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Briefing: Professor Vincent Nadin's decade of spatial planning and strategy at TU Delft

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Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) is the leading institution in the Netherlands for research and education in urbanism. Planning, design and technology traditionally form the key pillars of 'Dutch urbanism'. The year 2008 marked the beginning of a new section with a new professor at the TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment: the section of Spatial Planning & Strategy (SPS). With the farewell to SPS professor Vincent Nadin in 2019, a huge source of expertise and inspiration for urbanism has left Delft's academic community. Under Vincent's leadership, SPS has strengthened its position and become a centre of excellence on (a) international and European territorial governance and policy-making, including their potential for democracy building, (b) regional design and planning, (c) contemporary methods of spatial planning, spatial planning instruments and spatial planning systems and cultures and (d) territorial evidence and impact assessment.

1. Introduction

The year 2008 marked the beginning of a new section at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment (ABE), Department of Urbanism of the Delft University of Technology: the section of Spatial Planning & Strategy (SPS) led by a newly appointed professor, Vincent Nadin. The new section gathered more than 20 tenured staff members from two existing chairs: spatial planning and urban renewal & management. 11 years later, we bid farewell to Professor Vincent Nadin, now retired. This paper introduces urbanism at TU Delft, positions the field of spatial planning within, and presents the legacy of Vincent Nadin as academic leader of the SPS section.

2. Urbanism at TU Delft

The Delft ABE faculty (in Dutch: 'Bouwkunde') has traditionally been the home of various disciplines concerned with the design, engineering, planning and governing of the built environment, across several scales, from building units to city regions. Currently, it hosts more than 3000 students and four departments: Architecture, Urbanism, Architectural Engineering & Technology and Management in the Built Environment. Each department consists of several sections with hundreds of academic staff members: ranging from design to theory, from real estate and building law to product development, from cultural heritage to environmental technology, and from media studies to building informatics, to name but a few. Since the introduction of Urbanism at 'Bouwkunde' – at the end of the 1940s when

Theodoor Karel van Lohuizen and Cornelis van Eesteren started as first urbanism professors – spatial planning has been a crucial component of urbanism and a central field of studies in the faculty.

TU Delft is the leading institution in the Netherlands for research and education in urbanism. It has an established track record of excellence in research, teaching and learning. The Department of Urbanism at TU Delft comprises more than 100 tenured staff members and many PhD candidates, post-docs and guest researchers and teachers. It is organised into six sections which reflect the nature of urbanism in the Netherlands: Spatial Planning & Strategy, Urban Design, Environmental Technology & Design, Urban Data Science, Urban Studies and Landscape Architecture. The six sections of the Department of Urbanism are united in contributing to the mission of the department, namely to advance, share and apply knowledge on (a) the interaction between the built environment and society, including human behaviour, politics and the environment, and on (b) how design, planning and engineering interventions in this built environment can better satisfy human and societal needs. Here, 'advance' refers to research, 'share' to education and dissemination and 'apply' to conviction that urbanism needs to be an action-oriented, forward-looking practice.

At TU Delft, spatial planning has a unique but evident relationship with spatial design, focusing on the development

and transformation of spatial form, composition, patterns, structures and networks, and the governance of these systems. Planning, design and technology form the key pillars of 'Dutch Urbanism' education and research at TU Delft. This integrative approach to urbanism has a long history at TU Delft, and makes the university's academic profile in this field highly distinctive and recognised.

3. Spatial planning: a changing field

Globally, cities and regions are challenged by the risks and opportunities associated with accelerating challenges arising from climate change, migration, the fourth industrial revolution, rising inequalities, globalising economies, socio-spatial fragmentation and political instability. Regions, cities and communities face urgent spatial planning questions with respect to sustainable growth and transformation that can only be tackled in an interdisciplinary and integrative way that promotes social, economic and ecological sustainability and spatial justice. Spatial planning at TU Delft is not only concerned with what to do (i.e. the objectives of spatial planning), but also with how to do it (i.e. processes of governance and democratic citizen engagement).

Over recent decades, processes of spatial planning, policy-making and territorial governance have changed drastically. First, trends of deregulation and decentralisation have had a large impact on traditionally strong spatial planning authorities, such as national governments and national bodies of planning. They have repositioned themselves and gotten new responsibilities, but regional and local planning authorities have had to adapt as well. Additionally, at least in the European Union, private stakeholders and civil society have been given much more room to co-create spatial plans and interventions with those planning authorities. Spatial planning has developed into an inter- and transdisciplinary activity, especially in advanced economies.

Second, vision and strategy-making have become mainstream in spatial planning, with an increased understanding of the complex, uncertain, networked and dynamic nature of cities and regions (Figure 1). Planning for resilience and sustainability, for organic growth, for flexibility, and for adaptivity means that planning has become a process of intensive interaction, negotiation and communication between involved stakeholders, looking for shared visions and strategies to go forward. Such a process is helped by diverse tools and ways of approaching the tasks at hand, with the formulation of alternative spatial scenarios and by visions and strategy-making. These tools contribute to a new planning paradigm that focuses on communication and *consensus*-seeking in collaborative decision-making processes. This has increased the need for urbanism-planning professionals who can lead, guide,

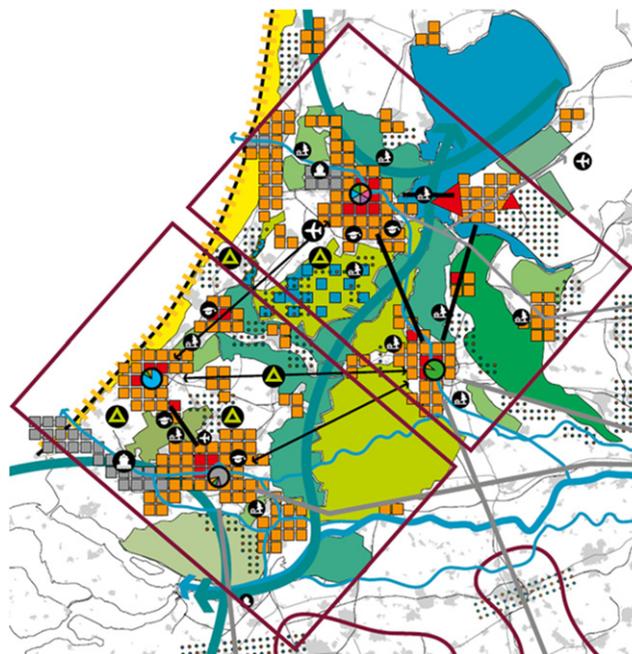


Figure 1. Randstad vision map (VROM, 2008, cover illustration)

facilitate, mediate, manage and steer those processes at and across a variety of spatial scales, from neighbourhood to city-region and beyond.

Third, spatial planning has become a digitised and digitally supported process in many ways. In several places, spatial planning processes are based on E-participation. Urban (big) data and sophisticated two- and three-dimensional analysis, design, visualisation, modelling and decision-making tools are providing urbanism professionals with more input on the city than ever before, making urban policy-making processes (potentially) more transparent, explicit and democratic and strongly underpinned and supported by actual and dynamic data that allows for evidence-informed decision-making.

The changes in the professional field of urbanism, and spatial planning in particular, come with many questions, which gives SPS the opportunity to conduct innovative research on issues of

- inclusion, diversity, spatial justice and democracy building
- the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders in spatial development processes including the roles and values of planners
- spatial decision-making processes and how they are informed by socio-spatial data (analysis)

4. Vincent Nadin: injecting new ideas into Dutch planning

With the farewell to Vincent Nadin, a huge source of expertise and inspiration for urbanism has left Delft's academic community. Under Vincent's leadership, SPS has strengthened its position and become a centre of excellence on (a) international and European territorial governance and policy-making, including their potential for democracy building, (b) regional design and planning, (c) contemporary methods of spatial planning, spatial planning instruments, and spatial planning systems and cultures and (d) territorial evidence and impact assessment. SPS contributes to scientific research and education on today's and tomorrow's questions of sustainable spatial development, territorial governance, spatial justice and resilient and healthy cities and communities through a better understanding of theoretical perspectives on the nature, scope and effects of spatial planning. By doing so, the section builds on its strong tradition of international comparative studies, of which Vincent Nadin is a leading figure (Figure 2). To celebrate spatial planning at TU Delft 2008–2019 and at the same time to bid farewell to Vincent Nadin, the SPS section published a book on its achievements during the period 2008–2019 (Stead *et al.*, 2019). This brief paper is a summary of that text.

As a research leader and doctoral supervisor, Vincent has contributed to the increase of departmental success on PhD research, and to the further academicisation of urbanism education. He did so by encouraging staff to excel in research and publications. See for example the ICE – Urban Design and Planning articles by Vincent Nadin's PhD candidate Jorge Gil

(Gil and Duarte, 2013), and his colleagues of the Department of Urbanism Bekkering *et al.* (2018), Hooimeijer and Tummers (2017) and Nijhuis *et al.* (2017). Vincent also contributed substantially to creating a culture of collaboration among sections and between TU Delft staff and other universities, especially through research bids, and in particular universities in China and Taiwan, where he was often invited to teach. However it was with students that Vincent found one of his most captivated audiences, bringing to life ideas about different styles of planning and their associated tools in his interactive and dynamic classes.

Most specially, Vincent invited students to consider the many instances in which planning has failed, drawing students' and staff's attention to the limitations of planning and design. He did so with the utmost conviction that we are far better off with spatial planning than without it. He often pointed at the Netherlands as a success story in the history of human planning endeavours. When confronted with the too often repeated cliché that 'Dutch planning has failed', he would point to the closest window and exclaim in a very British voice: 'Look around you! We live in a garden!', making reference to the excellent organisation and design of Dutch cities.

Vincent's enthusiasm for spatial planning is contagious, and it touched the academic and professional lives of countless students, PhD candidates, researchers, policy makers and others. 'Vincent is there, backing initiatives, raising issues, and conveying messages to the higher echelons. This style of leadership seems to suit the Urbanism department...' (Andreas Faludi in

Spatial Planning

Is an action-oriented discipline influencing and steering the distribution of people and activities over space, at and across various spatial scales: local, regional, national, international. It informs and coordinates practices and policies affecting spatial organisation.

Spatial planning is essentially trans-disciplinary teamwork involving different professionals and actors in complex processes of socio-spatial development and transformation. The products and outcomes of planning usually are spatial plans, such as: visions, designs, strategies, policies and regulations.



Strategy

A (spatial) strategy in urbanism is the structured and effective manner in which an established (spatial) vision, ambition, aim or goal can be achieved; it refers to the 'how?' (planning tools, including policies and regulation), to the 'when?' (priorities, phasing), and to the 'with whom?' (stakeholders) of spatial development and transformation. Consequently, a strategic project is 'strategic' because it is part of a strategy, and thus contributes to and is directed towards achieving that spatial vision, ambition, aim or goal.

Figure 2. Vincent Nadin and the core of the TU Delft Spatial Planning & Strategy section

Stead *et al.*, 2019: 102). 'I could experience how inspiring it is to brainstorm with Vincent about a research problem, and how he manages (...) to motivate and empower those working with him...' (Stefanie Dühr in Stead *et al.*, 2019: 103).

5. Vincent Nadin and the international comparison of planning cultures

Vincent Nadin leaves a large legacy of insight and understanding of the variety, richness and limitations of planning cultures around Europe. This is manifested in both his extensive writings (see e.g. Dühr *et al.*, 2010) and his teaching (see e.g. Nadin, 2019). For Vincent, planning is ubiquitous, but extremely varied, because it is embedded in places with different landscapes, political systems, spatial/urban structures and so on. One of Vincent's best-known ideas is his typology of planning cultures in Europe. He distinguishes four 'ideal types' of spatial planning

- *Policy oriented* (land-use management): indicative plans with performance criteria and decision rules.
- *Strategy oriented* (comprehensive integrated): strategies to coordinate spatial impacts of public policy.
- *Economic investment oriented* (regional economic): incentive by investments in hard and soft infrastructures.
- *Zoning oriented* (urbanism): imperative legally binding zoning plans.

This and many other ideas have guided SPS in the last 11 years. Vincent's retirement leaves us with a rich legacy that

has influenced countless people and organisations. This legacy will stay with us for many years to come.

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