for choosing settlement types and for comparing the layouts coming forth in the workshops.

CHAPTER 1

- the workshop process step by step

This chapter introduces the tools in the flow of a workshop process. The next chapter expands on their details. The Urban STEP has been tested extensively in the Scandinavian context, once in Sri Lanka in an urban corridor project, and also in Australia. The tools are clear-cut, but also open for adaptation to each project.

Step 1: REMINDING THE HERITAGE - opening eyes

A STEP workshop starts with a display of the vast heritage of settlement types that have evolved over centuries in different cultures and subcultures: dense and sparse, beautiful and ugly, threatening and promising, elegant and bohemian, posh and humble, silly and sensible, locally and globally. This display works as a reminder that the human settlement has many truths and myths, many experts claiming knowledge of what the people or the consumer likes or should like, can afford or should be teased into.



Figure 2. STEP 1. Open your eyes and display our vast heritage of settlement types.

Step 2: IMAGINING - 30 seconds for 30 years

An important next step is to get the participants to lean back and close their eyes using their imagination for the purpose of foreseeing a future trip to their children and grandchildren. Use let's say 30 seconds. Imagine a future, say 30 years from now, and visualise the town or village you wish for your loved ones. Ask the participants to describe their images to one another. The result is often creative and a good input into the coming discussion.

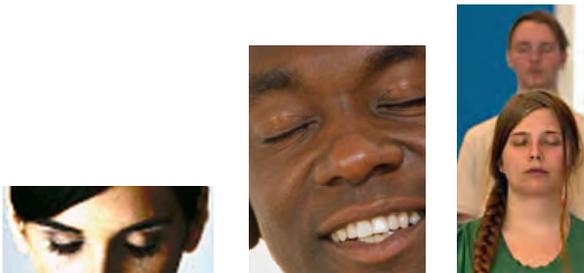


Figure 3. STEP 2. Close your eyes and imagine the future.

Step 3: DISTRIBUTING A MATRIX OF TOWN TYPES

Ask participants to comment and improve a given Matrix of Town Types by adding their own images. Then ask the participants to circle those types they want to see more of, and cross out those types they want to see less of.

The notion of town types offers a vocabulary open to laymen and professionals of different trades. The vacant boxes of the Matrix are there to challenge people to come up with



Figure 4. STEP 3. Make your own Matrix of Town Types.



Figure 5. STEP 4. Make a summary of preferred and rejected types

their own dreams and images, travel photos, memories, postcards etc

Step 4: COLLECTING THE MATRIX SHEETS and MAKING A SUMMARY

Make a summary of preferred and rejected types within the Matrix. Ask the participants to describe the suggestions they have made.

Step 5: INTRODUCING THE VALUE ROSE - "what we want and what we should"

Draw attention to the Value Roses indicated in the upper corner of each of the town types, and also to the second Matrix on the back of the matrix sheet where the same town types are portrayed as maps.

Introduce the Value Rose and how it is used to evaluate the quality and performance of town types. Clarify with examples.

Introduce sustainability as a relevant means to measure urban performance if sustainability is given a broad spectrum of aspects. Explain the four corners of STEP's broad 4-legged sustainability, and the 12 spokes of different indicators. Ask people to consider adding spokes for aspects they find missing.

Ask the participants to double-check if it turns out that they had chosen sustainable town types, or not so sustainable town types, in the previous poll. Ask them to contemplate the effects of street grids and cul-de-sacs and their correlation to sustainability aspects (fig 7).

Ask the participants to make an evaluation of their own town or the district under discussion. This can be done by jointly filling in an empty Value Rose on the back of the matrix sheet, aspect by aspect, spoke by spoke.

Step 6: GATHERING AROUND THE ROUND-TABLE

The Round-Table is a metaphor of the Value Rose, but also the place where the participants of the workshop gather for the hands-on work to create their own plans and layouts.



Figure 6. STEP 5. The Value Rose is a tool to evaluate the quality of the town types.

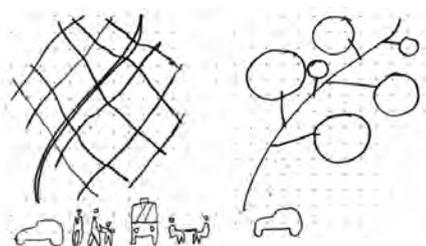


Figure 7. Grids vs. enclaves. The Rose evaluates the performance of the different settlement patterns. Grids favour public transport, walking and urban synergy. Enclaves, on the contrary, enhance the use of the car and impede urban life.



Figure 8. STEP 6. The participants grouped around Round Tables work actively hands-on.

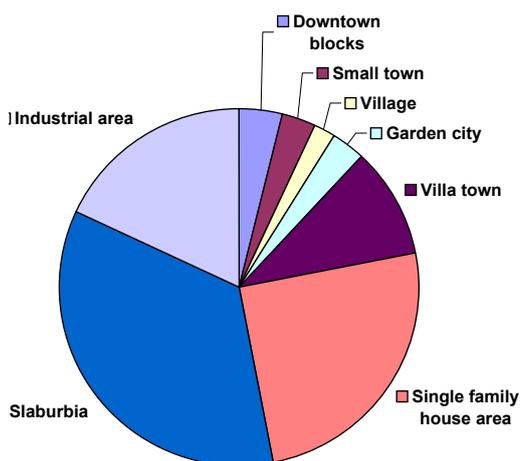


Figure 9. STEP 7. A mixed Bouquet of Town Types helps to reach a rich scene, more assorted and including the interests of more people.



Figure 10. STEP 8. The Four Glasses help to "read" better the region.

Aerial photos and plastic models are the work tools. Five to fifteen people around each Round-Table form handy groups. The groups should be as mixed as possible, preferably representing as many of the spokes of the Value Rose as possible: neighbour, planner, developer, traffic engineer, economist, environmentalist, historian, politician, etc.

Different Round-Tables can be given different themes, different amounts of model pieces representing "small, medium, large", etc. Ask the groups to create a first alternative, take a photo of it, and then quickly make new alternatives with other emphases and with previously timid participants having a say.

Step 7: MIXING A BOUQUET OF TOWN TYPES - adding aspects of urban texture.

The group work is interspersed with short lectures on subjects of interest – by the workshop crew, and by group members and invited stakeholders.

A first topic and challenge is to ask the group to consider changing town types, testing different densities and mixing different types into a richer Bouquet of Town Types.

A second topic and challenge could be to ask the group to improve the street grid for better conditions for workplaces and local services. Etc.

Step 8: THE FOUR GLASSES adding aspects of regional pattern

If the task is a regional one add the aspect of sustainable regional patterns. The tool presented here as "The Four Glasses" is suggested as a guide. Consider central, dispersed, polycentric and linear alternatives. Imagine a situation with soaring prices of energy, food, etc to check the robustness of different patterns.



Figure 11. STEP 9. Switching the group mix provides new perspectives.

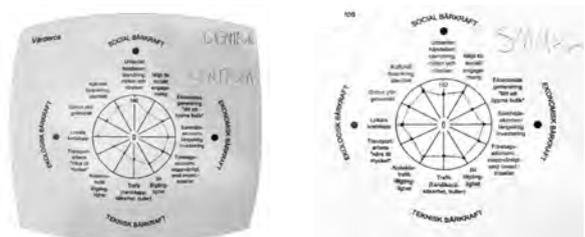


Figure 12. STEP 10. Fill in your own Value Rose to evaluate the features of the proposals of the groups.

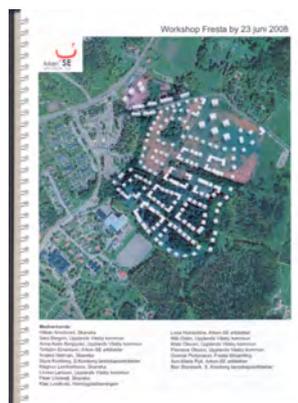


Figure 13. STEP 11. Summarize in a report the discussions from the workshop.



Figure 14. STEP 12. The summary of the professionals is a document that will be distributed to the participants to receive a feed-back.

Step 9: SWITCHING THE GROUP MIX

If a second workshop day is available let the workshop groups get into a second phase where participants are free to switch to another Round-Table. The choice pattern is observed, estimating which scenarios seem most tempting or successful.

Step 10: CREATING & FILLING IN YOUR OWN VALUE ROSE

Ask the groups to make an evaluation of their own result. They are asked to do this by yet again filling in the Value Rose on the back of the matrix sheet, aspect by aspect, spoke by spoke. They should discuss this outcome internally, and then make mutual presentations with the other workshop groups.

Step 11: PRELIMINARY REPORT - summing up and venturing conclusions

Later, discussions and photos of the proposals from the workshops are summarized in a preliminary report assembled by the workshop crew. A set of conclusions, common denominators and one or two boiled-down alternatives are ventured. The report is distributed to the participants for comments and feed-back.

Step 12: PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

After feedback a summarized plan, or a set of alternatives, is put together by a professional team of planners. Ideas are aligned within the legal and practical frameworks, aiming at including and refining as many of the participants' fingerprints as possible. The result is distributed to the participants and this time also to a wider circle of stakeholders for consultation. The plan and the feed-back then goes to the political bodies for decision procedure.

.....
Chapter 1 ends here. If you found this introduction interesting!? Please continue to the next chapter for tools & observations.

CHAPTER 2

- tools & observations

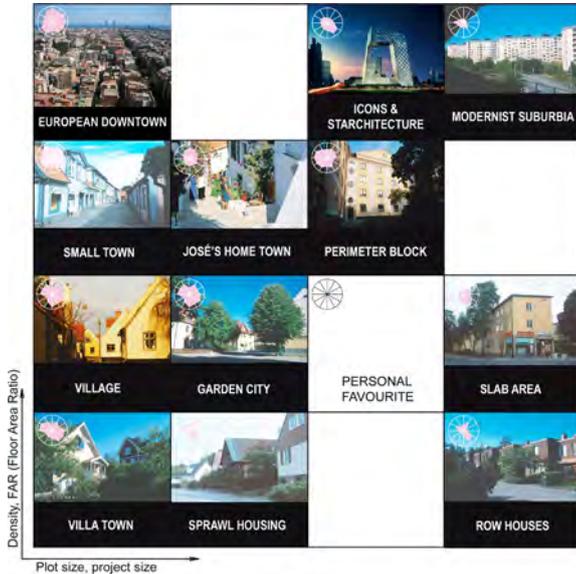


Figure 15. Matrix of Town Types as photos.

In this matrix the town types are sorted according to density - vertically - and ownership/project scale - horizontally-. Within these axes is a remarkable grouping of agreeable variants of the "European town." To the left, from sparse villa blocks, garden towns and villages, then up to small towns and downtown blocks. All these types are useful when one wants to build "more real town". And they all differ from the different types of European suburbia that can be seen to the right of the matrix. The Value-Roses in the upper left corner of each box indicates their sustainability performance.

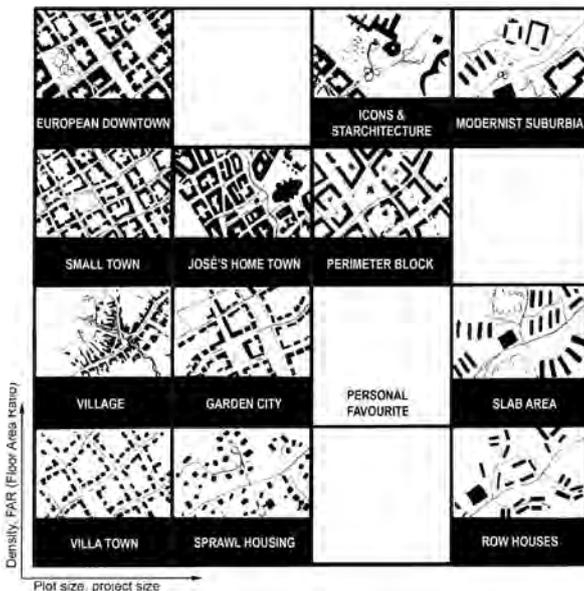


Figure 16. Matrix of Town Types as plans.

The corresponding plans to the pictures show blocks and street patterns. In the author's experience, the preferred town types tend to be grid based patterns as against suburban types based around cul-de-sac patterns.

Tool 1 - MATRIX OF TOWN TYPES

Planning in the sense of the process outlined here, means choosing what kind of town, or what kind of urban types, the participants want to see more built of, and which settlement types do they want to see less of, or even want to see being avoided completely.

A Matrix of Town Types gives an overview. The notion of town types is chosen as this vocabulary represents a language that can be used by both laymen and professionals of different trades. This notion offers a perspective of wholes, as opposed to focusing on house types, on street types, or on technical details such as dBA, FAR, VKT, minimum this and maximum that...

No town type is perfect. There are many "town types" and "village types" to gather inspiration from. This urban heritage not only offers a broad reference of types where some work well and others don't, it is also the bases from which improvements can evolve.

The Matrix works as a reminder of the great diversity of settlement types that have developed over generations. At the same time illustrates how town types have different sets of advantages and disadvantages. "Planning by choosing" means that whilst choosing advantages you are also aware of and prepared to take a stand for the disadvantages that come with your choice.

The matrix shown here (figs. 15+16) has been used extensively in Scandinavian contexts. In other regions and countries it has been, and should be, adjusted accordingly. Empty boxes in the matrix are kept open for alternatives that arise during discussions. The photos in the matrix (postcards, clippings or private photos) can be placed randomly, or, as in this matrix, sorted vertically indicating density and horizontally indicating the scale of ownerships and projects.

Two Sri Lankan versions of the matrix are shown as a parallel (fig 17), one covering the national

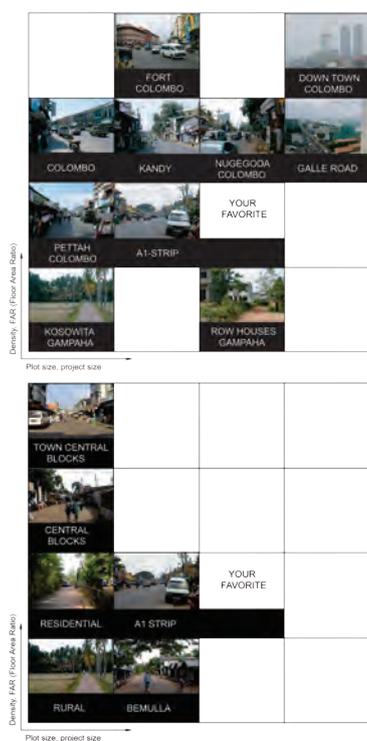


Figure 17. Matrix of Sri Lankan and Gampaha Town Types. These show that the tool and technique can be adapted for very different circumstances. These have been used in workshops and planning in Sri Lanka

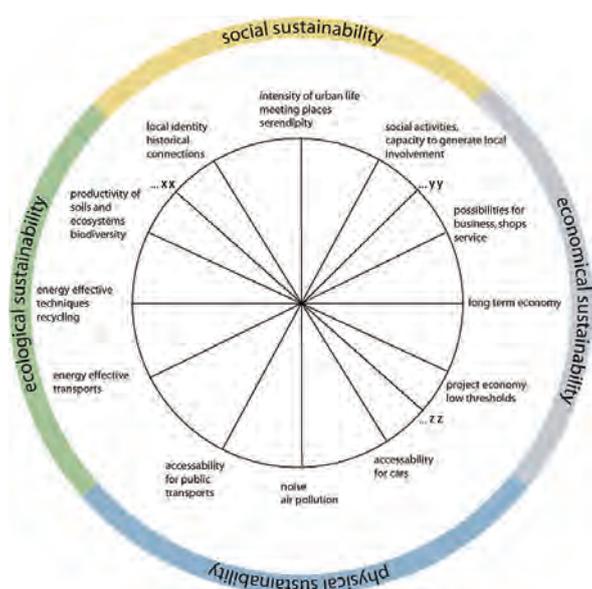


Figure 18. The Value Rose. Facilitates a transparent evaluation of different town and village types. The Value Rose assesses sustainability in a broad sense: ecological; economical; social; and physical. The reader is free to use other descriptors if he or she so prefers. The Value Rose is efficient as a basis for evaluation and makes it easier to keep many issues of debate of the debate alive throughout a discussion, as they all can be seen in relation to each other, and how they may influence each other.

level, the other covering a local small town situation. With the same X- and Y-axes used, it was found that good performances were generally on the left hand side of the matrix, in Sri Lanka as well as in Scandinavia. It will also be noticed that there is good, or even the best, performance among the traditional urban town types. Not for all, but for most of the people.

Experience has shown that the town grids even with moderate density give quite good urban performance; they are sustainable. In contrast, areas that show 'functions' segregated into different 'zones' tend to produce weak urban performance also at high densities; i.e. they are poor in sustainability.

The Matrix depicts the urban performance through a Value Rose in the upper left corner of each town type picture. Any spontaneous addition in a workshop can or should be double-checked with a sustainability evaluation through the Value Rose.

The Matrix has other benefits: it helps to turn the attention away from the level of types of building or style, to town types and urban morphology. It helps the layman, politician and planner to all perceive and remember the qualities that come with the scale, density and street pattern. Thereby it reminds us that a town is more than the sum of its parts, and that the urban challenge, and the planner's task, is the "life between buildings" as Jan Gehl has pointed out so eloquently.

Tool 2 - The VALUE ROSE

The Value Rose is a tool for evaluating urban performance of town, village and settlement types, measuring sustainability in a broad perspective. The 12 spokes (fig.18) of the 4-legged (fig 19) Value Rose shown here is chosen to give a reasonable summary of the hundreds of indicators involved in a sustainability analysis. Each indicator or issue is a spoke with 0, or "bad", in the centre and 100, or "perfect", out at the edge.

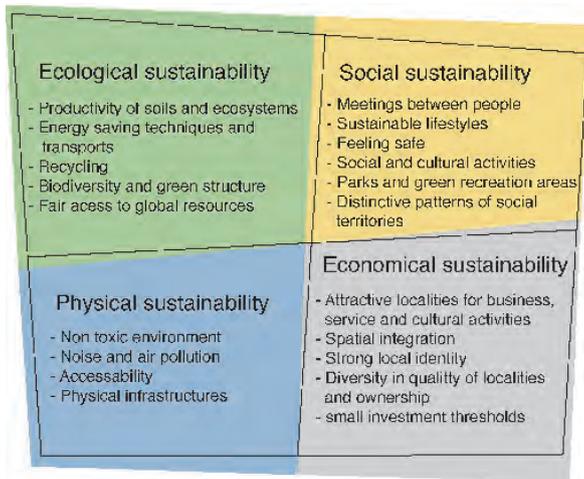


Figure 19. "Sustainability on Four Legs". Lists of aspects/ issues and programme criteria can be endless. To facilitate the use of the Value Rose, important aspects have been grouped together, and these become the spokes of the value-rose.

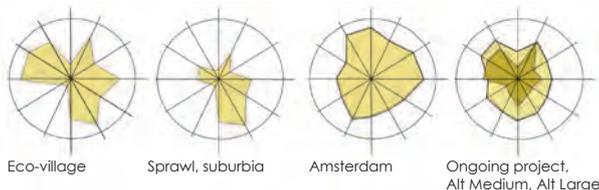


Figure 20. Examples of the Value Rose. Value Rose evaluates the different performance of the different urban patterns.

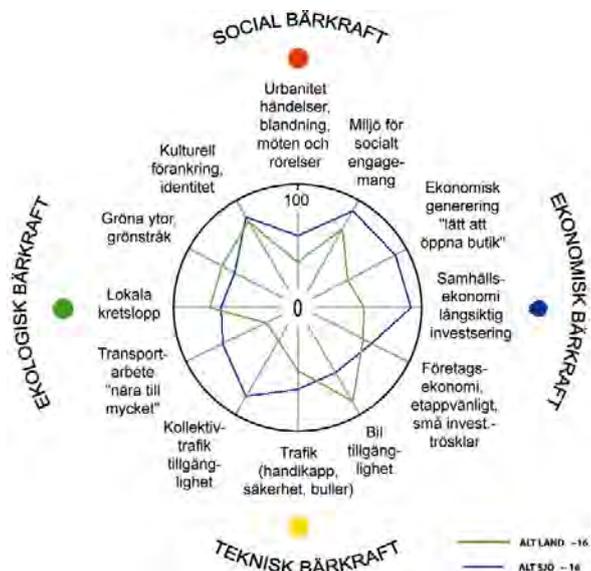


Figure 21. Swedish example. Depicting evaluation of one alternative on land, and another one closer to water

Participants should feel welcome to add spokes they find dear or relevant to the project at hand. Hence the spokes marked x, y and z. The Value Rose works as an efficient explanatory tool in the participation process. It offers a vocabulary that can be understood by both laymen and professionals of different trades. It turns out that the broadened sustainability perspective makes the Value Rose into a pedagogic tool. It also shows that there exists a broad palette of sustainable town and village types at hand for complementing your town or village.

An evaluation of town and village types is in many respects subjective. And yes, subjectivity is a problem if plans are based on the subjectivity of one planner or one politician, whereas it is relevant if it sums up the subjectivities and dreams of a group or society concerned ("The Wisdom of Crowds"). And that is the crux of the evaluation we propose – we have evolved a combination of an urban Matrix and a Value Rose that help you in assessing different settlements' sustainability in abroad sense, both the measurable and the not so easy to measure aspects.

The Value Rose helps to illustrate the sets of advantages and disadvantages of different options. It helps participants to keep a broad set of indicators alive throughout a workshop and is used to evaluate the proposals that come forth during a workshop or charrette. Hence the "E" in STEP emphasizes experience or experience-based choices.

The Value Rose can easily be re-tailored for a specific district, for a town as a whole or for different regions. The indicators chosen around the circle in this Value Rose are, as mentioned, subjective to some extent. However, we have found in our extensive use of this STEP Method, that significant trends do occur, and that choice patterns in these workshops seem to favour sustainable settlement types. Luckily!...

The indicators or spokes shown in our Value Rose here are:

Ecological Sustainability, for instance:

- local recycling;
- green corridors for wildlife, animals and plants;
- green spaces for man's enjoyment and recreation;
- capacity for local food cultivation "in your back yard".

Economical Sustainability, for instance:

- capacity to generate local economics - shops and businesses;
- long-term economy in a national or municipal perspective;
- project economy for investor/developer/builder;
- small investment thresholds.

Social Sustainability, for instance:

- urban vitality, serendipity, performance as a meeting point;
- local identity – as opposed to global anonymity;
- capacity to generate involvement, pride and responsibility;
- daily needs accessible on foot.

Physical Sustainability, for instance:

- car accessibility;
- public transport accessibility;
- transport yield – as opposed to movement dependency;
- security, safety;
- noise and pollution levels.

The Value Rose assessment clarifies other important observations:

- one quality is not necessarily detrimental to any of the others
- some town types offer a reasonable balance between qualities and demands
- there is no town type or village type that has maximum yield on any of the spokes,
- there are well-balanced sustainable town types at different densities
- grid plans perform better than cul-de-sac plans
- large scale projects and large scale ownerships tend to give poorer performance
- sparse projects tend to give weaker performance
- over-emphasizing one aspect can lead to forgetting other aspects

"Sustainability" is a relevant, but by now also a commonly misused word. As indeed most buzz words tend to be. Nonetheless, the Urban STEP Method maintains that sustainability in this broadened sense gives relevant criteria for a broad evaluation of our settlement types. And it reminds us to consider sustainability as "quality over time".

Tool 3 - ROUND-TABLE

The Round-Table is the place in the workshop where the participants are coming together, the key forum of the process. This is the place at the heart of the discussion, both choosing town types, adding evaluation criteria in the Value Rose, working with models, etc. The Round-Table is the arena where bottom-up planning can materialize.

The Round-Table can also be seen as a metaphor for the Value Rose. A good Round-Table has the Value Rose indicators represented by a wide variety of participants: neighbour, politician, ecologist, builder, traffic engineer, bus company, historian, economist, architect, etc. Bringing together seemingly antagonistic stakeholders have proven to be quite efficient in increasing mutual understanding.



Figure 22. "The presence of all". The spokes of the Rose should be represented by a wide variety of participants.



Figure 23. The Urban STEP offers real Participation. A hands-on method with town-types, models, aerial photos around the Round-Table.

Here, the different stakeholders, lobbyists and locals can face each other, hear new viewpoints and, by listening to each other, find mutual qualities that will work over time. 'The presence of all', the actual sitting around a Round-Table, promotes openness. Openness promotes proper public behaviour and the kind of responsibility that history and thinkers like Kant and Kirkegaard taught us.

Tool 4 - HANDS-ON MODELLING

Laying out model houses or model blocks on aerial photos is something that people can understand and easily visualise. It is also quite fun and energizing. The method works well for both laymen and professionals of different trades.

The 'fingertip' contact through models is more realistic and creative than working with pencil and sketch paper where the architects tend to take over. Likewise, the fingertip work is more for real than "listing program points" that tend to end in non-committing and wishful "request lists". Those "wishing lists" seldom come to the point where the group has to contemplate making compromises and choices.

Laying out models on aerial photos means that the participants can quickly illustrate different alternatives and observe how different sets of advantages and disadvantages occur.

The Round-Table also means a quick feedback of local knowledge that helps the planner to avoid blunders and to quickly correct errors. For the professional planner the workshop process gives the basis for not only for a well-grounded town plan, but also a quick way of getting an abundance of knowledge and ideas that would otherwise have not come out.

Tool 5: PICTURE POSTCARD method

Spotting local picture postcards can be another part of benchmarking and matrix making. Picture postcards sold in a municipality often indicates which places are the pride



Figure 24. The postcard method. Spotting local postcards is a way of understanding the place.

of the municipality. This tool as well as local “photo safaris” are efficient in adding and retaining local flavour to a town type matrix.

Tool 6: TOWN TYPES BOUQUET – mixing mixes

A good plan is more than finding out which is the perfect or the best town type. There is obviously no such thing as a best type for everyone. But it turns out that urban life seems to bloom where differences meet. Where there are intriguing mixes of town types, where small scale meets bigger scale, fancy meets bohemian, where there is a mix of different forms of tenure, colours, ages, architectures, etc. Boring for one, can be an oasis for another. This is the serendipity that can come with a “Bouquet of Town Types”.

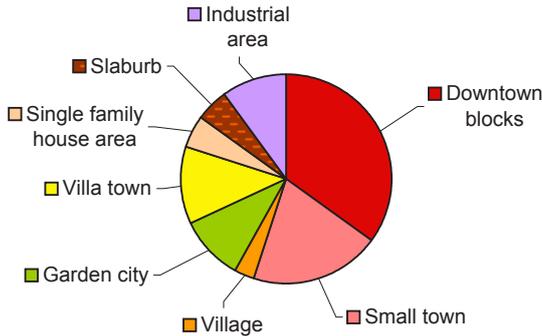
Using the Matrix and adding town types to it was first an intuitive scanning of town types that met the needs and dreams of the participants. A second crucial phase is putting together a bouquet of preferred town and village types considers assets and deficits in the existing town and adds types accordingly. It means digging deeper into the local situations, finding what needs to be complemented and finding win-win situation where different life styles and tastes find their havens.

Tool 7: GRIDS AND BUBBLES - grids enhance synergy and urban life - enclaves kill it

When evaluating the pictures and plans of the Matrix, people often notice that the grids seem to work best.

The use of the Value Rose gives clear evidence that the street grids facilitate mixed use and are more robust in supporting local services and a lively urban mix. Thus grids give synergy and generate urban life through connectivity, accessibility, safety and integration. Whereas hierarchical streets that create enclaves kill it through the lack of these qualities. For example, it is easier to open a corner shop in the grid-based pattern than it is in a cul-de-sac-based layout (fig. 27).

Town Type Bouquet: Visby, Sweden. Old regional town



Town Type Bouquet: Botkyrka, Sweden. New suburban town.

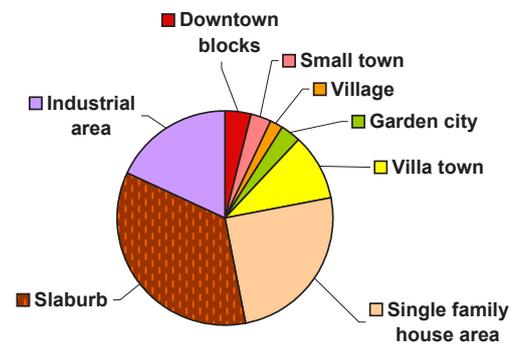


Figure 25. Town Type Bouquet. The circle diagram can easily show the set and amount of town types within a town. This helps bring an understanding about which (additional) types could broaden the repertoire and enliven the mix that is so crucial for urban life.

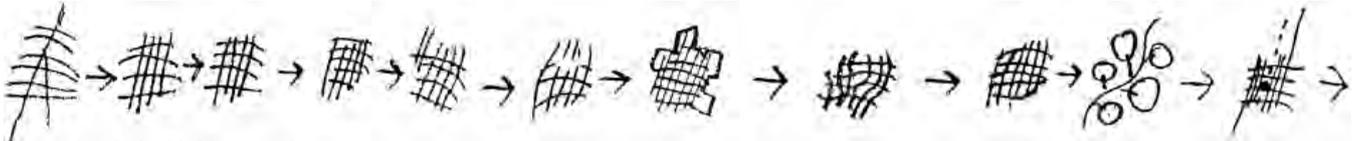
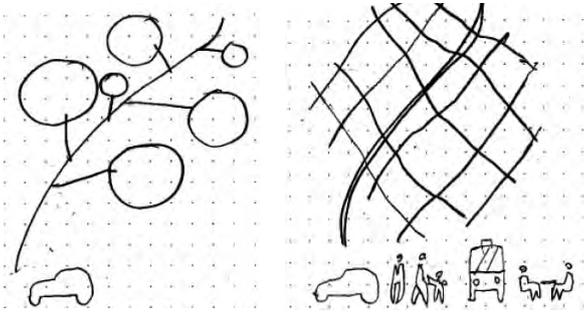


Figure 26. Quiz: Picture puzzle

Answer: "Swedish towns over the centuries", or "the Modernist zone town is a parenthesis"



Enclaves:
impede urban life.

Grids:
support urban life.

Figure 27 Grids – should be differentiated, but not plain hierarchical or dendritic like a tree, as in the "7v" of modernism. Grids with proper filtering encourage local business - cul-de-sacs kill local business.

A recipe for lively new towns and districts is therefore to base the planning on grids and blocks as the basic urban DNA. The grid should be held open to different uses.

Modern post-industrial work places and services can be mixed into the ordinary urban fabric and street grid; somewhere around 90% of them. All it takes, though, is the clever design of a differentiated street grid.

Tool 8: THE FILTERING GRID

The grid facilitates movement, accessibility and connection. A connected grid integrates people and places, it manages and filters traffic across the urban fabric, whereas a cul-de-sac based layout concentrates it.

An urban street grid is open for shopping, for driving, for eating at a sidewalk café, for walking in improvised patterns, whereas a cul-de-sac based layout tend to give hegemony to the car – based on the fake promise of Le Corbusier: "a town built for high speeds is a town built for success" (figs. 27, 28). Over 90 years of experience show otherwise. And, as Jan Gehl has shown in his work: the 70km/h town tends to be hierarchical, unconnected suburbs, while the 5km/h town is a well-used and appreciated urban format full of life.

Tool 9: STREETS AND BLOCKS - moving around and staying around

Real towns are formed by streets and blocks. The grid is robust. If you take away a block you get a square, if you take away another block you get a park. This "urban DNA" is indeed simple. The virtues and delicacy of a good plan lie in finding and upholding the balance between streets, blocks, squares and parks. The balance can also be seen as a balance between two basic urban elements, the element of staying around and the element of moving around. This balance is so tricky that the best formula is not a formula but a keen observation of urban empiricism.

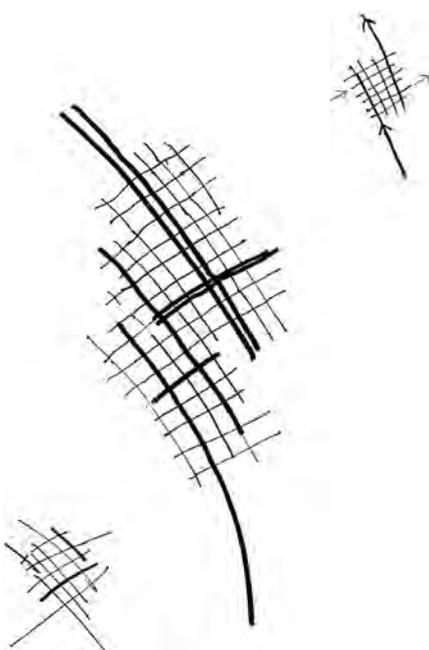


Fig 28. The differentiated grid. The filtering grid facilitates movement, accessibility and connection.

A second conclusion of such observations is that urban grids work well in a broad spectrum. Another conclusion is that in a way the traffic – or the element of moving – is both the upper and lower limiting factor of a well functioning urban fabric. The denser you build the closer you come to getting a jammed street or streets turning into barriers instead of arenas for street life. On the other hand, the more sparse the blocks get, the closer you come to losing the basis for good public transport. From this perspective, we learn that traffic is “both ceiling and floor” in the urban equation.



Figure 29. Blocks and density. Increasing density or the FAR (floor area ratio) on a block can be achieved either by placing more houses along the perimeter (top horizontal row) or by opening new streets that means smaller blocks and more meters of perimeter (left vertical column). The diagram also shows the possibility of combining both actions diagonally... Key indicators, such as FAR, generated traffic, green share can be seen in the tables.



Figure 30. Helsinki-Tampere Axis. Ideogrammatic plan linear development along public transport and water.



Figure 31. Melun-Sénart. Linear development along public transport connecting to important train lines.

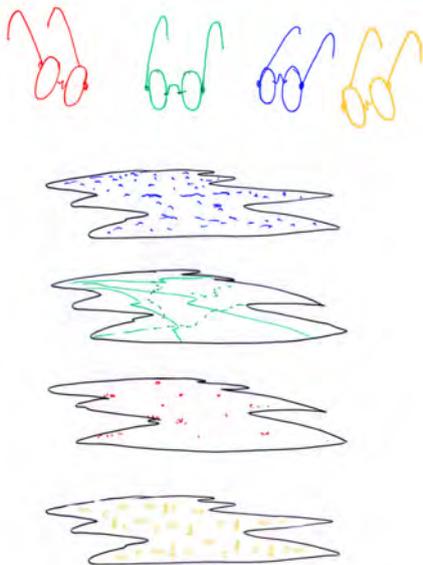


Figure 32. The "Four Glasses" tool. Observe a region with glasses of red, green, yellow and blue lenses, which are representative of places of desire (or lust), responsibility, local culture and where the money is ... and then seeing where they coincide, and what opportunities they create.

Tool 10: PUBLIC TRANSPORT - it should be the main arteries

With empiric evaluation we will observe that towns need public transport as main arteries. In large settlements the element of moving will otherwise ruin the street as a key element of the urban DNA. Traffic amounts or speeds can destroy the street as arena for other activities. This already occurs in low densities such as the American suburban sprawl (figs 30 and 31).

Badly advised traffic planners, architects and politicians still lead the public to expect that there is some short cut close to Corbusier's fake promise of "a town built for high speeds is a town built for success", 90 years of empiricism shows otherwise.

Tool 11: 'THE FOUR GLASSES' – finding sustainable regional patterns

This tool looks for sustainable regional settlement patterns by superimposing and finding denominators of different perspectives, what is here called "the Four Glasses".

"The Four Glasses" works well together with the Value Rose. The Value Rose in assessing aspects of urban patterns or particular designs. The Four Glasses in assessing about what can generates sustainable regional patterns.

One first example of how this works is from Sörmland County in Sweden (fig. 33). Trough each of the four perspectives ("glasses"), the map of the region is viewed with a particular perspective in mind:

1. View the map of the region with the "Glasses of Coveting or Beauty". Through these glasses, sites close to the shoreline, beautiful landscapes, mountaintops with views, islands of one's own, will be clearly seen.

2. View the map of the region with the "Glasses of Responsibility." Through these glasses, the main communications lines, like existing bus routes, or potential railway routes, railway lines that have been closed will be clearly seen.

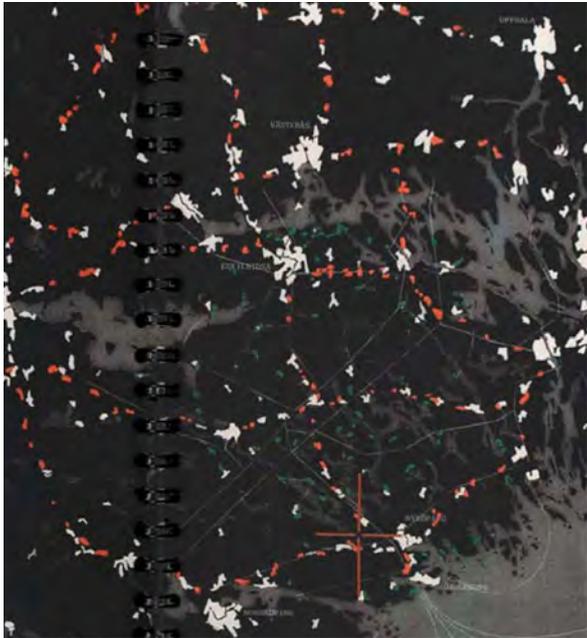


Figure 33. Sörmland County (south of Stockholm). A Sustainability pattern that is derived by using the “Four Glasses” too.”

3. View the map of the region with the “Glasses of Local Culture.” Through these glasses, places that give local spice, attractive villages, interesting closed mills, beautiful towns, abandoned religious buildings, the legacy of earlier generations will be seen.

4. View the map of the region with the “Glasses of Money” (or “Entrepreneur’s Glasses”) and it will be clearly seen where it is possible to make money, run businesses, and initiate developments of different sorts.

5. Lastly, put the generated perspectives together and see where they coincide. These will be the places with the most promise, and greatest potential value. It will be seen a ‘twinkling galaxy’ coming forth of the different perspectives, showing clusters and corridors of both urban and green patterns.

Second example is the Helsinki-Tampere Axis in Finland (figs. 30 and 34): a “Tomorrow as Threat” or a “Tomorrow as Vision”. It can turn either way: a threatening perspective of modernism’s “bubble town” sprawling along the highway as opposed to a promising vision with oblong linear grid patterns along lakes and public transport. The modernistic disconnected sprawl will happen with “business as usual”. The vision of a sustainable pattern is not a difficult or expensive one, but it presupposes a set of conscious choices, let’s call it “Planning By Choosing”.

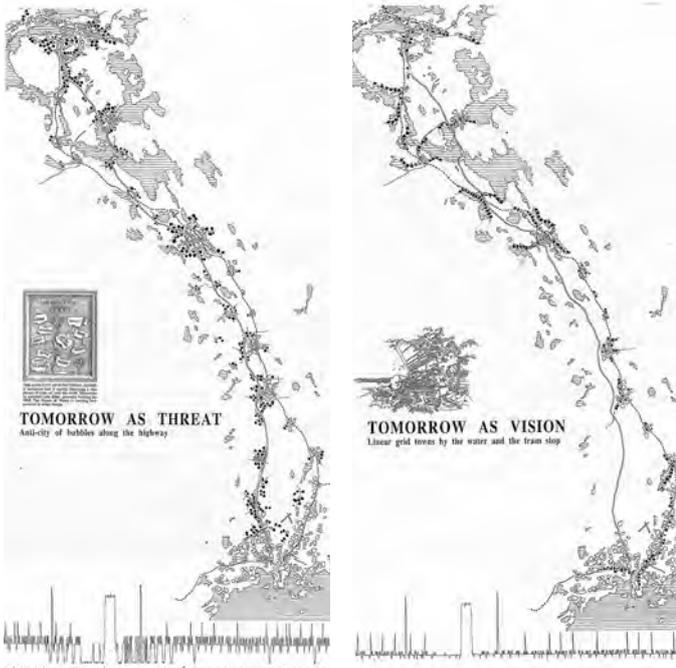


Figure 34 The Helsinki-Tampere Axis. A vision with oblong linear grid patterns along lakes and public transport as opposed to a threatening perspective of Modernism’s bubble town sprawling along the highway (see also fig 30).

EPILOGUE

- a lingering paradigm – time to get on

Town planning is a tricky word. It can give you, or the layman, a misleading idea about the essence or quality of current everyday planning. The word has turned into a hoax! Today's planning praxis is still very much influenced, or dominated, by a 90-year old modernism and its idea of zoning different functions into different enclaves. This means that it does not deal with real town planning, rather, it continues the corbusian formula for creating more suburbia, or non-town as Dan Solomon put it. The urban debate has repeatedly dismissed this ongoing modernistic paradigm, but, so far it has survived, not so much because of its strength, rather more obviously because of inertia and lack of strong or clear alternatives.

This booklet is another attempt to illustrate such an alternative.

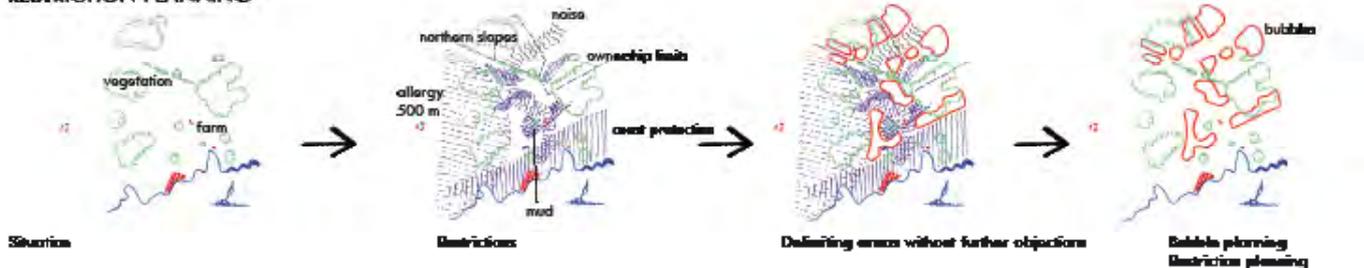
The modernistic form of "planning" struck the world by both claiming it would create a "new town for the new man" – and yet being so simple. Life was seen as a set of functions, each function was put in separate land zones, traffic in 7 different speed zones, "les 7v" - all neat and tidy. It was green and sunny, but also very aggressive towards the existing towns; "il faut tuer la rue corridor", as Le Corbusier put it. It was, let's face it, with this "killing the corridor street", a recipe for killing existing towns.

After 90 years we continue seeing the dismal effect; "non-town eats town", the paradigm is still luridly aggressive. The modernistic newspeak prevails; critical remarks generate an ever more elaborate collection of statistics, buffer criteria, limits and restrictions.

Even worse: much of the sustainability debate seems to get trapped in the same pattern of just adding new "functions", new restrictions and proposing larger buffer zones. With the implied assumption that if you make those inventories and processes ever more elaborate, you will avoid all disadvantages and then, at the end, get some sort of "sustainable town plan" falling out from the "process". It normally doesn't. Instead, this still modernistic thinking tends to give you modernistic zoning into even more specialized and re-branded enclaves for living, working and services. In spite of luring marketing labels, such as eco-village, garden town, office park, the enclaves are still enclaves.

This is far from the real urbanity that people would normally expect, prefer or demand when we talk about "town planning".

RESTRICTION PLANNING



ATTRACTION PLANNING

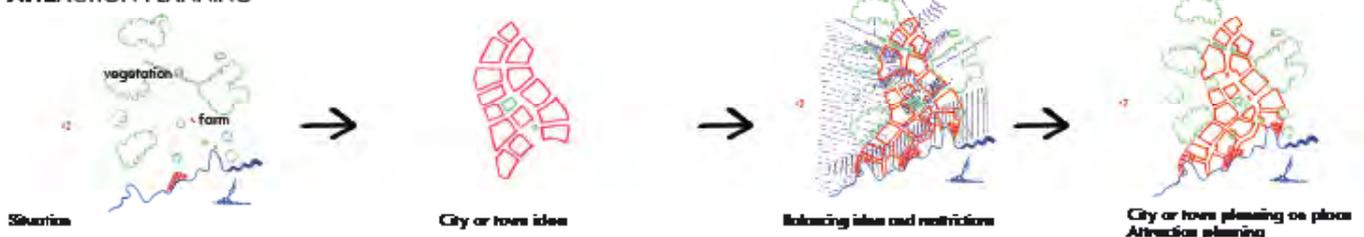


Figure 35. Planning is choosing. Attraction planning yields richer urbanism than restriction planning.



Figure 36. "It is possible!"
 - an inspiration book for the 9 communities of the Sörmland region, based on STEP method. 2004.

There is an alternative method – “planning by choosing” – we call it ‘the urban STEP’ a method that changes the paradigm

This booklet suggests that we should move away from modernistic enclaves and its “restriction planning” and move towards “attraction planning” based on a broad evaluation of the town and village types that mankind has developed over the centuries.

This STEP method can help you to move away from meek planning of more suburbia to real planning for real towns.

The STEP method is empiric. Instead of modernism's notion of inventing the “New Town for the New Man” this method asks you to evaluate the performance of settlement types around us in the broadest way possible. It then urges you to choose: which types should we be inspired by and build more of, and which types should we avoid.

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The Urban STEP has been developed by ARKEN SE Architects and Ekologigruppen Ekoplan AB, together with Jerker Söderlind, Håkan Jersenius, Peter Robinson and Jaime Montes.

CHECK LIST

-for sustainable planning

- A** Scrutinize the town map. Start with maps much larger than your foreseen task. Check older maps. Find old tracks and fragments of history.
- B** Find desire lines between points of interest, foreseen lines of walkways, bus lines and other modes of communication.
- C** Choose town or village type and level of density.
- D** Designate a sequence of bus or tram stops and let those stops become squares. Let a walking distance 300-500 meters to the stops define the width of the built area along the artery that is formed by the public transport.
- E** Let the urban fabric take form from features that the landscape offers - views, historical marks, sun angle, bay, valley, ridge, etc.
- F** Form a scenography for urban life and private domains.
- G** Designate block and non-blocks (parks, squares).
- H** Choose scale and grain so that people feel they can add their personal marks both at building stage and later on over the years.
- J** Choose scale which supports a good microclimate. Consider local winds, sun and shadow.
- K** Illustrate different ways to mix workplaces vertically within the building and horizontally within the block.
- L** Choose places for necessary external workplaces that could come later but where their urban energy is induced towards town squares. This makes sure that employees have access to public transport, lunch, restaurants, etc.
- M** Establish Design Guidelines. Make clear agreements with tenants, traders, builders, clerks and politicians what aims should prevail

Density varies
but a good urban grid is built out of blocks



Small



Medium



Large

so that process and formalia do not take over with all the petty details. Make all aware that the result is a balancing of many wishes that are well meant but mutually necessitate choice. Make it clear that no one represents an aspect that can be fully met.

N Put names and labels at an early stage to facilitate communication between professionals and laymen.

O Define a Lex.... (town, initiator, politician, etc.) to emphasize that you work on a project that is special to this town or village and therefore should enhance local scale, consciousness and pride.

P Choose allotments and contracts at a moderate scale. That makes place for local or small entrepreneurs on the market and enhances variation and innovations - and lower prices in the long run.

Q Leave out parts of sites and blocks with high marginal costs and leave those for later completions. This refers to all levels.

R Create a grid of roads instead of traffic separation. Differentiate the street grid to different widths for alleys, streets, boulevards for differentiate use and different parking capacity. Develop street sections so that tree roots and pipes can coexist. Avoid labyrinthine street grids with cul-de-sacs. Instead impede through-traffic with the help of intimate scale, bollards, surface, trees, sequencing and other positive signals.

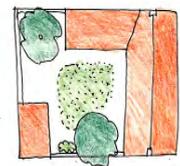
S Let ownership be small scale and follow the "cell" that the individual building with its site constitute. You thereby get a delicate sorting of responsibilities and de-dramatization of conflicts. The restaurant owner who cleans "his" part of the pavement with bucket and brush in the morning is an illustration of this mechanism.

T Each block should take responsibility for its permanent parking needs. Home or work-parking is cared for within the own block.

Visiting or spontaneous commercial parking can take place in the street.

U Give place for changes and additions in all levels of scale. This will increase possible use in a longer perspective.

V CELL - The basic unit of the urban fabric. The cell consists of site + building. Urban morphology shows that buildings come and go, but it also shows that a living town tissue should keep cells as basic units of blocks.

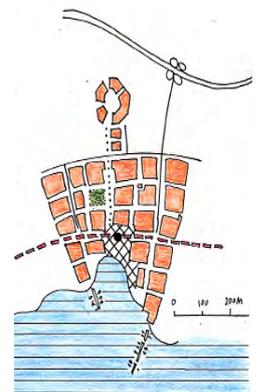


THE CELL = SITE + BUILDING

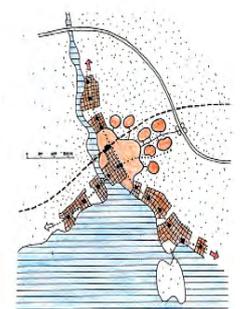
X BLOCK - A sum of cells. Defined by the grid of streets and alleys. Scale depends on type of town, village, climate and local culture.



Y QUARTER OR DISTRICT - A sum of blocks. Can be experienced differently by different people of the town. But can also have an obvious form resulting from topography and green corridors.



Z TOWN - A sum of districts. The town should be seen as an expression of human culture, summing up aspects of all parts of life. But also as a sign of how man sees his relation to Mother Earth.



THE TWELVE STEPS OF THE METHOD



1 Step 1: Reminding The Heritage - Opening Eyes



2 Step 2: Imagining - 30 Seconds For 30 Years



3 Step 3: Distributing A Matrix Of Town Types



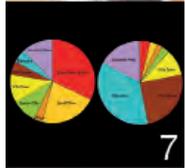
4 Step 4: Collecting The Matrix Sheets And Making A Summary



5 Step 5: Introducing The Value Rose - "What We Want And What We Should"



6 Step 6: Gathering Around The Round-Table



7 Step 7: Mixing A Bouquet Of Town Types - Adding Aspects Of Urban Texture.



8 Step 8: The Four Glasses Adding Aspects Of Regional Pattern



9 Step 9: Switching The Group Mix



10 Step 10: Creating & Filling In Your Own Value Rose



11 Step 11: Preliminary Report - Summing Up And Venturing Conclusions



12 Step 12: Professional Summary