2 ON THE ROLE OF WILL-SHAPING IN PLANNING EVALUATION

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2.1 Introduction

Plan and project evaluation have become important activities in modern public planning and administration. Especially in the field of environmental and infrastructure planning, many examples can be found of a systematic assessment and appraisal of alternative policy proposals, also called ex ante evaluation (e.g. see Voogd, 1994). Selective overviews of evaluation approaches can be found in the following books: Cochrane and Zeleny (1973), Lichfield, Kettle and Whitbread (1975), Nijkamp (1980), Kmietowicz and Pearman (1981), Voogd (1983), Shofield (1987), Nijkamp and Voogd (1989), Shefer and Voogd (1990), Nijkamp, Rietveld and Voogd (1990).

Of course, the ultimate choice of the preferred evaluation approach is always a function of the nature of the problem, the interested parties and the planning context. A recent analysis of recent infrastructure planning processes in the Netherlands has found that many problems during the evaluation phases of a planning process relate to the *interaction* between the planners and the planning environment (see Alteren et al., 1990). In particular the inadequate integration of evaluation and planning processes is seen as a major reason for discontent. The application of methods often neglected the need for evaluation to accompanied with a 'will-shaping process' to familiarize people with the alternatives and the evaluation outcomes.

In this paper, we focus our attention on the relationship between evaluation and planning processes. In the next section we show that evaluation may not be simplified to the mere application of one or two methods, however useful these methods may be. Evaluation in urban and regional planning can be seen as a complex set of social activities directed towards the specification and choice of a set of goals and related plans and/or projects (e.g. see Archibugi, 1994). Will-shaping is an important part of it, and this can be realized in several ways. Some theoretical foundations of the 'will-shaping' concept are discussed in more detail in section three. Section four is devoted to some consequences

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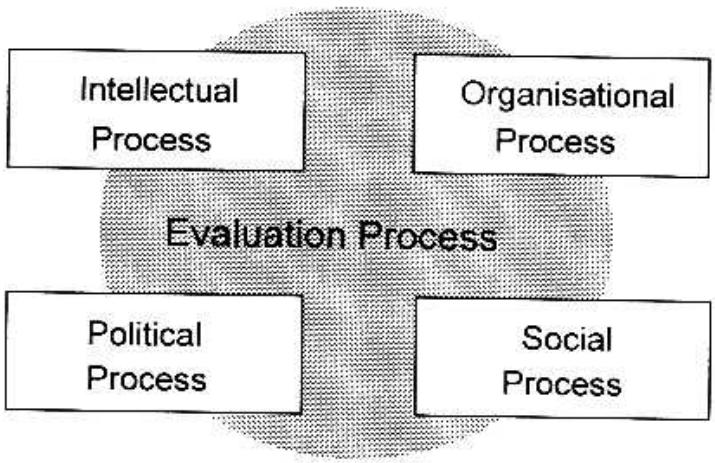
of this concept for the formal structuring of the evaluation and planning process. We conclude with some summaries.

2.2 Characteristics of planning evaluation

An analysis of infrastructure planning processes in the Netherlands has revealed that a major fundamental reason for problems is that many people, including many 'technical' planners, have a limited notion of what planning evaluation is (e.g. see Alteren et al., 1990). They consider an evaluation process to be mainly an 'intellectual process'. In this view, methods and techniques play a role that is next in importance to disciplinary-based empirical knowledge. However, there are at least three more dimensions of an evaluation process that are all extremely relevant to understanding the practical problems that arise in applying evaluation methods. These are summarized in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Four dimensions of an evaluation process



Planning evaluation is not only an intellectual process, in which the proper alternative options are specified and their various impacts are compared. It is also a 'political process', in which power structures, consultation, mediation and negotiation play a prominent role (see Forester, 1989). An important consideration in this process concerns the question, 'Who gains and who loses?'. The answer to this question is strongly related to the problem of 'equity' versus 'efficiency' (e.g. see Miller, 1985). In practice, defining what equity and efficiency involve is very problematic. The reason is that such definitions may have many political implications. An assessment of the distributional effects of planning proposals implies that explicit consideration must be given to social categories (for instance, the definition of groups of actors involved in, or affected by, policy). The PBS framework of Lichfield that distinguishes between producers and operators on the one hand, and consumers on the other, is especially helpful here, for it explicitly considers the 'intellectual process' (e.g. see Lichfield, 1985, 1990). Practice, however, teaches that explicitly to classify groups may also be very difficult, especially when the evaluation is done in relative isolation and, therefore, without close consultation with the groups concerned. When outcomes do not reflect the preferences of a group, it is certain

to voice criticisms. Consequently, close cooperation with the interests concerned is strongly recommended, which implies explicit attention to evaluation as a 'political process'.

However, planning evaluation must also be considered as a 'social process'. It is particularly important for planners concerned with the development and evaluation of planning proposals to understand the social context of public decision making. There is a vast literature on individual decision making, much of which is directly about evaluation as an intellectual process. In the use of planning evaluation methods an important point is that politicians and interest groups make choices based on their *perceptions* of reality that often differ from reality as defined or seen by planners. To effect the desired changes, those engaged in public planning need to understand the circumstances and criteria that people employ in arriving at a judgment relating to a proposed plan or project. It is also necessary to gain knowledge on how people evaluate information in their opinion-making process. Evidently, many outside-participants in public planning processes do not successfully obtain relevant information, because much that is important never reaches the pages of a project plan. Therefore, in an early stage of the evaluation process selecting the most effective means of communication with various social and political groups will always remain important in every public evaluation process with conflicting issues (this corresponds to concepts in planning theory which focus on planning as a 'communication structure', e.g. see Habermas, 1973; Van Gunsteren, 1976; Teisman, 1992).

The four dimensions of an evaluation process, as we have mentioned, to some extent explain the difficulties encountered when evaluation methods are applied in planning practice. Many decision-making processes need *time*. Time that can be used for a proper analysis of the consequences, which will also always increase uncertainties due to the dynamics of political viewpoints, of value systems, of society, to decrease uncertainties. In other words, time needed for *will-shaping*, to familiarize with problems and with solutions. By will-shaping we mean forming a mental faculty common to many people through which they deliberately choose or decide upon a course of action.

2.3 Some theoretical observations

Resembling a negotiation process, will-shaping can be seen as a process that aims to synchronize attitudes towards and preferences for certain goals. Negotiation techniques, as much about the process of decision-making as the decision itself, include procedures and ground rules for negotiations between different parties that aim at solving problems by fostering consensus between the various interest groups - reconciling different calculations of costs and benefits (Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987; Susskind, 1994). Will-shaping is essential in arriving at a consensus. It will be part of a negotiation or mediation process, but it can also be witnessed in any - less formally structured - planning or decision-making process. For example, promotional activities around urban revitalisation projects are often intended to create a permissive social attitude towards them (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990).

The relationships between attitudes, preferences and human behaviour have been widely studied, in particular in cognitive psychology (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Dawes and Smith, 1985; Greenwald, 1989). The 'theory of planned behaviour' (Ajzen, 1988, is very

interesting in stating that a choice is made between alternative behavioural patterns on the basis of attitudes towards these patterns. Bentler and Speckart (1981) have shown that habit may be as important as intentions in determining behaviour. If behaviour becomes habitual, attitudes may even change without accompanying changes in behavioural patterns. However, in general attitudes and preferences are seen as determinants of behaviour and hence of decision-making (see also Dwyer et al, 1993). Obviously, attitudes are more enduring dispositions than preferences (Ajzen, 1987). Changes in attitudes are likely to underlie more permanent behavioural changes. Such changes can probably be accomplished by directly changing attitudes, or, at least in certain circumstances, by indirectly changing behaviour.

The process of will-shaping has not been much well studied in public decision-making processes, although it is a crucial cognitive characteristic of human beings (e.g. see Grossberg, 1982; Kolb and Wishaw, 1990). For a proper understanding of will-shaping it is essential to divide the process of the forming of a common mental faculty into three distinct mental processes concerning information: its projection, transmission and reception. *Its projection* concerns the mental representation of the problem and the suggested solutions (i.e. the alternatives) by the users of evaluation research results (viz. the public and politicians). Different media can be used for this *transmission*. For example, between planners and political executives there is usually direct communication via meetings and/or planning reports. Transmission may also occur through intermediaries like news media, and citizens' participation. However, projected information usually has to compete with message interference (e.g. unexpected events, past experiences) from other sources of information. Consequently, the image of the planning problem and planning alternatives received by the audience can be quite different from the one intended by the planners. In other words, it is essential to distinguish *information reception* as a specific component of the will-shaping process, because this component ultimately determines the success of the evaluation process in the sense that the receiver (i.e. the audience) returns a useful reaction to the sender (i.e. planning authorities). It is visualized in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Information processing tasks in a will-shaping process

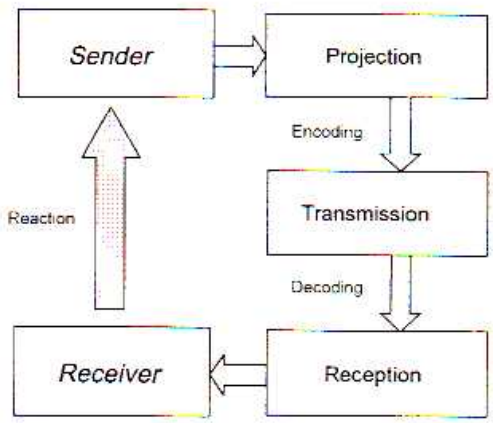


Figure 2.2 is just one way to represent human information processing. In cognitive psychology at least three different types of models of human information processing have been formulated (e.g. see Miller, 1988; Sanders, 1990). *Discrete-serial stage models*

assume the existence of serially organized stages of information processing, which each transmits output in one final step only after which a subsequent stage can become active. *Continuous models* assume that information processes, organized in parallel, continuously transmit preliminary results of their transformation to contingent processes. Finally, *hybrid models* are recognized, which form a mixture of both discrete and continuous models.

Public planning and promotion have a lot in common (e.g. see Ashworth and Voogd, 1990). Evidently, the will-shaping process may be structured by explicit promotional activities of evaluation results. Promotion tries to evoke a specific change in an audience's attitude or behaviour. The change sought is a specific response from the target group. From persuasion theory it is known three different forms of response are possible (see Roloff and Miller, 1980). Firstly, promotion may be *response shaping*. This is similar to learning: evaluation activities may attempt to shape the response of an audience by 'teaching' it how to behave and offer positive reinforcement for learning. If audience responses favourable to the planner's purpose are reinforced by rewards to the audience, positive attitudes are developed toward what is learned. The audience fulfils a need for positive reinforcement, and the planner fulfils a need for a desired response from the audience at hand. Secondly, there is *response reinforcing*. If target persons in the audience already have positive attitudes toward the proposed alternatives, whether specific or general, the planner reminds them about the positive aspects of the solutions and stimulates them to feel even more strongly by displaying their attitudes through specified forms of behaviour. Many public policy activities in today's society are response reinforcing (EC fund raising, seeking political support, investments, and so on), but the people from the target group (e.g. EC authorities, investors, social groups) have to be motivated to do these things. Thirdly, promotion may be *response changing*. This is the most difficult task because it involves asking people to switch from one perceived image of the planning problem and alternatives to another. People are reluctant to change; thus, to convince them to do so, the planner has to relate the change to something in which the target person already believes. In persuasion theory this is called an 'anchor' (Roloff and Miller, 1980), because it is already accepted by the target person and will be used to tie down new attitudes or opinions. An anchor is a starting point for change because it represents something that is already widely accepted. Anchors can be beliefs, values, group norms, etc..

2.4 Structuring the evaluation process

It is well-recognized that planning evaluation is a continuous activity, which takes place in many stages of a planning process (e.g. see Lichfield et al. 1975). However, in planning practice the role of explicit ex ante evaluation, and therefore the role of systematic evaluation methods, is usually restricted to a stage in which several alternative proposals are available and subject to internal (i.e. within governmental organizations) discussions. Such an evaluation process will generally have the following simple structure: see Figure 2.3.

It starts with an analysis of the planning situation, which involves an analysis of the problems involved, the goals and objectives and the various relevant interest and/or target

groups. Often simultaneously, work is done to find and design alternative options and to assess their impacts and other relevant characteristics. In the evaluation phase, work usually aims at constructing one or more rankings of the alternatives: the higher an alternative is ranked, the more it is recommended (at least, from the point of view of the weight of the criterion in question if a multicriteria evaluation has been performed).

Figure 2.3: A simple structure of basic activities in an evaluation process.

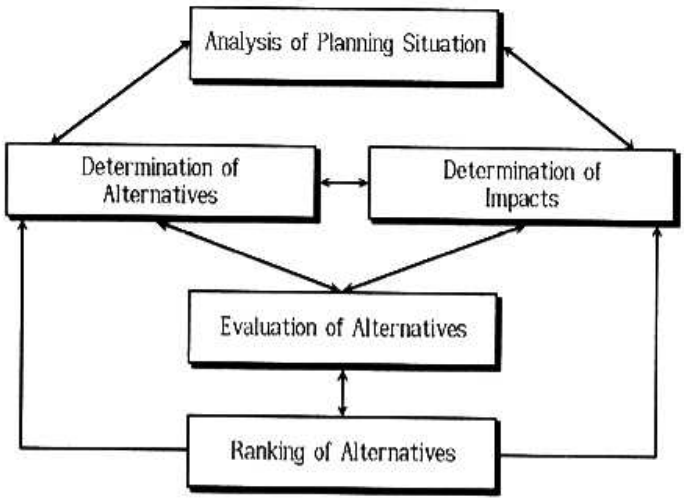
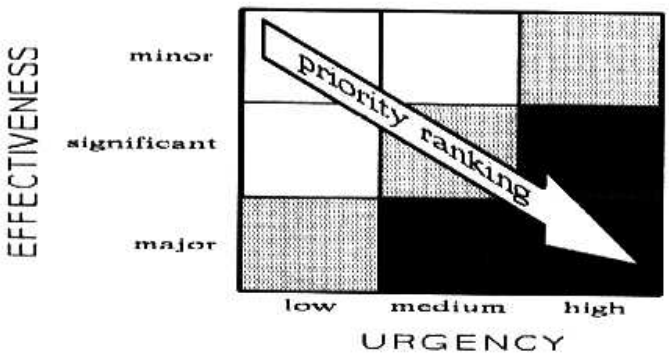


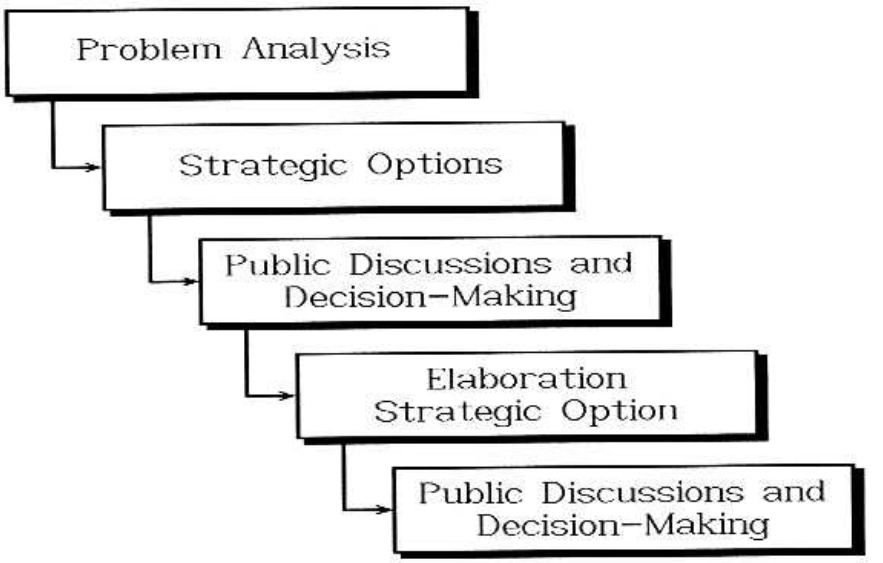
Figure 2.4: Example of a combination of an evaluation result (i.e. effectiveness score) to another criterion (i.e. urgency).



Practice teaches that evaluation results, derived according to the model outlined in Figure 2.3, may be very soon 'out of date'. This is especially the case if the external negotiation process and/or citizen participation rounds provide 'new' information and/or other political values may become apparent. If the evaluation results are already included in a

formal plan or proposal, it is usually considered by political executives as 'undesirable' to modify the analysis. This may be interpreted by the political opposition as a token of a 'drifting policy'. Therefore, preference is usually given to adaptations like that of Figure 4, i.e. linking an 'old' evaluation outcome to a 'new' preference represented by some vague criterion such as 'urgency' or the like. Such adaptations may be considered as illustrations of an inadequate will-shaping process.
At least two fundamentally different avenues can be explored to improve the evaluation process in this respect, viz. the strategic model and what can be (cf. Voogd, 1993) called the elaboration model. These models are roughly outlined in Figures 2.5 and 2.6.

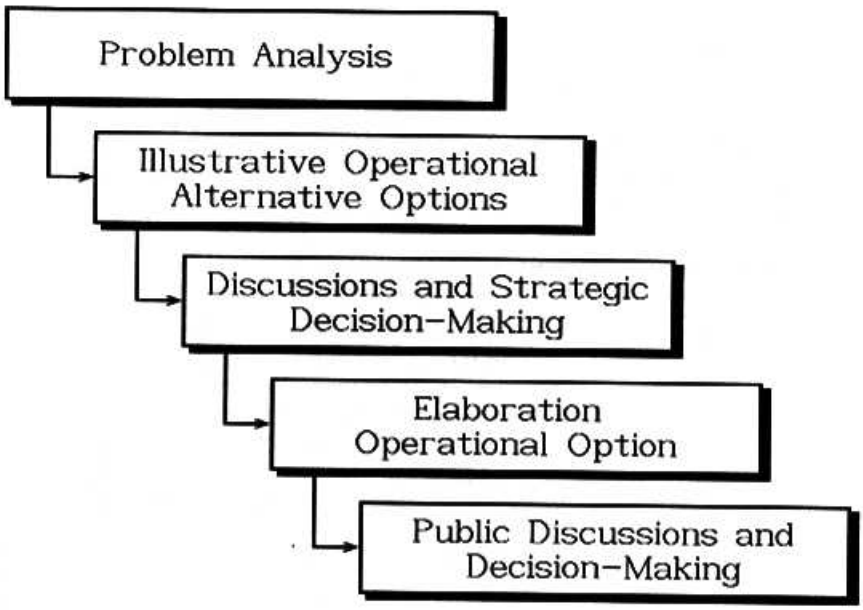
Figure 2.5: Strategic Model



The *'strategic model'* is well-known in planning and management sciences (see, for instance, Capon et al., 1987; Sutherland, 1989). If applied in an evaluation context based on will-shaping, it starts with a general fundamental discussion on goals and objectives, resulting in 'strategic alternatives' included in a 'strategic plan'. These strategic alternatives are often built around metaphors like planning ideologies (Foley, 1960), planning concepts (Zonneveld, 1991) or planning doctrines (Alexander and Faludi, 1989).
The idea behind this strategic model is that the strategic plan should be the subject of public and political debate, so that the approved strategic plan can provide the constraints for a further elaboration of 'operational alternatives'. A weakness of the strategic model is that the strategic alternatives often have little or no appeal to the public. They are often too vague to be recognized as of vital importance to the future of their own living environment. The result is that the will-shaping process is hardly started in this phase. As such, many public objections may result in the next phase of operational planning because only then do the consequences of the strategic plan become evident to the public. It is usual then that in the phase of operational planning another fundamental discussion is started about the underlying principles and concepts of the strategic plan.

An alternative route, which takes into better account the will-shaping process, is the 'elaboration model'. This model starts immediately, of course, after a problem analysis, with the development of illustrative, but operational, alternatives. These alternatives have to cover a broad spectrum of principally different strategic directions, however, without being exhaustive within a strategic direction. These operational alternatives may be very useful in starting a public discussion and, consequently, a will-shaping process, in a very early phase of a planning process.

Figure 2.6: Elaboration Model



Both the strategic model and the elaboration model may have systematic evaluation activities. However, as clarified by Figure 1, evaluation is more than just a systematic comparison of alternatives to justify a preferred course of action. It also involves a broad orientation on the wishes and ideas of social groups, with the purpose for creating a 'power base', i.e. a broad consensus between many groups and participants in the planning and evaluation process. Only in this way can certain solutions not be overlooked and therefore not elaborated. A so-called 'open planning process', stressing communications with various interest and target groups, is much to be preferred in an early plan-making stage than an internal evaluation of the alternatives by means of a systematic evaluation method. Consequently, because the elaboration model stimulates the process of social 'will-shaping', it must be preferred to the strategic model.

2.5 Some concluding remarks

In this paper, we appeal for more attention to be given in evaluation to communication with social groups and their 'will-shaping'. In the light of earlier work by the author (e.g. Voogd, 1983, 1985) that aimed primarily at providing political executives with the best

possible information and therefore improving public accountability, this may be seen as a change of mind. Indeed, in the present paper this target is to some extent weakened by stressing the necessity that an ex ante evaluation approach must also work towards a consensus. Obviously, the practical conduct of planners engaged in evaluation will always reflect both considerations. Ultimately, the balance of emphasis may depend in practice on the context and content of evaluation and on the phase of the decision-making process.

A key element with respect to the credibility and acceptability of ex ante evaluation is the way in which both methods and results are presented. The importance of good presentation not only holds for the accountability issue already mentioned but is also evident in an evaluation process that focuses on will-shaping. Thanks to modern technology e.g. computer graphics and so forth, many improvements are already on the horizon. However, a great deal of information resulting from evaluation cannot be represented graphically. More research is necessary with respect to possible 'interfaces' between evaluation and actual decision-making. Future research programmes should cover this important area, both empirical (case studies) and methodological.

It should be evident from this paper that there is no single recipe for evaluation. An important reason is the political and social dimensions of evaluation, but it would be unwise to conclude that therefore no rational evaluation approach needs to be pursued. On the contrary: the only way public authorities can legitimize their being towards citizens is by basing their work and working processes on scientifically rational points of departure! If, however, the factual behaviour of politicians and government is used as a behavioral norm and standard for evaluation, then this can only lead to a further deterioration of the situation. Evaluation will then be no more that a power play, where wishes are more important than impacts and political influence more important than arguments.

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