

# **Using strategic planning and Future Forecasting Methods for the Evaluation of the Heritage of the Recent-Past**

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## **1. Abstract**

This article focuses on the possibility to utilize strategic planning and future forecasting methods, which are usually connected with future studies, in order to enrich the identification and the evaluation process of the heritage of the recent past. For this purpose different aspects of the identification and evaluation of the recent past are analyzed and in addition, strategic planning and future forecasting methods are introduced. On this basis the proposed approach is developed. This act is an initial step towards using the future, as a generator for understanding the recent past heritage, in addition to other methods. It is based on an integrative point of view which brings together knowledge from different fields like: heritage architecture, planning theories and methodologies, strategic planning, future studies and others.

## **2. Introduction**

The importance of the area of the recent past heritage or the post-world war II heritage, in the academic field, in the practical world or in the public life, has been growing with time. In spite of this, the process of identification, advocacy and protection of the recent past heritage is considered to be a complex and non-conventional process. One of the problematic issues is that in many cases there is a minimum time period for the inclusion of a project as one having heritage significance. During this period many projects can remain unprotected and exposed to potential destruction. In the United States for example, a general accepted threshold for identification and determination of heritage significance was set at fifty years (Icomos 2007). One of the most influential stages in this process of identification, advocacy, and protection is the first stage – the identification stage, which includes prioritization of the resources of concern. It deals with identifying urban qualities, specific buildings or other heritage elements. This stage is strongly connected to evaluation, which is the determination the value of the heritage. But this process of identification and evaluation of the recent past heritage encounters many difficulties especially because of the time dimension, as well as because of other aspects, which are influenced by this dimension.

## **3. Identification and evaluation of the heritage of the recent past**

Usually, in the identification and evaluation of heritage projects under normal circumstances, there is relatively a long time span. This span is the time gap between the appointed time in the present, and the "birth time" of the heritage project, generally located far away in the past. The time span is the age of the heritage project. As a result of this long time, there is relatively a wide perspective in the evaluation process, which helps to define values and criteria for the identification and evaluation of the heritage projects. These values are an outcome of many aspects, like the time spirit during the evaluation period, the cultural and political circumstances of the society etc., and they are normally in a process of steady conversion and evolution over time. These values constitute an infrastructure for the criteria of identification which can be:

architectural interest (design interest), historical interest (nation's history), technological interest and others.

The conditions in the process of the identification and evaluation of the recent past are considered to be un- normal because here, the time span for evolution (the building age) is too short and thus the scope in the evolution process is relatively narrow as will be explained later.

One of the steps which may enrich the identification and evaluation of the recent past in un-normal conditions, is to add strategic planning and future forecasting methods to the existing tools in this process.

#### **4. Strategic Planning and future forecasting**

##### **4.1 Strategic planning**

Strategic planning has many definitions and conceptual models. In general, it deals with the creation and achievement of a long range vision for an organization (or any other entity) in unstable and turbulent environments, when there is relatively limited information. The origin of the strategic planning philosophy is rooted in the warfare world. From one hand, in this world the environment is very unstable and causes difficulties to predict the horizon, but from the other hand there is a necessity to have a vision of the future in order to be prepared and to act in the present. These characteristics are in many cases in contradiction, but it is possible to say that this tension is between the main triggers of the strategic thinking.

With the years, strategic planning has been adopted in the business field as well. This happened mainly when the business world became more and more unstable, dynamic and with turbulent environments. Later, during the eighties, strategic planning in the public sector and for non profit organizations (see for example Bryson, 1988, 2004) was also found adequate. The globalization, rhythm of life and other circumstances accelerated the need and opened the way for the absorption of this kind of thinking in the public sector.

Because of these characters of the environments, the strategic planning is not a "one time action" but an ongoing and continuous process. The environments are scanned and tested all the time, while forecasting the options of the future. As a result, one of the most important elements in strategic planning is the future forecasting process.

##### **4.2 Future forecasting**

The future forecasting process is considered as an integral part of strategic planning. In spite of this, the field of future forecasting or future studies is recognized also as an independent field of research and as an academic activity. In this field, which feeds the strategic planning theories and enriches them, it is possible to find many specific institutions and activities (for example: Rand,2007, IIF,2007, IJF,2007, and others) and experts who deal with mega trends in the future in general or in relation to specific aspect (for example: Naisbitt and Aburdene,1990, Hall and Mitchell, 2007).

#### **5. Strategic planning and future forecasting methods for the evaluation of the recent past heritage**

In the following paragraphs a conceptual approach about using strategic planning and forecasting methods to enrich the process of identification and evaluation of the recent past heritage will be introduced. This approach will relate in general to a case where the target is to identify and evaluate the recent past heritage. It is important to stress that the ideal situation is that in which the process of identification and evaluation of the recent past heritage is as an integral part of an

overall strategic planning, which deals with all aspects of life in the city or in any other entity in which the heritage projects are located. In this case the approach mentioned below will be applied as part of an overall strategic-planning.

### 5.1 The evaluation of the recent past heritage

The proposed approach (see Fig.1) is based on the assumption that the conditions of evaluation of the post-world war II heritage are considered to be un- normal because here, the time span for evolution (the heritage project age) is too short. The time span in this case is TA (actual time span) (see Fig.1), which is the gap between the standing point in the present P (present point) and the era of the heritage project RP (Recent past point). Thus, in this case the scope, which is the width of view during the evaluation process, is relatively narrow SN (scope-narrow). It can be said that in this case "the painter is too close to the picture" and thus there is no cognitive possibility to get a large point of view. This short "distance from the picture" has a strong connection to the time perspective, which is considered to be one of the most important elements in human perception – individual or community. When the time perspective is too short the scope is not wide enough and as an outcome the information is limited. Working under information shortage influences the identification and evaluation process. As a result, values, which act as essential infrastructure for identification and evaluation, are not clear enough and there can be a relatively high level of "turbidity". In this situation the use of criteria for identification and evaluation of the heritage projects, becomes much more problematic.

With the help of future forecasting and strategic planning methods it is possible to change the position of view in space. It is possible to make a forecasting process and to "jump" to the future – F (future point) in order to stand at a relatively far point of view from the recent past – RP (recent past point). The forecasting time in this case is TF.

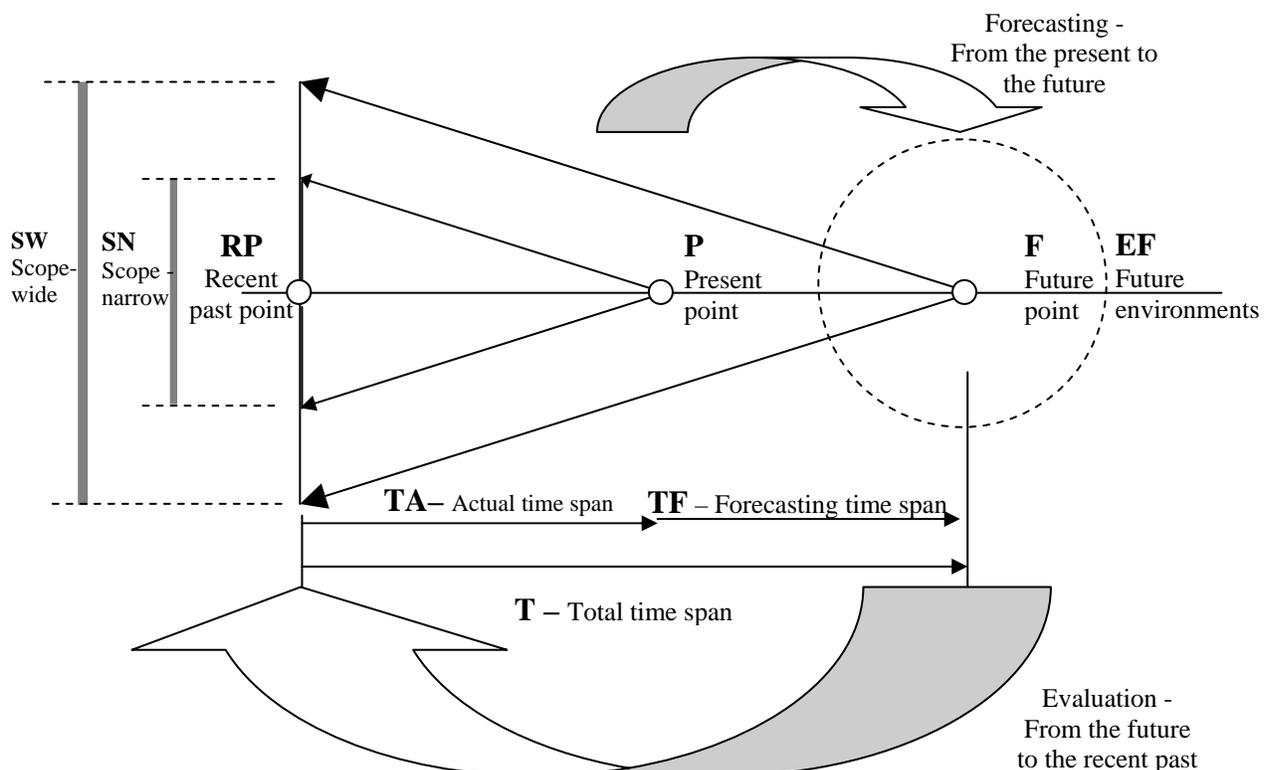


Fig. 1: Evaluation process using strategic planning and future forecasting methods

This can allow us to "stretch" the time-span and to have total time span - T, which is the sum of the actual time span TA (the real age of the heritage project) and the forecasting time span TF ( $T=TA+TF$ ). This way we can have more time depth or time perspective. As an outcome, a wider scope – SW (scope-wide) on the recent past (which we do not have now in the present at point P) is achieved.

In relation to the point in the future – F - it is possible to draw, even with rough lines, the environments in the future EF – the cultural, social, economical, environmental, and other environments EF. From this point of view of the future, it is possible to assume the relevant values and criteria and to use them in order to examine the heritage of the recent past. After this it is possible to go back to the present and to define the relevant actions that we have to undertake in relation to the heritage of the recent past.

It is important to stress that this process can create another source for contingent and initial assumptions in addition to other sources and tools for assessment and evaluation of the recent past heritage. This approach is more suitable for identifying and evaluating the future potential of the recent past (in parallel to other methods of assessments) rather than for fixing a final and tough identification and evaluation. Because of this flexibility and contingency aspect is important in this case.

## **5.2 The time span in the forecasting process**

Fixing the time span in the forecasting process for the identification and evolution of the recent past heritage is an essential and initial step. In general, the time span in strategic planning and in the field of future studies can vary as an outcome of the area of interest and other specific circumstances like our possibility to forecast, the sort of required data and others. In urban and regional planning for example, the forecasting time can be between 30 to 50 years. The 2020 national spatial plan for Israel was for nearly 30 years ahead (Mazor et al.1997) and the national spatial plan of Netherlands was even with longer horizon. In the field of aviation technologies the time span can also be relatively long. In the business field there are cases where the time span can be shorter. General forecasting of mega trends at the global level of national and international systems can be also for several decades (for example: in the book: "The World in 2020" (Mcrae, 1995) the time horizon is 25 years). Based on the assumption that the built heritage has strong connections to the city, region, nation and their development it can be assumed that the time span can be between 30 to 50 years. In spite of this, in each case there is a necessity to make a diagnosis of the specific circumstances and according to this to decide about the range of forecasting.

## **5.3 Learning the future environments of the heritage projects**

Learning the environments of heritage projects includes learning the external and the internal environments of the city, state or any other entity in which the heritage is located. The external environments are all the surrounding environments of the organization – cultural, social, political, economical, environmental, and other environments which can influence the organization. The internal environments include all the facets within the organization. It is important to note that prior to this stage there is usually a necessity to create a legitimization act, especially in the internal environments but also in the external, to begin the process and to clarify the mission and the rational of the organization. Participation in this case is an especially important element.

Learning the external and the internal environments of the built heritage relates to the past, present and future of the built heritage. It includes data collection and analysis of the information of the built heritage in order to understand current behavior and future trends. But, while dealing with past and present data of the built heritage is relatively a simple task, understanding the

environments in the future is much more complicated and here it is more a question of probabilities, possibilities and future forecasting. Because of this fact in many cases future forecasting process points out few relevant versions of futures of the environments.

There are many ways to create future forecasting in order to understand the environments in the future and in any case there should be a selection of the proper method for understanding the future. There are also different approaches to classify the different methods and the border between them is not always clear and sharp. In spite of this it is possible to bring the following classification as one of the possibilities in strategic planning and future studies:

### **5.3.1 Future forecasting methods based on the past as a generator**

These methods are strongly based on past and present findings – here the future forecasting is constructed outside and in continuity to a set of known information and data which were collected in the past until the present. In this case it is possible to call these methods "from the past to the future". Between the most popular methods is the extrapolation method – to predict by projecting past experience or known data (Merriam-Webster,2007). The assumption is that there is continuity and logical-rational connection between the behavior of the system in the past and its behavior in the future. In most of the cases the use of extrapolation is connected to numerical and quantitative data, but it is possible to use also qualitative data. The main benefit of these methods is that they are strongly based on solid data and information about the behavior of the system. But this can be its Achilles point because there are cases in which the future does not behave according to the past codes. For such cases there are other methods which are introduced in the next paragraphs.

### **5.3.2 Future forecasting methods based on the imaginative future as a generator**

In this case it is not necessary to have total continuity between the events in the past, when dealing with the future. In contradiction to extrapolation, here there is a full freedom to use imagination, creative thinking and even non systematic thinking between past and future. The forecasting methods in this category, that are also being used in strategic planning and future studies, includes simulation games, scenario methods, brain storming. In many cases the forecasting process in these methods is not an outcome of one person but a group of people or experts. The interactions and the relations in such a group can act as a creative-associative thinking generator. The Delphi method, which is based on a group activity, can be a good example for the benefits of group thinking. The scenario method may contain forecasting aspects, which are not easy to concretize, like subjective meaning of facts, norms, attitudes and others. It is important to note that in spite of the fact that total continuity between past and future is not an obligation condition in these methods they still can be based also on known facts about the past and the future such as cultural, social, environmental, economical, and others.

## **5.4 Strategic issues, vision and values in relation to the future of the recent past heritage**

After learning the environments of the heritage of the recent past, focusing mainly on the future environments, it is possible to identify the strategic issues which can be relevant to this heritage. In this case the key strategic issues are all the main elements of the environments which can influence us as a society and to shape our attitude to different fields including the field of the built heritage. These issues can be for example: development of the built area and possible destruction of old fabrics, real estate demand, social transformation that has a high probability to appear in the future, environmental aspects that can emerge and others. Knowing these potential issues can allow us to clarify our attitude towards them and to have a vision in relation to the social and physical space in which the built heritage is located in. Because of uncertainty and

dealing with probabilities there might be few possible visions, depending on the different strategic issues.

The possible vision or visions of the society can supply assumptions about the potential values of the society in the future. These values, which can be in relation to the built heritage aspects and to social, environmental, economical, historical, and other aspects of life, are in many cases an outcome of "the spirit of the time". They are considered to be between the most important elements in the identification and evaluation process and they influence our attitude towards many facets including the built heritage facet.

### **5.5 Looking from the future to the recent past in the evaluation process**

After having potential options about the future like: the external and internal environments, the key strategic issues, the vision or visions, and as an outcome the possible values in relation to the built heritage and to other aspects of the society, it is conceivable to stand in the future and to look back from this "far" point to the recent past. From this outstanding point of view we can evaluate the heritage of the recent past from a different perspective, in addition to others, and in that way to enrich our evaluation. In this new situation the total time span is now much longer (in spite of the fact that is not a real time span) and it is possible to have more assumptions in addition to the assumptions that we have when we are standing in the present and looking back to the recent past. It is important to stress that this futuristic point of view is only a complimentary point of view to this in the present.

The evaluation process of the recent past heritage can be done systematically according to specific criteria: aesthetical, historical and others. In parallel, it is also possible to use a holistic approach and to evaluate the heritage projects with the help of tacit and holistic knowledge. This can be done with experts and other people who can participate in the evaluation process as a group or as individuals, depending on the circumstances. At the end of this process a contingent evaluation strategy or strategies can be identified with priorities. Because of the uncertainty the contingency or the conditioned dimension has to be stressed.

### **5.6 The contingency dimension in the evaluation process of the recent past**

All the evaluation process of the recent past heritage with strategic planning and future forecasting methods is relatively sensitive to uncertainty and unexpected events. The assumptions and all the assumed trends about the future are mainly a question of probabilities and potential possibilities. For this reason, in general, it is important not to have a single option but an "envelope" of options of the environments, visions and values in contingency with different circumstances or scenarios. As an outcome it is preferable to have several strategies in relation to the heritage of the recent past in contingent with the different possibilities. This way the identified and evaluated heritage projects of the recent past will be able to change their status and position over time.

### **5.7 Control and follow up in the process of evaluation of the recent past heritage**

The process of identification and evaluation is only a first step in creating strategic and principal assumptions about the recent past heritage. The identification and evaluation are temporal and thus they have to be as flexible as possible because of uncertainty and new unexpected events in the future. According to this, the identified projects have to be checked in a cyclic and ongoing process as an outcome of constantly scanning the environments, gathering new information and making analysis. All the evaluations made in the past have to be tested in the light of the new information and analysis. Thus with the time the environments, visions, values and attitudes towards the recent past heritage might be changed. As a result it is possible that there will be a

necessity to update the identified projects from the recent past. This element of follow up and control with feedbacks and loops is one of the key elements of the whole identification and evaluation process.

## **6. Summary and future directions**

The possibility to utilize strategic planning and future forecasting methods, which usually are connected with future studies, in order to enrich the identification and evaluation of the recent past heritage, is only a first act towards using the future as a generator to understand our recent past. Because of this that issue has to be more developed, investigated and tested in the future. It is preferable that the whole concept of using future studies for the heritage of the recent past will be developed as part of an overall and comprehensive strategic planning. This way the heritage of the recent past can be evaluated in a wide context and as part of large scale process. In any case, it is important to stress that the suggested method has limitations, weaknesses and advantages as other methods. For this reason it is important to use the suggested method, after its final development, in addition to other methods and to create a diversity of point of views in relation to the recent past heritage.

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