Place Keeping in Aldtsjerk

ACT -- Assignment / Full Description

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What is Place Keeping?

The attractiveness of streets and squares has its effect on whether people love to come or stay in a certain place or area. It also has an economic impact. The more attractive a street, the higher the property prices, and the better also the retail results (as people spend more time in a high quality street.

> " Better streets result in higher market prices. The research shows that in London an achievable improvement in street design quality can add an average of 5.2 per cent to residential prices on the case study high streets and an average of 4.9 per cent to retail rents. "
>
> *Paved with Gold*
> *C. Buchanan, Cabe Research*

Place Making

But how to design successful places? You will need a good urban planner and architect in the first place. However, in the '80s people began to understand that involving local residents and shop keepers into the designing process will improve the design results. The idea was that the local street users have profound knowledge about the place, its history and its functions. Their demands and their input therefore should be guiding in designing the place. This approach is known as *Place Making*.
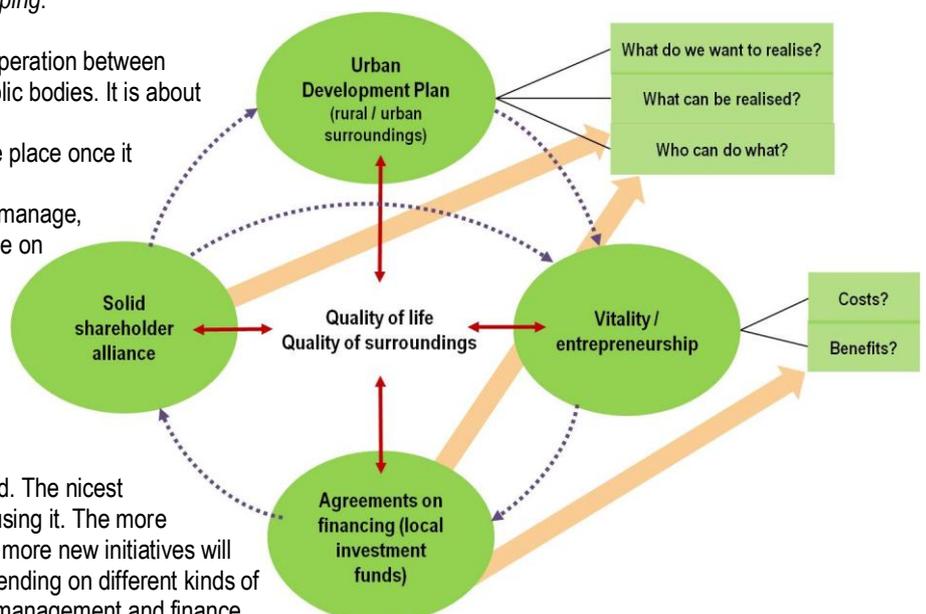
> " The success of a particular public space is not solely in the hands of the architect, urban designer or town planner; it relies also on people adopting, using and managing the space – people make places, more than places make people. "
>
> *The Social Value of Public Spaces*
> *K. Worpole & K. Knox*

One step further: *Place Keeping*

Further research on urban quality revealed that it needs more than just engaging residents in designing. Once the new design is realised the success of a street or a place depends on whether people really use, adopt and manage their place. If people feel responsible for the whole process of designing, realising, managing and even further developing and improving their public space, this is called *Place Keeping*.

The central issue in *Place Keeping* is co operation between citizens, experts, authorities and other public bodies. It is about answering four questions:

1. Adopting space – how will we use the place once it ready?
2. Keeping up the quality – how will we manage, maintain and further develop our place on the long term
3. Financing – how can we together take achieve sufficient resources
4. Cooperating – how can we build long term alliances that share responsibility?

These four aspects are mutually connected. The nicest place doesn't work if there are no people using it. The more vitality and entrepreneurship develops the more new initiatives will be attracted, including new business. Depending on different kinds of users and benefits, the more chances for management and finance

agreements and the more shareholders can be attracted to join the local alliance. Shareholders have to bear in mind all these aspects from the very beginning of planning and designing their place.

Place Keeping = top—down + bottom—up

For a long time our societies were ruled top-down. Top-down management is where the decision making occurs at the higher levels of an organisation. The effects of the decisions are then (hopefully) implemented down the organisation corporate ladder. From the 70's on, the concept of bottom-up gained ground. In local communities, people discovered and started using cooperation tools to deal with common issues or problems.

Both top-down and bottom-up have their positive and negative effects:

|	Top-down	Bottom-up
Positive effects	- Efficiency - Overview - Responsibilities are clearly distinguished from each other	- Team-work - Flexibility - High level of motivation - People are more likely to take a personal responsibility in decisions they are part of
Negative effects	- Poor connection with what is going on at the bottom, amongst the people - Resistance against what is perceived to be imposed 'from above'	- Lack of long-term vision - Poor connection with what is feasible - Resistance against what is perceived to be elaborated 'from beneath

If spatial and social development is exclusively resulting from bottom-up processes, the realisation of plans may be endangered because they are not sufficiently supported by current policy and often financial resources for realisation are missing. Plans in that case will end up in someone's desk, causing frustrations in the local community members, who feel not taken seriously. On the other hand, if spatial and social development is exclusively resulting from top-gown decisions, in many cases they will lack public support and therefore people will try and prevent plan from being realized.

In *Place Keeping*, both approaches are combined in a cooperate approach, taking the best of both worlds. Who in such approach can contribute what?
- Local authority: support the local process through policy and financing
- Local community: invest time and (professional knowledge into the process
- Local entrepreneurs: discover business (improvement) opportunities

From stakeholder to shareholder

You will have noticed that we are speaking here about 'shareholders' instead of 'stakeholders'. What's the difference? Stakeholders have an interest and want to make good on that interest. Shareholders do too, but they also take personal responsibility for making good not only on their own stake, but those of their fellow shareholders. Give something to get something is their motto. Co-responsibility is the keyword. This means: sharing knowledge, sharing efforts, sharing costs and sharing benefits.
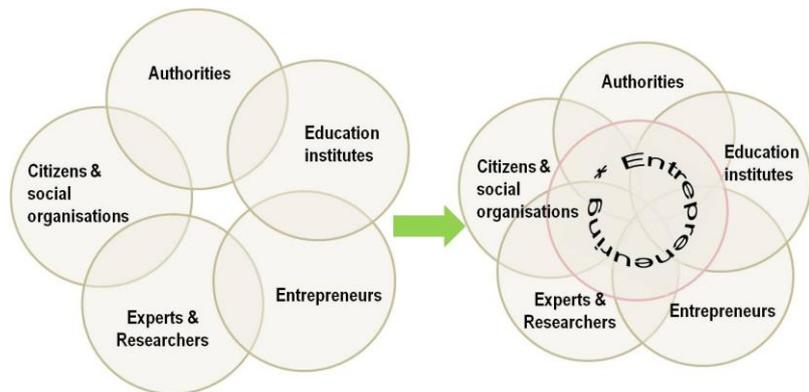
From stakeholder to shareholder: the traditional relationship between cooperation partners changes into shareholders in *Place Keeping* – a shared pursuit towards 'entrepreneuring'.

Entrepreneurship

Recent policy developments in the Netherlands have placed a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship. In *Place Keeping*, this is an important issue as well. But entrepreneurship is more than having your own business and the knowledge and skill needed to make it a success. Entrepreneurship is also an attitude that lets you see opportunities and seize them to make things better. Such attitude might be referred to as 'entrepreneuring'. *Place Keeping* demands that entrepreneuring not just from shop keepers and other entrepreneurs, but from all shareholders.

Let's look at what entrepreneuring really means for the shareholders involved:
- For the authorities – Learn to see things from a different perspective. How can you, as a political and official organisation, become a cooperative partner? How do you discover the freedom that legislation and regulations offer you to act as a facilitator rather than an enforcer? And how can you delegate responsibilities to your social partners (the other shareholders)? (Note: this is not the same thing as simply handing off tasks to others)

- For the citizens and social organisations – Learn to understand your own role. Don't call for more responsibility, and then look to the government as soon as something needs to be done. In a representative democracy, the government is all the citizens together. So, learn to be a part of the government. Be responsible for the quality of your living environment, and do this together with others.
- For the entrepreneurs – Think further than your own shop-front. The fact that you're an *entrepreneur* doesn't in itself make you *entrepreneuring*. Shops and companies play an important role when it comes to a vibrant living environment. What image does your business have in the public space? And can you improve it? Can you also get profit for your business out of it in the process?
- For the education institutes – Remember, learning is not just for students, but for teachers as well. Training colleges, schools of applied sciences and universities are taking on an increasingly important role for all professionals in the government, industry and social organisations (Lifelong Learning being just one example). And the same holds true within *Place Keeping*: teachers and instructors not only pass on knowledge but get new knowledge themselves. Here, entrepreneuring means recognising opportunities for new knowledge. This is an important HRM tool.
- For the researchers and experts – Understand what the real questions in society are. Often, these are different questions than the ones initially asked. Remember that the public, government bodies and entrepreneurs cannot ask for things that they have no inkling of. Asking the right questions is more important than answering the wrong ones. For researchers, entrepreneuring means teaching others to ask for things they do not yet know about.

Place Keeping – a tentative definition

Having in mind what is said above, we can try and tentatively define what *Place Keeping* is:

Place Keeping is the process of developing and long term managing of a village or neighbourhood. In that process as many as possible spatial qualities of the place, positive effects on climate and environment, social wellbeing and economic welfare in a shared effort of all shareholders involved (authorities, citizens, entrepreneurs, public organisations) should be discovered, applied and strengthened. *Place Keeping* results in long lasting alliances between the shareholders and contributes to permanent vitality and quality of life in a village or a neighbourhood.

What is the Aldtsjerk research assignment about?

The situation

In the Frisian village of Aldtsjerk (municipality of Tytsjerksteradiel) the local village association has taken the initiative for an interesting development process.
1. As a first step they worked out a vision for their village, pointing out the strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats. The main threat was young people leaving the village – not because they didn't want to stay there, but simply because there was a lack of affordable dwellings. In the end, this would result in an ageing community. Thus, the main opportunity was found in developing some 20 dwellings for younger people.
2. As a next step the community made a development plan, indicating how to connect opportunities for new housing estate, landscape development, tourism and recreation and other facilities in the village.
3. The following step was from planning to realise. The village association is aiming to manage the building process themselves. They are planning to buy 18 hectares of ground from one of their fellow residents against a low price. Young people who are willing to buy a house can buy a lot for far less than the market value and have their houses built. At the same time they will have a lake excavated to attract tourism and to generate income by selling the sand.

The question

The local authority is supporting the process by collecting the necessary information and permits. The process is conducted in consultation with the residents. Thus, the plans are broad-based in the village and the revenues will benefit all the residents to be invested in activities the residents choose themselves.

This is a learning by doing process. Which means that the citizens repeatedly have used the experience they had in their previous phase for the next phase. What happens here might be a good example for *Place Keeping*. The experience of the citizens of Aldtsjerk therefore is no doubt very valuable for other processes. The knowledge however only exists in the citizens' heads and is until today not in detail described and documented.

The research job

The assignment for the students is as follows:
1. Give a detailed description of the process in Aldtsjerk from 2006 until now:
   - **What** exactly did the citizens undertake?
   - **Why** did they do this, what were their reasons?
   - **Who** were involved and who was doing what?
   - **What** are the next steps?
2. Difficulties and pitfalls: besides the steps they took and are going to take, it is interesting to know what difficulties the citizens have encountered. Meaning we want to know more than for example "they encountered an official

governmental issue". We would like the students to conduct in depth interviews with a number of key figures to get hold of:

- What issues did the citizens encounter exactly?
- Why was this an issue?
- How did they handle this issue? Did they find a solution?
- If so, what? If not, why not?
- What should be changed to improve the cooperation?

Summarizing, we ask the students to:
- Describe and analyse the Aldtsjerk process
- Advise on the next steps from multiple disciplines
- Produce a summary of the most important factors for success as well as the most important issues
- Extract a method to be transferred and applied elsewhere and / or create an advice of the usability of the methodology, in other words: what are the lessons learned for other initiatives?

Literature (only in Dutch)

- Dorpsvisie Aldstjerk:
  www.t-diel.nl/document.php?m=17&fileid=5751&f=1413fd21b034d357823ae05d3b0b8494&attachment=&c=0
- Article about the Aldtsjerk processin the journal Binnenlands Bestuur:
  www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/ruimte-en-milieu/nieuws/nieuws/friese-dorpsvereniging-bouwt-zelf-voor-jongeren.4279746.lynkx
- Informaton on Place Keeping
  www.sharefoundation.eu/nl/activiteiten/place-keeping