Introducing *Shifting Sense*

**Objective**

With *Shifting Sense, Looking Back to the Future in Spatial Planning*, the main aim of the Chair of Spatial Planning in the Faculty of Architecture of Delft University of Technology is to contribute to the discussion about content and procedures in this field of study. Although the starting point is the work of the Chair itself, the majority of the contributions comes from respected experts from other Chairs, from other universities and from practitioners in the field.

Secondly, this book will establish a starting point for the future of the Chair of Spatial Planning, one of the central Chairs of Urbanism. Paul Drewe has held this Chair for over thirty years and has therefore directed, over a long period, the extensive changes, visible in retrospect, in its content. His retirement is used here as an occasion for drawing up a balance – and making a broad profile – of what the essence of spatial planning is within Urbanism, and how it differs from the other central Chairs, the Chair of Urban Design and the Chair of Landscape Architecture.

The third objective is to offer to the new generation of planners and designers, and to our students, more and more of whom come from distant countries, a book worth reading.

**Title**

*Shifting Sense, Looking Back to the Future in Spatial Planning* is a daring title. It will come as no surprise to learn that it has been discussed for a long time. Literally dozens of titles were proposed and rejected, not least because of the varied and broad content of the book. *Shifting* and *Sense* are both concepts with many meanings. In combination, they form a hybrid. ‘Sense’ has to do with intelligence, perception, feelings, purpose, and discernment (with ‘nonsense’ as an antonym). ‘Shifting’ is related to changing, moving, and adapting (with ‘static’ and ‘rigid’ as antonyms). The title *Shifting Sense* indicates that it is the intention here for the chapters in this book to be seen as a bundling of initiatives; on the one hand, to describe and explain the rationality, meaning, emotion, direction of the change, moves, and adaptations that have been made so far, and, on the other, to indicate in which direction the discipline of Spatial Planning is expected to go.
The history of Spatial Planning research reveals a number of shifts in focus. What will remain in research and education is the attention that is given to the relation between societal and spatial aspects, the actual and potential role of urban planning and design, the interest in policies, actors and instruments, and, of course, methodological issues. The shifts relate to the interpretation and focus of the content. In the 1970s, the main attention was on urban population developments, housing conditions and urban economy. During the 80s, European cities and cross-national co-operation came more into focus, but also urban phenomena such as vulnerability and deprivation, unemployment and mobility. In the 90s, the new information technologies, the network city and the need for new urban concepts in relation to changing urban complexity became the fields of study. At the beginning of the 21st century, time–space relations, urban modelling and the links between top–down planning and bottom–up initiatives were added to the list of research topics. In our view, ‘shifting sense’ is a hallmark of the spatial planning undertaken within the context of universities; the shifts themselves are societally induced and anticipatory.

Themes

The book is comprised of four parts. These can be considered as four main themes, each of which has its own demonstrable history, a present-day meaning and an anticipated future relevance. The division into four parts does not imply that the themes are clearly demarked. A concept such as ‘network’, for instance, is dealt with in various chapters, albeit from different points of view. The overlaps cause the chapters to interlink with one another in all sorts of ways.

The theme of Part One is: ‘Societal changes and their effects on the use of space’. The societal questions in spatial planning and the aspects of design that are dealt with here are: designing and planning for the changing and reduced mobility of the elderly and for vulnerable groups in deprived urban areas; accommodating economic changes brought about by (top) location development; changing technology and its use; cross-national co-operation in logistics and in knowledge about integral forms of planning.
Part Two focuses on the opposite starting point, with the theme: ‘Spatial developments and their societal effects’. The discussion in this section is about urban and regional developments and how they affect societal life. A selection of experiences and theoretical and practical points of departure from various countries and cultures makes it clear that more precision is needed in the spatial scale of the subjects and questions that are dealt with, and with that a thorough knowledge of the spatial changes that are taking place, so that their effects can be fully understood and used as lessons to help find solutions for situations elsewhere.

Part Three is: ‘Networks’. For these, space is usually the point of departure. The historical perspective of networks has already been dealt with in Part Two. Here, in Part Three, attention is given to the various ways in which theories about spatial problems are formulated and applied. It will become clear that networks – ranging from technical, functional and users’ networks to natural networks and patterns – are understood as actual concepts and tools for urban planning and design. Linking public-space networks with the time-space problems of various groups of citizens, illustrates their importance for future spatial-planning problems.

Part Four is headed: ‘Strategies’. In this final section, the spotlight is on strategies and the role of the spatial planner. Here, particular attention is given to the process side of future assignments. The towns and regions, the areas where spatial planning is applied, call for effective strategies to meet the changing needs of both citizens and businesses. Apart from strategies for transforming urbanised areas sustainably, attention is also given to the adaptation and positioning of problems within an economic environment that is oriented more and more towards a European and global scale; directed more towards competition than complementarity.

**Contributors**

The contributors are together a rather diverse group: they are affiliated with different universities (Barcelona, Delft, Gent, Liverpool, Paris, San Antonio, Utrecht), active as (public and private) practitioners in their various fields, and are from different countries and cultures. The initiators of this project are
all members of the Chair of Spatial Planning. The remaining twenty or more contributors were invited to contribute to the book because of their relation with the Chair of Spatial Planning and their highly valued expertise, capacities, interests and challenging visions on various areas that have come under discussion by the Chair over the years.

This diversity of contributors and backgrounds has also had its influence on the language. Although English is the language of communication, the usage of words and the meanings given to them and the sentence construction may still vary. In editing the chapters, much attention has been given to preventing confusion of concepts and to increasing readability, while respecting the contributors’ writing styles. It goes without saying that, with such a variety of contributors, this in itself has been an extensive task. In order to increase the accessibility of this book a References Index has also been added.

Finally, making this book, with all its efforts, obstacles, strokes of luck and, not least, pleasure in realising the design, has been a complex, collective job. The Chair that initiated this project has felt greatly honoured by the contributors’ unconditional response in sending us their submissions.