VE IN COMBINATION WITH MEDIATION AS SUPER TOOL FOR MULTIPARTY PLAN MAKING

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Biography

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Dorine Cleton is a strategic advisor, senior lawyer for spatial planning and environment, mediator and Value Engineer, as well as director-owner of the firm Cleton & Com in Rotterdam. She advises on strategic level and searches for creative solutions for various parties in the field of city and area development, spatial planning and environment and leads processes of citizen involvement concerning area transformation. In this work she uses mediation and Value Engineering. She has held positions as a lawyer and senior advisor with several companies in the past.

Abstract

Multiparty plan making for spatial and town plans is hot in the Netherlands. But how do you do it?
Two year ago in my former presentation I explained how we used VE In combination with mediation to improve an environmental impact study for a metropolitan redevelopment project in the heart of Rotterdam. Last years we went beyond that and used VE/Mediation to devise the outlines and the juridical conditions for a spatial plan for the transformation of the site of a concrete factory (10 acres) into a housing and recreational area, starting from the bottom.
VE/Mediation did the job where other methods failed. This paper curtains a review of our approach.

A New function for the Concrete Factory in Arkel

On the western bank of the Merwede Canal, in the Dutch village of Arkel, lay 25 acres (US) of land. Till 7 years ago this site was the venue of a concrete factory that had been one of the major employers in the area for more than a century. Unfortunately during the recent economic crisis the factory had to be closed down. Every attempt to find new opportunities for the site have failed. Development companies showed no interest to buy the land and the town council was not willing to support a plan to change it into a housing and recreation area. The town council had no direct desire to add such an amount of housing to the village and the Regional authority as well as the Province of South Holland ruled against such plans.

Fig. 1 Aerial view of the project location, with the site of the concrete factory outlined in red.

On behalf of the owner a process was suggested to come up with a proactive dynamic spatial plan:

- proactive: through the use of the PPBS-method (Public Private Neighborhood Partnership), a combination of VE and mediation
- dynamic: the plan offers room for adaptation to developments.

The town council responded positively! They welcomed a process with citizen involvement and embraced the idea of trying something new, something that did not beforehand require their approval of a new function for the area.

VE in the PPBS-approach

Cleton & Com make a clear distinction between VE and PPBS. Both are interactive methods, but the aims and the targeted elements differ. The goal of VE is to improve value and the method focuses on products and services.

The goal of PPBS (based on mediation) is to simplify the process and to speed up the execution of a project by creating support among residents and improving understanding between participants. The other objective is to improve the outcome of the project by creating a plan in a joined cooperation of all stakeholders. PPBS offers the possibility to add new concepts to a project and is targeted at the project and its stakeholders. PPBS facilitates negotiation and prevents the origination of conflicts.

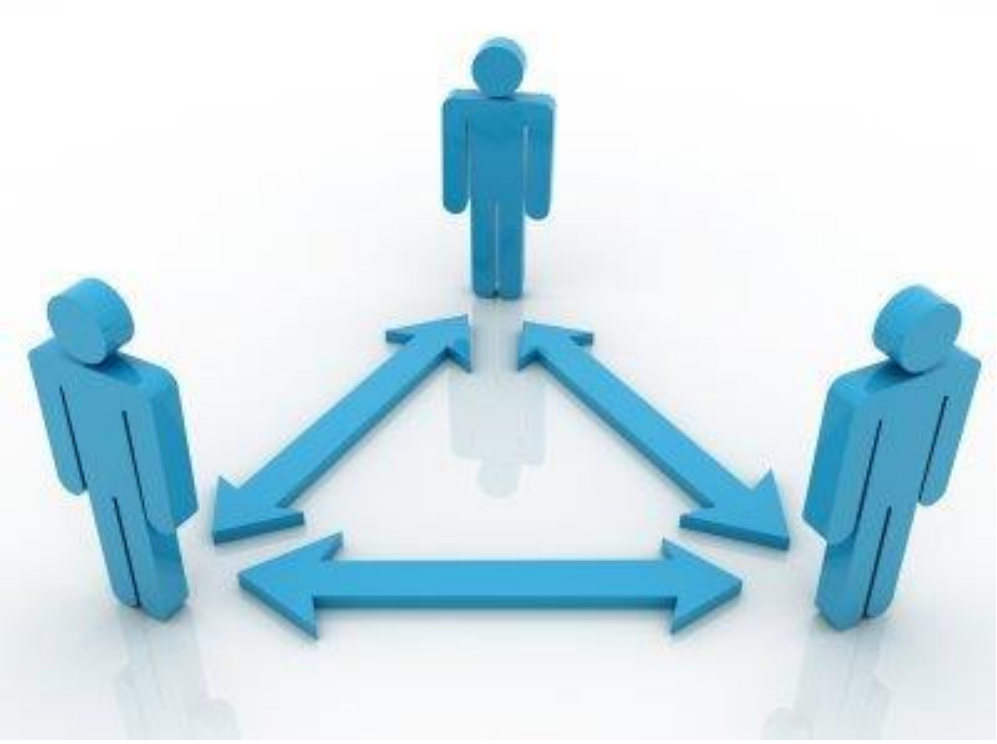

Fig. 2 PPBS requires respect for the views and needs of every participant

VE and PPBS are independent methods that can be applied separately or in conjunction with one another. When both are applied there is a strong symbiosis and it is difficult to distinguish between their separate contributions. Since the main objective of the assignment was to involve the stakeholders and to grow support among them, the emphasis lies on PPBS. Yet VE took up most of the time and its contribution was paramount. Both methods are aimed at exploring all of the available knowledge to find the best ‘solution’. And the two methods work flawlessly together.

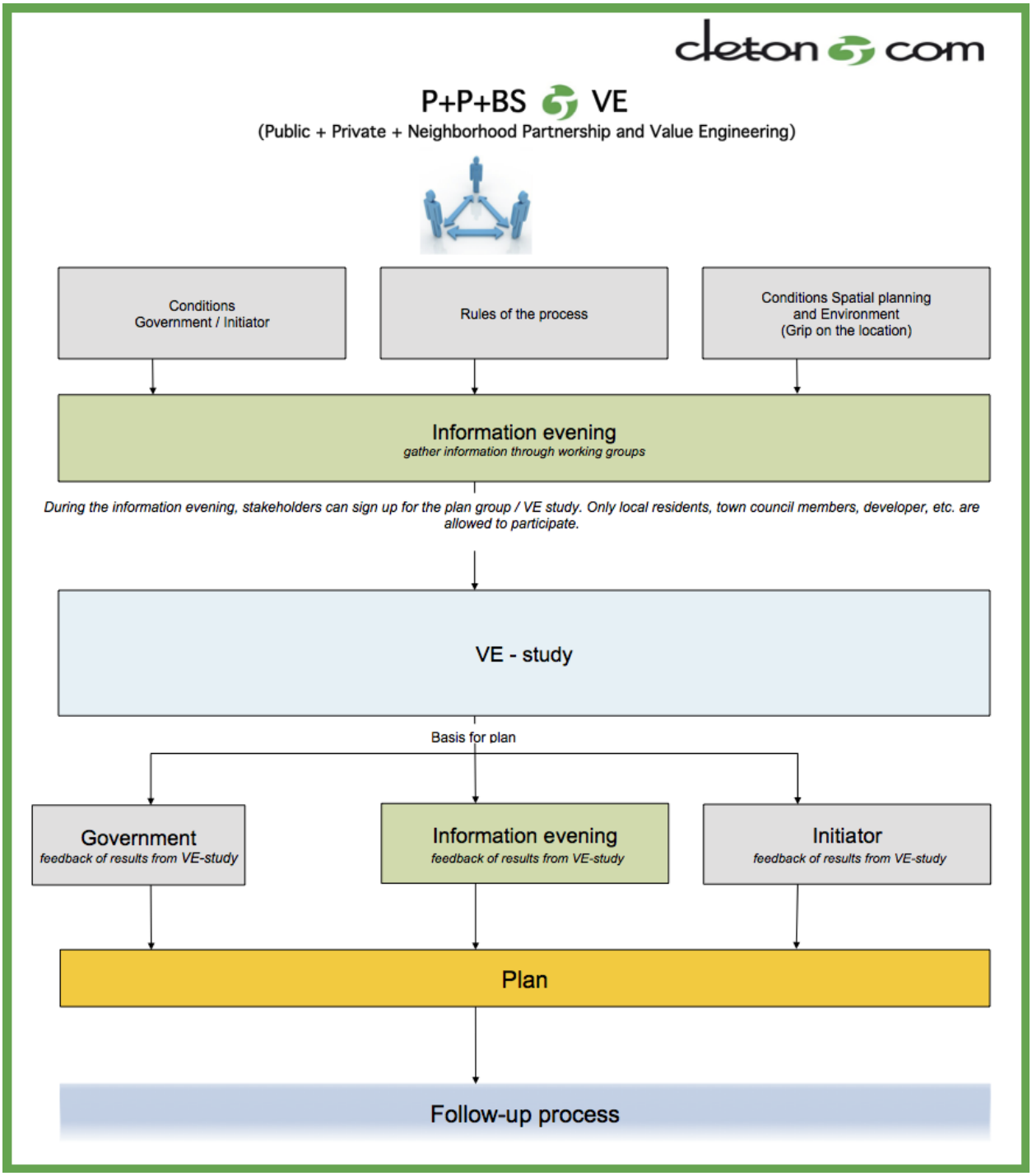

Fig. 3 Steps in a combined process of PPBS and VE

There is another reason VE works so well in area development and transformation.
One of the major problems we face with citizen involvement processes is insufficient justification of the choices. The participants feel strongly about their surroundings and they bring in a plethora of suggestions. But only a few of these suggestions will be discussed in the process and the participants would like to see a justification of this selection: they want to know why their contribution is left out. Mediation alone does not provide the instruments to deal with this issue in these large-scale citizens

involvement processes. But VE does!
Using the job plan of VE within the mediation-oriented process, offers just the tool that is needed to address all ideas as well as the do's and don'ts. Not only does the use of VE irrefutably show that every suggestion finds its place in the process (in the FAST diagram), it also demonstrates why some ideas are left behind.

Using the job plan provides a process so transparent that participants can work together in a multiparty team and come up with ideas beyond everybody's imagination! Even if the participants come from totally different backgrounds and disciplines, and have differing levels of knowledge about the area at the beginning of the study.

Moreover: the VE job plan leads to decisions making that is so transparent that it becomes accessible to large groups of citizens, members of town council, and the board of the owner of developer.

PPBS + VE at work in Arkel

After the positive reaction of the town council the Information phase was started.
In the beginning of the Information phase knowledge and data are being gathered about:
. environmental issues
(noise pollution, risks and hazards, water aspects, nature, as well as the rules and regulations about these subjects of the town council, water authority, etc.)
. the rules and regulations as well as the attitude of the region and province considering the change of function of this location
. investigation of and contact with the main stakeholders in de the neighborhood
. basic economic info about the program that would be needed to make the transformation possible and profitable.

The information phase ends with one of the important PPBS parts: a meeting to gather information, open to people from the neighborhood and other stakeholders except the municipality, province, and the owner/developer. Goal of the evening is to gather all the 'feelings' about what needs to be done with this area: the ideas, do's and don'ts, suggestions etc. The evening starts with a short explanation of the reason for the transformation of the area and an overview of the process. Critical in the process presentation is the explanation of the method of PPBS and the ground rules of mediation. This makes the participants aware of principals like searching for a win-win solution and respect for the interests of other parties: crucial concepts for a successful process.

At the end of this meeting people could volunteer for the VE-study-team study-days (24 people did). In the small working groups people were asked one by one to give their ideas. The working groups were organized and facilitated in such a way that the original words were used to describe the ideas (without any editing). Every working group was supported by a expert that was knowledgeable on several subjects concerning the issue.

In this project 130 people came up with 238 suggestions!

A list was produced showing all these ideas and the different aspects (for instance: housing, green and water, traffic and parking etc.).

The complete list was transformed into several FAST-diagrams before the first VE-team day.
On this first day 43 people came together: citizens, specialists of the town council and representatives of the owner. After presenting the available information, the teams set to finding the criteria for the evaluation later in de process. Time and again this turns out to be a teambuilding process in which mediation and VE come together. Discovering that some criteria are more important to one group while other criteria are more important to another, sparks the awareness that a win-win solution can only be found by respecting each other's vision and interests. This awareness does not limit the 'wildness' of the ideas that come out of the brainstorm later that day, but it does make it a we-effort, instead of a three party endeavor (city counsel, owner and citizens). It also feeds the understanding that in the end, ideas have to be feasible, as well financially as in any other aspect. An example of this new way of looking was

shown by the Historical Arkel Foundation. In the beginning they wanted to hold on to all the buildings that their fathers and grandfathers had worked in. In the afternoon of the VE-team-day they abandoned that wish, knowing that not all could be kept and they were searching for ways to make it affordable to preserve maybe one.

The VE-team days followed the job plan with a two week 'home work' period in between. As a special addition, during the PPBS-evening and the VE-team days the ideas are not only noted, they are also captured in cartoon drawings that make communication a lot easier in this multidisciplinary group.

VE-results in the PPBS and follow up

Wonderful ideas came out the VE-team days; some so vivid that they inspired many of the participants and fuelled their energy. Some of these inspiring contributions were the ideas about sustainability that were put forward by the people from the neighborhood. They made the owner so enthusiastic that the board decided to remain part the development instead of selling the property to a developer. The town council became so involved with the project that they took responsibility for overcoming the resistance of the region (they invited them over to the location for their regional meeting with the province). The initial resistance was transformed into enthusiasm that has not withered since.

The results of the VE-team days were presented on another PPBS-evening as well to the town council. Reconnection and even more ideas were the result. The 10 main ideas - the basis for the plan - were also presented as a poster. This poster was so well received that it remained the main source of communication in the process that followed.

These results thus presented were also the inspiration for the dynamic spatial plan. On the PPBS-evening that the spatial plan was presented the majority of the visitors showed amazement: the neighborhood recognized that their ideas were truely part of the plan! The process had proven to be trustworthy.

The organization received only a small amount official complains. The complaints that were put forward, stipulated that some aspect of the plan did not respected the outcome of the VE-mediation-PPBS process enough. That can and will be taken care of. A wonderful result!

VE not only works, it is a super tool for a citizen involvement process when it is combined with mediation. It makes all the difference!

Fig. 4 Poster with the 10 main ideas