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Seeking certainty: recent planning for Sydney and Melbourne

Authors: Bunker, R; Searle, G

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Raymond Bunker and Glen Searle

Seeking certainty

Recent planning for Sydney and Melbourne

Recent metropolitan strategies for Melbourne (2002) and Sydney (2005) are reviewed in order to establish why they were produced, what their main proposals are and the kind of methodology used. The central question posed is whether they provide sufficient purpose and direction while at the same time acknowledging the uncertainties facing the future of both cities. It is concluded that in seeking certainty they are too prescriptive and deterministic in their provisions, but they do provide a basis for adaptation and adjustment to changing conditions. These challenges exist in terms of climate change, management and use of energy and water, transport, and the need for a national approach to planning the Australian urban system.

This paper reviews metropolitan strategies which have been released in recent years for Australia's two largest cities: Melbourne, called *Melbourne 2030* (Department of Infrastructure, 2002); and Sydney, titled *City of Cities* (Department of Planning, 2005). These two plans have much in common, but there are also important differences in emphasis and research content in the matters and concerns they cover. Their general themes are planning for a more sustainable future; developing advanced and innovative businesses which will be competitive and significant in the world economy; providing certainty for the property market; and having a more compact city form.

The background to the plans is that they are effectively state government documents. Local government authorities generally have fewer functions, powers and resources than in the United Kingdom and most parts of Europe, and the metropolitan strategies are written for and by the state government. Similarly, although Commonwealth government policies such as immigration impact substantially on urban conditions, there is no present desire for any engagement in the cities by the Commonwealth government. There is certainly no national view of the urban system and how it might be guided in the national interest. There is no present inclination to become involved in any of the urgent issues affecting some cities more than others, such as affordability of housing, and only reflexive engagement in matters that may be of national importance such as failures in urban transport systems, or port congestion.

Spatial planning, the provision of infrastructure and regulation of land use are the responsibility of each state government. This does provide the opportunity for

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co-ordination of these functions in their capital cities, and this has been achieved in varying degrees in the past. But, as well described by Gleeson and Low (2000), the neo-liberal agenda now followed by governments has complicated this potential, leading to part-privatisation of functions, the transference of risk from governments to households, and public-private partnerships in many major projects. There are continuing examples of lack of co-ordination and accountability and poor service arising from these circumstances. 'Splintering urbanism' (Graham and Marvin, 2001) has its Australian counterpart.

The key question explored in this paper is whether the methodology used in both plans provides a strategic planning framework which gives effective purpose and direction while also proving sufficiently flexible to deal with uncertainties. In doing this we pursue the implications of the strategies as state government documents, review the range of issues that the two cities are likely to face in the next 25 years (the planning period used by the strategies), and then comment on the appropriateness of the similar methodology employed by both cities in their forward planning.

The discussion is organised in four parts. The first briefly reviews current planning theory and paradigms relevant to such spatial strategies, together with examples of such plans from Europe as responses to urban complexity; increasing interconnection of cities and economies; the emerging issues of climate change and shortages of some forms of energy; and social harmony. In them space, society and governance interact, engage and reciprocate in the way that Gleeson et al. (2004) outline in a similar socio-theoretic analysis of metropolitan planning in Australia.

The second part discusses the circumstances that caused the two metropolitan strategies under review to be constructed and looks at the main drivers of their content. The third part describes and comments on their provisions. Both cities plan for a population total projected forward for a quarter of a century and devise a compact city form and structure to accommodate this distribution. Because of space limitations this paper concentrates on the drivers of the plans and their influence on how metropolitan form and structure, transport and governance (including financing) are treated. This is done through a comparison of the two cities showing their differences as well as their common themes.

A fourth part examines the changing urban environment in which the two strategies are now placed and examines whether the planning process followed in them is adequate to address these fluid conditions. In the light of this, the paper ends by suggesting that important changes could be made to the strategies if they are to provide appropriate direction in an environment that has already changed remarkably since they were formulated. This may largely be in ways that reflect the European experience.

Recent theories and examples of strategic planning

Given the evolution of planning theory concerning metropolitan strategies, it is appropriate to place *City of Cities* and *Melbourne 2030* in that context. Recent writers have both complained about the lack of adequate planning theory and constructed new ones (Hillier, 2006; Harper and Stein, 2006). Hillier proposes a 'multiplanar' theory which bridges the abstract with the physical in a process of creative experimentation. It is normative, inclusive and dynamic, without closure. Its long-term vision is investigating 'virtualities unseen in the present; the speculation of what might happen', but with 'temporary inquiry into what at a given time and place we might yet think or do and how this might influence socially and environmentally just spatial form' (Hillier, 2006, 318). In less philosophical vein, Harper and Stein construct a 'dialogical' planning paradigm which lies between modernism and post-modernism. It is liberal (with the autonomous individual as central), pragmatic, incremental, critical, communicative and political, offering a more instrumental approach to normative purposes. Much of this takes place within the transactive planning process shaped by Healey (1996; 2006) and others (Madanipour et al., 2001), with its logical extension into discourse analysis (Healey, 2000). In summary:

there is a need for a) a multidimensional, complex understanding of space, and b) new ways of negotiating how society should shape and influence the myriad of urban actors who mobilize to transform spaces. (Madanipour et al., 2001, 3)

All these constructs sponsor, in one form or another, a creative ongoing dynamic dialogue between space, society and governance, such as that described by Richardson and Jensen (2003). Interestingly, both Richardson and Jensen and Hillier cite the European Spatial Development Perspective as an example of their arguments. Though advisory, it is claimed that the Perspective is influential in shaping spatial planning. Tellingly it was 10 years in the making but provides a set of 'clear spatially transcendent guidelines' (Committee for Spatial Development, 1999, 7) with each member state implementing the document in its own fashion. The Australian variation on these concepts is best represented by Gleeson et al.'s (2004) socio-theoretic analysis of Australian metropolitan strategies where they identify five key interacting themes in the search for urban sustainability – policy, space, planning governance, finance and democracy.

We turn to more tangible examples concerned with metropolitan planning. A rich discussion of the new context of urban strategic planning has been provided by Healey (2007). She notes that strategic planning now takes place in an environment of competing modes of governance and of competing discourses that need to be balanced. Increasingly fluid and diverse economic and social relations within urban regions mean that spatial strategies need to focus on critical juxtapositions and connec-

tivities, and where these are located in the landscape of governance. All this means that traditional comprehensive strategies become too hard and unpredictable on the one hand, and too narrow and thus politically dangerous on the other. More specifically, Albrechts et al. (2003) have summarised driving forces behind recent European strategic spatial planning as including inter-city competitiveness; new financing imperatives arising from government budget reductions; new forms of governance involving decentralisation; formation of alliances and restructuring of welfare state organisation; and the diffusion of (new) principles of spatial development across Europe by the discourses and practices of a trans-European spatial planning policy community. They also note the importance of socio-cultural and lifestyle changes in focusing voter and lobby group attention on environmental sustainability.

Following this approach, Albrechts (2004) has espoused a 'four track' approach involving four types of rationality:

value rationality (the design of alternative futures), communicative rationality (involving a growing number of actors – private and public – in the process), instrumental rationality (looking for the best way of solving the problems and achieve the desired future) and strategic rationality (a clear and explicit strategy for dealing with power relationships) (Albrechts, 2004, 752)

These changes in metropolitan planning issues and context have, it is argued (Albrechts, 2006; Albrechts et al., 2003; Friedmann et al., 2004; Healey, 2007), generated a move away from modernist end-state predict-and-provide plans towards a less deterministic strategic spatial planning. Albrechts (2006) sees the main components of the latter as selectivity in choosing decisions and actions; a 'relational-annex-inclusive' quality that involves a full range of citizens; integration of relevant departments and agencies; development of a vision; and an action orientation. As a consequence, there is a change in the outputs of metropolitan and regional plans. Policy maps are absent or very generalised, with the central purpose of many 'new' strategic spatial plans being to help frame activities of stakeholders to achieve shared concerns about spatial changes (Albrechts, 2001; Healey, 2007). More generally, Friedmann argues that since strategic planning is a process, the output should be much more than merely a plan document or vision statement (Friedmann et al., 2004).

Albrechts's analysis of eight strategic plans from Europe and one from Perth (Australia) indicates that those plans show some shift towards his normative criteria for strategic planning (Albrechts, 2006). Most cases show a shift away from traditional technocratic statutory planning with its regulation of land use, towards a more collaborative approach. Even so, Albrechts concludes that the eight strategies have a 'considerable way' to go before meeting his normative criteria for strategic spatial planning (Albrechts, 2006, 1166). The recent London Plan (Greater London Authority, 2003) similarly shows 'new' spatial strategic planning features, such as an

action orientation and inter-agency co-operation (Newman and Thornley, 2005), and a fairly schematic approach to land use control. Nevertheless, the priorities of the Plan were controlled by politics, with business interests having a significant influence on the agenda and wider consultation having relatively little influence (Newman and Thornley, 2005, 147–48). The 1996 Hanover city region plan (Kommunalverband Grossraum Hannover, 2001) is an earlier example, with the spatial plan itself incorporating a certain degree of abstraction with its conceptual ring transport routes and land uses shown at a broad brush level followed by the formation of a regional development forum and a new level of regional government (Albrechts et al., 2003). Even here, old-style deterministic planning detail has been added to the city region plan through a legal addition that sets the position of retailing at all levels. Healey's analysis of the strategic plans for Amsterdam, Milan and Cambridge similarly shows that they have become more schematic, with few if any zones, and emphasising spatial flows and nodes that embody local 'relational geographies' and generate new meanings of local place qualities (Healey, 2007, 224–30).

Thus contemporary strategic spatial plans for European cities have generally moved away from traditional end-state determinist plans towards more flexible, inclusive and action-based outputs, although retaining some elements of old-style modernist planning. There are various difficulties involved in putting into practice new planning ideas such as those encompassed in the 'new' strategic spatial planning. These include lack of experience, lack of resources and skilled people, lack of time, local governance fragmentation, and lack of agreement between regional actors on causes and targets of regional structural change (da Rosa Pires et al., 2001). More broadly, there are tensions between ever-increasing uncertainty and the associated need to retain flexibility regarding future options (Hyslop, in Friedmann et al., 2004), and demands by investors for older-style plans that deliver more certainty and direction about the spatial pattern of future development.

The reasons for and the drivers of the strategies for Sydney and Melbourne

At the beginning of the new century both Melbourne and Sydney faced the need for new plans and policies about metropolitan growth and change. Both cities needed important and connected decisions to be made about the distribution of future residential populations and jobs, and about travel and catching up on the neglect of infrastructure needs, particularly in public transport in the 1990s.

When a new Labour government came into power in Victoria in 1999, it launched a series of planning initiatives, including a State Strategic Plan called *Growing Victoria Together* and a new metropolitan strategy. *Melbourne 2030*, launched in 2002, was based on a careful process of investigation and consultation. In Sydney, in the early 2000s a

series of mishaps and performance failures concerning public transport was accompanied by increasing road congestion, some shortages of land for outer suburban growth, and sharp rises in property values affecting housing affordability dramatically. This was accompanied by a downturn in the economy of New South Wales relative to the resource-rich states of Queensland and Western Australia, and some emerging anxiety about the performance of Sydney as a global city. There was considerable public pressure from the media and the Property Council of Australia for a 'new blueprint' for Sydney.

Dominating both plans are firstly the drive to shape Sydney and Melbourne so that they are better able to compete in their own national economy and on the world stage, and secondly the desire for certainty on the part of business investors and the property industry. These themes are more strongly adumbrated in Sydney, perhaps because of the later dating of its plan, and the further development of some of the ideas contained in the Melbourne strategy by people involved in both. It does mean the strategies are directed to an outside world and there is little appreciation of or engagement with the national urban system of which the cities are such important components.

Economic competitiveness

Early research for *Melbourne 2030* was concerned with globalisation and the strengthening of economic competitiveness. In a paper dated May 2000 a consultant report (SGS) discussed the influence that urban policy and metropolitan strategy might have on the various drivers of economic competitiveness and concluded that the most important policy 'levers' were:

- road network planning;
- public transport policy;
- transportation pricing policy;
- activity centres policy;
- employment zone policy and standards; and
- airports.

The report became Technical Report 3 in *Melbourne 2030*. It was also recommended that the clustering together of advanced businesses would help their functioning and facilitate speedy response to the information flows on which they depended. Thus *Melbourne 2030*

supports the development of an innovation economy by encouraging the expansion and development of logistics and communications infrastructure. It will support the development of business clusters, and work to help approval processes for industry

sectors and developments targeted under the Government's Innovation Economy policy. It will also promote a physical environment that is conducive to innovation and to creative activities. (Department of Infrastructure, Victoria, 2002, 87)

The same consultants delivered a report to the then New South Wales Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources in June 2004 called *Sydney's Economic Geography: Trends and Drivers* (SGS, 2004). This drew attention to the importance of knowledge workers in advanced business enterprises: the creative innovators and entrepreneurs of Florida (2004). It argued they were relatively footloose and would locate in places which were highly accessible to the outside world, had good business services, and which offered lifestyle assets including good entertainment, cultural activities and higher education. They were also attracted to places that were pleasant to live in – and had the income to do so.

The conclusion drawn from these later studies was that for Sydney to retain its economic competitiveness on the world stage, it needed to fashion those urban conditions that would attract advanced business activities and innovative people. It was argued that a more compact city, using the urban policy levers cited previously for Melbourne, together with good place management and urban design would enhance Sydney's attractions in this regard.

Certainty

While providing certainty is part of the Melbourne plan as will be seen from its detailed provisions, Sydney was strongly influenced by the demand of the property industry for certainty. The Property Council for Australia, based in Sydney, published a public discussion paper, *Initiatives for Sydney* (Property Council of Australia, 2002), in which it outlined 'Sydney's economic drivers' which needed to be supported by:

- concentrating employment in Sydney's various centres;
- ensuring sufficient supply of 'employment lands' for business parks, lower density manufacturing, distribution, storage and bulk retailing activities;
- higher density dwelling development focused on sub-regional centres; and
- better building design.

The November 2004 publication, *Metro Strategy: A Property Council Perspective* (Property Council of Australia), further developed these ideas and suggested many measures which subsequently appeared in *City of Cities*. Not unexpectedly for Property Council initiatives, both documents were notably short on transport and communication.



Figure 1 The Strategy for Melbourne in *Melbourne 2030*, published in 2002

The provisions of *Melbourne 2030* and *City of Cities*

Metropolitan form and structure

Australian cities have among the lowest densities in the world and are heavily car-dependent (Newman and Kenworthy, 1999). Both Melbourne and Sydney plan for a more compact urban form, with increased residential densities concentrated around major centres in the suburbs while the dominant focus of activity remains the central city. This increase in density is supported by strengthened public transport, articulating nodes and corridors of higher density development. The main strategic elements of these policies are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Melbourne

In the case of Melbourne, an urban growth boundary has been defined to encourage more compact and dense urban growth, and a more compact city is defined as the first 'key direction' of the strategy. However, this statutory boundary has already been varied and relaxed to some degree by parliamentary process. The 12 open areas that surround metropolitan Melbourne outside the growth boundary form 'green wedges' of countryside penetrating into the city, as can be seen in Figure 1. They are a long-standing feature of Melbourne's planning, and their importance is again reasserted in *Melbourne 2030*.

In pursuing the principle of encouraging the gathering of advanced and specialised activities into groups, a map locates and identifies selected economic clusters and precincts. These include industrial areas, and advanced business and research locations concerned with specialised medicine, science, technology, engineering, multimedia and biology. These are specific sites where the government has started to invest in order to promote development, notably in biotech precincts around Melbourne University and at outer Werribee, a science and technology precinct at Monash (where the only synchrotron in Australia was opened in July 2007: one of 40 in the world), and in an information technology precinct in the Docklands redevelopment area.

These measures devised to encourage the growth of advanced businesses are linked with a long-standing feature of Melbourne's planning: that of defining major centres as concentrations of activity, and seeking to focus investment, transport links and jobs on them. It should be noted that despite this, they have not been particularly effective in the past in achieving their intended function and character (McLoughlin, 1992). In *Melbourne 2030* these have been carefully analysed and defined. There is a hierarchy with central Melbourne forming a 'Central Activities District', followed by 26 Principal Activity Centres, 82 Major Activity Centres and 10 Specialised Activity Centres.

These activity centres of different kinds are used as focal points for the building of medium- and high-density housing. It is assumed that this will lead to shorter journeys

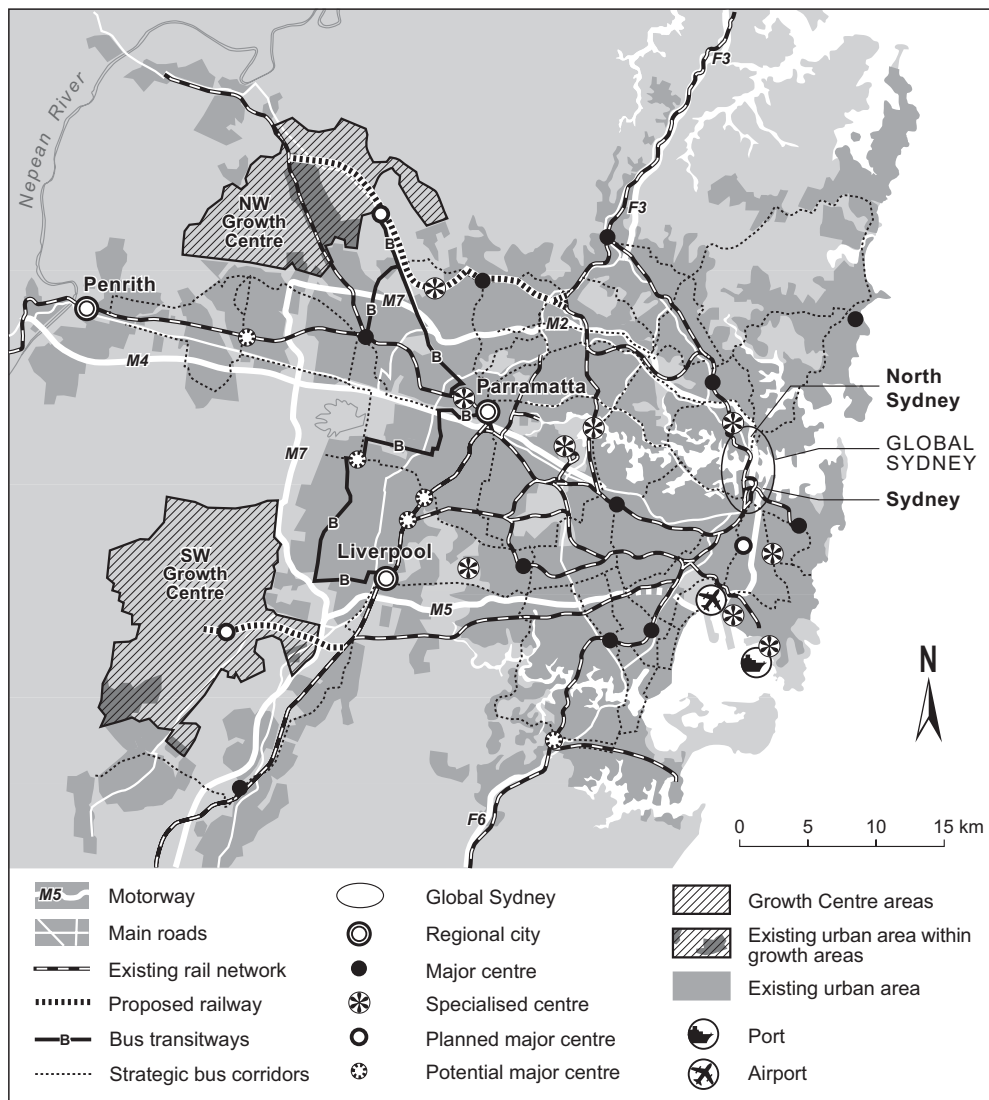


Figure 2 The Strategy for Sydney in *City of Cities*, published in 2005

to work and less use of cars for travel, with improved public transport serving these nodes and corridors and the close proximity of a range of everyday services. Because of the importance of this, fairly prescriptive 'targets' are laid down in both cities in particular locations for the construction of such housing. *Melbourne 2030* divides future housing construction into three categories: greenfields development, strategic redevelopment sites, and dispersed urban (within existing outlying suburban areas

together with a small amount of development around small rural townships). Recent new dwelling starts in each of these categories amounted to 38 per cent, 24 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively. It is proposed there be a major reorientation of this pattern to 31 per cent, 41 per cent and 28 per cent in the period 2001–30.

Sydney

‘Economy and development’ is the first section in *City of Cities* and argues that while Sydney is Australia’s only global city this status cannot be taken for granted. It identifies and maps a number of knowledge and high skill industries in areas such as: finance; information and communication; health and education; advertising, news and media; logistics and transport; and hospitality, visitor and cultural activities. It shows that many of these tend to cluster together and form specialist employment nodes. Most are concentrated in a ‘Global Arc’ linking the central city to inner suburbs to the north and south. There are, accordingly, ideas of reinforcing these clustering propensities so that these activities draw strength from each other and build into effective drivers of innovation and competitiveness.

Accordingly, a strengthened centres policy defines the central business district south of the harbour together with North Sydney as ‘Global Sydney’. The second biggest centre is Parramatta, a ‘regional city’ to the west, which has been a focus of investment and development for many years. Penrith in the outer west and Liverpool to the south west now join it as regional cities as focal points for transport and jobs, and there is another such regional city at Gosford on the coast in the commuter belt to the north of Sydney. In addition the strategy designates nine specialised centres such as Sydney Airport, and 19 existing and potential major centres, each with over 8,000 jobs. Job targets are set for all these major existing or potential centres for the year 2031. All major centres are served by public transport (usually rail) and have sub-regional catchment areas. Sub-regional consultations following the strategy’s publication have resulted in an agreed total of around 1,000 retail centres classified by type for local planning purposes. Complementing centres are corridors of three types:

- economic corridors: a Global Arc extending Global Sydney to the north west and also south to Sydney Airport; a motorway-based corridor running west from the Airport to Liverpool; and a corridor running north-south in the west along that stretch of the orbital motorway;
- renewal corridors in areas that are run down in the inner and middle suburbs such as the Parramatta-central Sydney link; and
- enterprise corridors made up of strips of commercial or industrial activity along busy roads.

In Sydney, 60–70 per cent of the new houses needed by 2031 are to be located in existing urban areas, amounting to 445,000 dwellings. Most of these would be in the form of

attached housing in medium- or high-density configurations. The wider metropolitan area is divided into 11 sub-regions, and the number of potential dwellings by 2031 is shown in each, as is the number of jobs. A later sub-regional planning process will allocate dwelling numbers to each of the councils making up the sub-region. Three of these sub-regions take the bulk of new construction in greenfields locations, mostly in the north west and south west growth sectors. Government plans for these sectors map out the detailed character of transit-oriented urban development in each sector involving a centres hierarchy, permeable street patterns, and residential densities graduated according to access to public transport and centres.

Transport

Melbourne

These changes in city form and structure are supported by and reflected in transport planning. In Melbourne the goal is set to raise public transport's share of motorised trips from the current level of 9 per cent to 20 per cent by 2020. The Principal Public Transport Network is to be extended to more adequately integrate Principal and Major Activity Centres, as there are gaps in the system where many of the centres developed in the 1960s and 1970s were built around car-based shopping and commercial developments. There are similar proposals to those in Sydney for developing more strategic bus corridors across the city, linking major centres across suburbs. These initiatives are not as well developed as in Sydney, where a 2004 Review of Bus Services identified a network of new bus transitways (Ministry of Transport, 2004). However, in contrast to Sydney, movement around central Melbourne is well served by tram and rail services, and although there are some capacity restraints on these, they are addressed in *Melbourne 2030*.

The transport proposals in Melbourne have been criticised (Mees, 2003). Major road and freeway building continues and there are questions about the proposed programming of improvements to public transport and the need for better management of buses and rolling stock. Ironically, an unexpected increase of 10 per cent per year in the number of rail passengers in the last two years has caused overcrowding of trains and inconvenience generally. A government spokesman has been forced to state that he did not believe the rise in such passenger levels over the next three years would continue at the present 'abnormal levels' (Whinnett and Gardiner, 2007). The 2007–08 Victorian State Budget contained substantial funding to specifically address this problem by buying more trains and training more drivers (Department of Treasury and Finance, 2007, 35). Contracts with private operators of the public transport system expire in November 2007.

Sydney

The main public transport component in the Sydney strategy is to link the major growth areas to the north west and south west directly to the central city by a new rail line involving a new tunnel for this purpose under the harbour. However, this is not scheduled to be constructed until 2015.

There is an emphasis on more effectively linking centres, with cross-suburban services. The most significant of these is to establish a number of strategic bus corridors to connect centres with fast and frequent services. However the need to improve access by public transport within Global Sydney and the way to do this, is not adequately addressed. Significant investment and construction in dedicated rail freight lines and inter-modal freight hubs is proposed to divert freight movement from roads and rail lines used for general-purpose travel. Much of this would depend on Commonwealth government funding.

The transport proposals in *City of Cities* have generally been regarded as the least convincing. Sydney has a long history of promised improvements and major projects to strengthen public transport which have not happened. It is true that this lesson does appear to have been taken to heart – at least in the short term – by the present State government. It has used two state budgets to fund some of the capital projects needed and its improved Infrastructure Strategy (Office of Financial Management, 2006) for 10 years ahead is based on *City of Cities*. It has also produced a considered and impressive Urban Transport Statement (Iemma, 2006a), but there are continued breakdowns and disruptions to rail services in particular. At the same time the need to improve the present road framework and deal with so-called ‘pinch-points’ is proving costly and difficult to resolve. Nevertheless, planning to expand the motorway network is continuing, although *City of Cities* limits discussion of potential new motorways to routes that have a regionally significant freight function that justifies them on the grounds of helping economic competitiveness.

Governance, consultation and implementation

Melbourne

In Melbourne, a far-reaching consultation process was held, involving meetings in all suburbs with a budget running into millions of dollars. *Melbourne 2030* has an extensive discussion of implementation procedures and processes where it identifies the strategic topics and issues that need to be infiltrated into local planning and state government activity and developer opportunities. An Annual Community Update is promised on this process.

Implementation mechanisms in the planning system are explained in a separate Advisory Note. These basically seek local government revision of its own plans to incorporate the policy intent of *Melbourne 2030*. To assist them in this, draft implementation

Table 1 The main characteristics of *Melbourne 2030 (2002)* and *City of Cities, the strategy for Sydney (2005)*

	Melbourne	Sydney
Drivers		
Main purpose	Sustainability broadly based although economic competitiveness vital. Enmeshed with other plans.	Sustainability interpreted mainly in terms of economic innovation. Driving Sydney planning.
Ensuring certainty	Dominance of targets for population growth in a typology of centres to 2030. Transport proposals more indicative.	Highly articulated and detailed land use and transport planning. Fixed targets for jobs and housing to 2031 by sub-regions, major centres, and employment precincts.
Main proposals		
Metropolitan form and structure	Urban growth boundary (since changed) to encourage compact and denser growth. Green wedges penetrate into the city between lines of communication from central Melbourne. Long-standing policies regarding activity centres reconfigured and strengthened to form a hierarchy of centres where jobs and future housing will be concentrated. In the period 2001–30 41 per cent of new dwellings will be in major redevelopment sites, 31 per cent in greenfields locations and 28 per cent urban infill and small townships.	60–70 per cent of new housing to be in existing urban area with two greenfields growth sectors in northwest and southwest. Compact city form with increased residential densities and concentrated employment round a hierarchy of centres. Innovative businesses located in an intensified central and highly accessible 'Global Arc'. More basic economic functions in the large suburban economy of Western Sydney.
Transport	Central Melbourne services improved. Some freeway building to continue. Public transport extended to more adequately connect principal and major activity centres, although not so precisely articulated as in Sydney. Improvements in management and ticketing.	Strengthening of public transport through building of new rail lines to growth sectors and new rail connection under harbour. Strategic bus corridors link regional and major centres with fast and frequent services. Little attention to improving public transport in Global Arc. Dedicated new freight lines.
Governance, implementing, and planning process	More consultation than with Sydney but considerable local opposition. Enmeshed more with other plans e.g. housing than in Sydney. Plan's proposals to be recognised in operations and plans of government agencies and implemented by revision of local development plans. Links with state budget seem less proactive than in Sydney, but more direct investment and support for particular business precincts e.g. the only Australian synchrotron (\$A200m) at the Monash science and technology precinct, reflecting a broader economic planning base. First five-yearly audit now started (<i>not review</i>).	A state government-led plan with little involvement of local councils in its formulation. They are seen as instruments of implementation rather than partners. Reconfiguration of local plans to a standard template to accommodate 2031 job and population targets. Supporting initiatives promised e.g. Innovation Strategy. Development levy for greenfields development. Strong links with budget processes and major projects at present. Depends on present strong ministerial leadership. Five-yearly review.

plans have been prepared for the Urban Growth Boundary, Growth Areas, Activity Centres, Green Wedges, Housing, and Integrated Transport. However a recent report aimed at improving council planning policies has pointed to a disconnection between state policy and the reality of planning with little guidance or help given to councils (Millar, 2007). It also illustrated the long conflict between a state government planning for a denser city and the resistance of local councils to such changes. Developers, in response, have called on the government to stand by *Melbourne 2030*.

As with *City of Cities*, *Melbourne 2030* seeks implementation through recognition of its strategic policy intent by state agencies through existing budget and corporate planning processes. Again, Activity Centres, Housing and Transport (including regional corridors) figure prominently.

Sydney

In general, there has been an increasing centralisation of planning powers and functions in the state government of recent years as it seeks to attract investment and development (Williams, 2007). In preparing *City of Cities*, the initial phases involved a strong attempt to involve the community but there was a clear break between this phase of seeking views and taking decisions. Well before the appearance of *City of Cities*, one commentator noted the dangers of combining an opening phase of ‘governance through negotiation’ with the following one of ‘governance through hierarchy’ and in:

switching from a negotiative to a hierarchic rationale in the middle of the process as one probably ends up getting the worst of both worlds ... [with] ... a high risk that the final Strategy will either be weak because it avoids the hot issues, or be a strong document that does take clear stances but then lacks the wide support for its successful implementation. (Kubler, 2005, 36)

The relationship with local government and local planning is problematic. In the Sydney strategy, local government is largely an instrument of implementation where councils will work in sub-regional groupings to translate ‘metropolitan region housing and employment targets spatially at a local level’ (Department of Planning NSW, 2005, 255) which will then be used to prepare local environmental plans to a standard template. This is to ensure the ‘planning system is progressively *transformed from a process driven approach to an outcomes focused service* ... [avoiding] ... interminable processes and delays’ (Iemma, 2006b, 15, emphasis in original). This sub-regional planning is the most immediate strategy activity.

Greenfields development in the north west and south west sectors is planned and managed by a Growth Centres Commission (a development corporation under the Growth Centres Act). A levy is made on developers to cover much of the costs of the new infrastructure needed to support urban development. Coordinating policies,

projects and plans in the existing urban areas is less easy, but state agencies are to incorporate the metropolitan strategy aims and directions into their operations. The State Infrastructure Strategy and funding for capital works is to support the unfolding of the strategy, for example in ensuring that key infrastructure supports major centres of activity. As already noted, the two state budgets since the publication of *City of Cities* have largely followed this programme up till now. An Innovation Strategy is being developed to facilitate the emergence, growth and clustering of advanced service and high tech industries.

Table 1 summarises the characteristics of the two strategies reflecting the headings used in this part of the discussion. *City of Cities* develops many of the principles used in *Melbourne 2030*, but they have evolved into a more prescriptive form, and the commentary in the table reflects this.

The planning process and a changing urban environment

Dynamic urban conditions

Since the two strategies were formulated, there have been important changes in urban conditions. The most significant has been the realisation that there are emerging constraints and limitations on the natural resources upon which metropolitan life is based. These relate to water, oil and the use of energy. In the last year there have also been dramatic shifts in the attitude of the Commonwealth government to climate change.

The current response to water shortages in all Australian urban areas is a relatively recent issue. In all state capitals, water supply, management and use has become critical as drought has intensified and rainfall totals obstinately remain below the long-term average. *City of Cities* incorporates the Metropolitan Water Plan adopted in 2004 to see the city through the next 25 years. The Water Plan was heavily criticised for its reliance on seeking new sources of supply, rather than emphasising demand management and recycling. *City of Cities* was released in December 2005; the Water Plan was replaced by another in May 2006 which moved some way to respond to these criticisms (Government of NSW, 2006). The new Plan promised a process of 'adaptive management' as the impacts of climate change became more apparent and as various water supply, demand management and conservation measures were examined, experimented with and adopted or discarded. Nevertheless, the recently re-elected state government has announced construction of a major desalination plant to ensure longer term water supply, even though stored supply levels had not dropped to the threshold where such a plant was to be started in the 2006 Water Plan. The head of the Department of Planning has recently conceded that the metropolitan strategy should have taken more account of the challenges of climate change (Munro, 2007).

In the light of increasing oil prices, and the large carbon emissions coming from the overwhelming dominance of the private vehicle for travel and freight movement, the most serious issue is the car/truck-dependence of Sydney and Melbourne. *Melbourne 2030* is still equivocal in this regard despite its aims of integrating travel modes. The transportation proposals in *City of Cities* represent an amalgam of various plans and projects, based on trying to more adequately cope with present conditions. There is no systemic analysis of how to move from travel and transport by private vehicle towards much more use of public transport. This will require a variety of measures, including not only the building of medium- and high-density housing and business premises but pricing, regulation, provision of services and facilities, and management of transport modes. In March 2007 a transportation consultant developed an alternative metropolitan transport strategy for Sydney, which was offered as a 'new vision' to the state government by the 10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney (FROGS), a community-based organisation created by the Warren Centre for Advanced Engineering which had previously conducted an extensive research study into transport in Sydney (Warren Centre, 2002). The Board of FROGS subsequently met with the NSW Transport Minister and emphasised that it was not a pressure group and wanted to work constructively with the government.

Another factor in the increasing complexity and dynamism of urban conditions in Sydney and Melbourne is that of 'splintering urbanism' (Graham and Marvin, 2001). This particularly applies to infrastructure networks, on which the plans for Melbourne and Sydney are predicated. These are to varying degrees part-privatised, and there are inevitably problems in co-ordination with urban growth and change, and level of service provided. Added to this is the increasing importance of more regionally- and locality-based systems of water recycling and stormwater management and harvesting. The move to domestic participation in water recycling and use, and solar energy production and use, could lead to significant reallocation of resources for infrastructure. There are signs of increasing departure from the extension of metropolitan-wide monolithic service systems and their associated technologies and protocols.

Melbourne 2030 and *City of Cities* are dependent on massive renewal and redevelopment processes to accommodate most of future population growth. The population targets represent a top-down approach and it is not really known if they can be reached in any sensible fashion. Only the most preliminary, tentative and ball-park figures have been suggested about the costs of redeveloping and intensifying the activity centres in Melbourne (McDougall, 2007), and Wilmoth (2005) has warned that the obvious needs of infrastructure provision for diminished greenfields growth may divert attention from the more complex and localised needs for infrastructure renewal in the existing urban area. There is little appreciation of the infrastructure support and change that will be necessary to accompany this intensification of density and activity, and much reliance on the dubious assumption that there is spare capacity in often ageing networks (Searle,

2004). Australia has little experience of the complexities of widespread redevelopment processes such as those that have taken place in Europe, and has adopted a supply-led capacity approach to planning urban growth and change.

The planning process

In the need to establish certainty and direction, the planning process used in both Melbourne and Sydney uses a rational-comprehensive model (Taylor, 1998) with sophistication and elegance. This certainty and direction is most pronounced in Sydney. The home page for the metropolitan strategy calls it 'The NSW Government's Long Term Plan to Maintain Sydney's Role in the Global Economy and to Plan for Growth and Change'. This makes it, almost by default, an economic development plan for Sydney and raises questions about the balance of other considerations (Bunker, Holloway and Randolph, 2005). In seeking certainty, both cities provide one blueprint for the distribution of population. Sydney also includes job targets for all major centres, influenced heavily by previous representations from the Property Council of Australia.

This blueprint drives each plan. In Sydney the population totals for each sub-region are being allocated to council areas, which then have to produce zoning configurations which can accommodate them. The environmental impact, traffic generation, necessary infrastructure provision, design challenges, heritage protection and social effects are unknown until that detailed planning takes place. Many councils have maintained this should have been done before the targets were imposed, and any necessary adjustment then made to the numbers. The blueprint approach is most evident in the strategy's planning documents for the new north western and south western sectors which specify street patterns and centre locations in detail for transit-oriented development.

In Melbourne, the first five-yearly audit of *Melbourne 2030* has been started to investigate inter alia the effectiveness of local government's role in implementation of the plan, how to provide greater certainty for residential development, and advice on measures to encourage investment for business and living in activity centres. The audit cannot consider fundamental changes as the view is that *Melbourne 2030* is a 30-year strategy that should run its course.

Adapting the strategic planning processes for Sydney and Melbourne

The conclusion reached in the argument of this paper is that metropolitan strategies in Australia need to move towards the principles and processes of strategic spatial planning described in the first part, and now under development in Europe. This is

not meant as an imitation of what might be good practice, but as a recognition that Australian cities face the same challenges and issues, particularly that of integration in an evolving urban system. The strategies for both Sydney and Melbourne have a modernist character partly based on their status as state government documents. Australian cities need to take on a more complementary and supportive role in the space economy of the nation and in dealing with the global economy. This issue and the emerging challenges of climate change, energy use, water management and social equity in the responses to these challenges demand a national approach.

It is possible, however, to suggest adaptations to the present strategies so that they progress towards the kind of paradigm outlined by Gleeson et al. (2004) and exemplified in Europe – although that does involve moving to another level of abstraction.

In that regard, three things are needed. A shorter time perspective is needed in organising metropolitan growth than the 25 or 30 years currently used. This would better reflect the increasing rate of economic and technological change; the urgent challenges provided by climate change and the management and use of energy and water which need careful, evolving and responsive measures to address them; and the near-impossibility of forecasting long-term social, political and economic environments.

Second, the hints of physical determinism in current strategies need to be qualified by better links with service delivery, regulatory guidance and funding measures as well as arranging land use location, density or mixture. Life in the suburbs depends a great deal on the principles determining the provision and funding of public education, health, access and transport (Gleeson and Low, 2000; Gleeson, 2006) as well as the nature of the built environment. Economic development and job opportunities reflect the availability of education, training programmes, the dissemination of best practice, proficiency in English, working conditions and child care facilities as well as appropriate infrastructure and location (Dodson and Berry, 2004). Natural resource management, conservation of biodiversity, control of pollution and ecological sustainability require conservation, enhancement and management measures reflecting natural systems.

Third, continuing dialogue with local communities and place management and enhancement is necessary not only to respond to strategic imperatives, but also to feed back the particular opportunities and pitfalls that shape the unique character of every locality. The finer-grained and intricate character of urban conditions is one of the notable features of recent urban research (Randolph and Holloway, 2005; Fagan and Dowling, 2005). The lack of recognition of this is conspicuous in *City of Cities*, and shows little appreciation of social issues, imbalances and patterns of difficulty, deprivation and disadvantage in both Sydney and Melbourne (Bunker et al., 2005; Randolph and Holloway, 2005).

Both cities have effective Metropolitan Development Programs which monitor

housing development and provide reasonable rolling forecasts some 8 to 10 years ahead. These well-established programmes, operated in conjunction with local councils, are a valuable indicator of short-term trends and operate in a timespan that can ensure essential infrastructure is in place as land is released and development takes place. Their original function was designed to deal with suburban expansion, but their scope has been extended to the more difficult task of estimating future housing potential in existing urban areas. It needs to go further and outline necessary infrastructure investment in these renewal areas.

This operation could take place within more *indicative* forecasts of future residential and employment growth some 15 or so years ahead with fewer locations selected for more detailed and careful analysis, and if this proves favourable, then linked specifically and programmatically to the infrastructure programmes and innovation strategies that are supposed to accompany and support the present long-term strategies. These indicative forecasts could similarly be developed in co-operation with local councils as they assess not only the apparent capacity of their areas in terms of space and infrastructure, but take account of social impacts and how local character can respond positively to the processes of redevelopment as well as the final outcome.

These suggestions, while moving towards the processes of spatial shaping discussed in the first part of this paper, attempt to anchor these principles in the concepts of progressive commitment outlined in the strategic choice approach of Friend and Hickling (1997) where continuous decision-making takes place as uncertainties of different kinds are clarified.

Conclusion

Australia has been regarded as having the potential for effective metropolitan planning as the capital cities remain the dominant economic and urban entities in each state. This means that state governments could bring their wide range of powers and responsibilities to bear on co-ordinated action in metropolitan growth and change. However, this potential has been eroded in recent decades for a number of reasons. These include the withdrawal of the state from some infrastructure and service provision; increasing centralisation of power and financial resources in the Commonwealth government, whose actions increasingly impact on city conditions but which takes no interest or responsibility in urban affairs, globalisation, and rapidly changing economic, social, cultural and demographic circumstances.

There are significant uncertainties which undermine the apparent confidence and certainty provided by the strategies for Sydney and Melbourne. Increasingly, issues about climate change, transport, and energy and water management will inescapably draw the Commonwealth government into national and international agreements which will affect the capital cities in which most Australians live. This could also help

redress the imbalances in *Melbourne 2030* and *City of Cities*, where the concern with being competitive in a globalising world ignores the increasing interconnection of the Australian spatial economy. As has been argued in such circumstances, 'Urban economies are fundamentally interdependent. If one city grows, people in other cities generally become better off' (Urwin, 2006, 1).

We conclude with reflections on what other cities may learn from recent spatial strategic planning in Sydney and Melbourne. One lesson is that developers seek a degree of certainty about where development is allowed and what transport and other key infrastructure will be provided to support development, especially where urban expansion is allowed. Another is the demand for spatial planning to move towards more ecologically sustainable development. These generate imperatives not only to firmly dictate the nature and extent of urban expansion, but also to closely link urban intensification to public transport accessibility and restrict retailing and commercial development to existing centres or new transit-oriented ones. In providing this certainty, the Melbourne and Sydney strategies are longer term, and more detailed and prescriptive than might have been expected from a reading of recent European planning.

The form that metropolitan strategies can take in Australia is also heavily influenced by the direction of statutory planning of (sub-metropolitan) local government by the state government. In both Sydney and Melbourne, the state governments making the strategies have the constitutional powers to approve or reject statutory plans made by local councils. This power, together with the spatially fragmented character of local governance, means the state governments can make very prescriptive strategic frameworks for local plan-making. Cities with more local plan-making autonomy and less fragmentation will not be able to impose detailed strategies on local government. Thus the governance context and institutional framework remains a critical factor in shaping the content and form of metropolitan spatial strategies.

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