

URBANISTICA

Association for good urban development

1

Growth and urbanisation are constants. The resulting urban sprawl, housing shortages and rising real-estate prices are primarily a consequence of failed land-use planning.

Switzerland is still urbanising – whether we like it or not. It must therefore be assumed that significant population growth will continue. Even if immigration declines in the future, the pressure on economic centres will rise. Those are the places where people find work and education. That is where attractive services, culture and mobility are offered.

As land-use planning has not been creating sufficient space in urban centres, demand is not being met, prices in the cities are exploding and, from the agglomerations, mobility is rising.

2

The agglomeration represents the major challenge in land-use planning. It can only be met effectively by means of urban planning and development.

The advent of personal mobility caused urban planning to be forgotten. Priority was given to transport planning, to the separation of uses by means of zoning, and to building regulations that focused on the individual parcel instead of on overall structures or public spaces. This has resulted in agglomerations along landscape-defining transport infrastructures, strings of autistic stand-alone buildings and monofunctional zones.

Urban planning forces differentiation between city and landscape, in the interests of nature and landscape conservation. Beyond that, it also provides orientation for the local planning of rural communes.

3

Good urban development leads to less traffic, greater land-use efficiency, attractive public spaces, an improved urban climate and social mixing.

Inward settlement development, as per the Spatial Planning Act, can only take place in a high-quality and sustainable manner if relevant densification occurs in places that are already well developed. Only with high utilisation density can urban structures be created in line with the concept of the 15-minute city, where the population's essential needs are met with low mobility levels. Alongside the issue of density, good urban planning pays particular attention to the programming and design of public spaces, streets, squares, parks etc.

4

Urban planning is one of the public sector's main tasks.

Today, communes and cantons largely refuse to engage in local or urban planning. Mostly, it is private-sector developers who strive for densification via special-use planning and create isolated urban elements within parcel boundaries by means of quality-assuring procedures. Due to increasing political and legal risks, such willingness is decreasing.

Overarching urban planning beyond parcel and administrative boundaries hardly ever takes place. Cantons, cities, towns and communes must meet their responsibility and engage in urban planning.

5

We are once again in need of qualified urban developers, town planners and city architects. Not only is participation required, but above all, leadership.

Emil Klöti, Zurich city councillor, and Hermann Herter, who participated in the 1914 Greater Zurich competition and later became city architect, are examples of personalities who had a decisive influence on Zurich's urban development. Successful politicians, cantonal planners and urban planners like those two are not only willing and able to initiate and implement long-term strategic planning that extends beyond legislative periods, but they also encourage the necessary democratic dialogue and commit to such solutions – personally and actively. They find an even balance between participation and leadership.

6

When it comes to functional spaces, competition procedures with proven planning teams bring the best solutions and stimuli for urban planning and development.

Competition procedures with interdisciplinary teams boost knowledge and competence in settlement, local and urban planning – among planners and authorities alike. Moreover, they engender understanding and insight among the population and the various stakeholders. They push the urgently needed discourse on the manner of inward settlement development, especially regarding the formulation and juxtaposition of different requirements and interests.

7

Planning instruments and processes must be adapted to meet the needs of sustainable, quality-assuring local and urban planning. They must enable a timely and comprehensive weighing of interests that provides legal security.

Urban-development competition procedures and master plans enable dialogue on a broad basis and encourage the weighing of different interests in political discourse. They lay the foundation for downstream planning instruments that are binding for authorities and property owners, such as sectoral plans and sub-plans, building regulations and zoning with typologies that correspond to current and future realities. Special-use planning becomes the exception. Ordinary building-permit procedures are to be reduced to questions of architecture, use and development. Subordinate issues, e.g. those regarding health or of relevance to building inspectors, are to be assessed when commencement of construction work is being authorised.

8

For the required financing of urban planning, appropriate use can be made of existing taxes, levies and funding programmes.

Today, planning-related profits are already partly siphoned off via property gains taxes, business taxes and value-added levies. These must also be earmarked for planning services, especially urban-development competition procedures and master plans. Funding programmes, such as the agglomeration programmes, should first be used for settlement planning and urban planning, and only subsequently for transport planning and infrastructure projects. Research and teaching must focus more on the topics of urban planning and development, and also be supported – e.g. via National Research Programmes (NRP).