METROPOLITAN PLANNING: An International Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper surveys the problems of metropolitan planning in Western democracies. It notes the abolition of metropolitan and regional planning bodies in the UK and considers the record of metropolitan planning in other countries. It analyses the current fiscal and other constraints upon effective metropolitan planning.

Despite the growing emphasis upon 'urban containment', metropolitan areas continue to expand in widening orbits. The failures of planning in the inner cities are analysed, and some remedies are suggested. The limited physical capacity and the inevitable loss of manufacturing employment in these inner areas mean that a further instalment of new towns is becoming desirable. In particular, metropolitan planning needs to widen the opportunities of the less privileged and to provide for a massive renewal of urban infrastructure.

The scope of physical planning has always been limited, and has worked through successive linkages with health, housing, transportation and environmental programmes. Comprehensive metropolitan planning depends upon new political alliances, the use of financial incentives as well as planning controls, and the strengthening of local government. In particular, it is essential for planning bodies to capture development values in land, so as to pay the high costs of balanced urban renewal. European experience has many lessons to offer on this critical issue. Urban planners need to come out of their defensive shells and accept their political responsibilities for making planning efficient and equitable.
METROPOLITAN PLANNING IN AUSTRALIA
A URU Sponsored Seminar

Peter Self's paper was a contribution to a two-day seminar on Metropolitan Planning in Australia organised by the Urban Research Unit in February 1988. This is the fourth publication of papers from the seminar to appear in this series. The foci of the seminar were the metropolitan plans or strategies which have recently appeared for four of Australia's largest cities. On the first day, papers describing the evolution and present state of planning policies and machinery in Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and Sydney were discussed. On the second, a variety of metropolitan planning themes were addressed. These included 'Planning Objectives' and the 'Instruments of Planning', with an international perspective provided by Peter Self. A full list of the papers delivered at the seminar can be found in the endpapers of this publication.

In the view of the Urban Research Unit, the seminar was timely. Sydney has a new metropolitan strategy covering urban growth and change for a population of up to four and a half million. Adelaide is the subject of a new 25-year metropolitan development strategy. Perth's corridor plan has been the subject of a recent major review. Melbourne has seen the transfer of metropolitan planning from the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works to the State Government, and the appearance of a 10-year urban strategy as part of a new integrated system of Cabinet policymaking. In the present unfavourable economic and political climate for strategic government planning, this revival of Australian metropolitan planning holds considerable interest. What can the big cities learn from each other's plans or from overseas experience? How useful are long-term land use plans and how do they relate to problems of urban management and service coordination? How much 'planning' is possible as opposed to incremental change and ad hoc decisions? What time horizons should be used? How, and how far, will metropolitan plans be actually implemented?

In the discussion, it emerged that all big cities (except Brisbane) wanted to reduce the extent and the cost of further peripheral growth, and to encourage urban consolidation and the promotion of stronger suburban centres. All of them wanted to retain the vitality of the capital city and its central area. The seminar revealed that these goals will not be easy to achieve, and that further study of the methods of implementation would be well worthwhile.

The second day produced intensive discussion of the respective virtues and vices of statutory land use plans versus coordinated but pragmatic urban
management systems. The machinery of State Government was given attention, as was the prospective role of local government, highlighted by the case of Brisbane. International experience suggested the key importance of land, housing and transportation policies for the achievement of metropolitan objectives, subjects which get too little attention in the Australian metropolitan plans. Some participants brought attention to the desirability of directing some growth to other centres in the same State. Others noted the weak understanding by planners of the property market and the need for more long-term evaluation of development costs and benefits.

The seminar achieved its aim of a useful review of the present state of metropolitan planning in Australia. In its wake, lies a formidable agenda for further research, comparison, evaluation and effective government action.
The Decline of Metropolitan Planning

In the 1960s regional and metro planning in Europe were flourishing. This was the era of big bold plans for London, Paris, Stockholm and other big cities. It was the era of regional development policies, comprehensive land use/transportation planning, projects for large new towns and cities, and comprehensive redevelopment in the old urban areas. It was also an era of planning technocracy and faith in system building, cost benefit analysis and other techniques. The decade also saw the start of vigorous protests against big development decisions.

In most European countries there had grown up a rich density of planning bodies working at national, regional, metro and local levels. There were national urban strategies, regional economic plans, metro plans and local plans. Although most of this machinery remains in place in most European countries, and sometimes has been more fully systematised, there is no doubt that the scope of planning and perhaps metro planning in particular has declined in the last decade. In the case of the UK, this process has gone much further and the Thatcher Government has dismantled the whole system of metro and regional planning, starting with the abolition of the regional economic planning councils in 1979 and continuing with the more drastic abolition of the Greater London Council (GLC) and the other metro counties. The government has changed the role of the Department of the Environment from one of promoting public planning initiatives to one of protecting private developers against local planning, and has cut down on the big public inquiries into major development decisions which used to be a feature of the British planning process. Finally, the government is now trying to eliminate structure planning by the remaining county councils so as to leave only a local (borough or district) level of plans.
This demolition job is the more striking inasmuch as Britain has had since the 1940s a strong tradition of regional and metro planning. In the 1960s, for example, there were three major regional plans dealing with the growth and structure of the London region—the South East Study (1964), Strategy for the South East (1967) and Strategic Plan for the South East (1970).\(^1\) Additionally, the Greater London Council produced the first and only London Development Plan, an ambitious effort which necessitated a public inquiry of over a year. Today any regional or metro planning depends upon the cautious efforts of joint advisory bodies appointed by the counties (in the region) and by the boroughs (in London), with the help of a little generalised advice from the Department of Environment.

The new Thatcher initiatives are the urban development corporations for London docklands, Merseyside and elsewhere, and the enterprise zones. The aims of these initiatives are to bypass local government planning and to stimulate private development—in the former case by making land and infrastructure available for private development, in the latter case by eliminating local development controls and rates.

There has been no comparable overthrow of government planning in other European countries. In some European countries, such as Denmark and the Netherlands, consensus politics have avoided large policy swings over planning. In a number of European countries, the tendency has been towards more, rather than less, delegation of powers to local government (Williams 1984). In the USA, the belated attempt of the Carter Administration to create a national urban policy soon floundered on economic and political rocks (Wilmoth 1986).

Specific machinery for metro government and planning has been created in a number of countries. Indeed the structural requirements of planning, and the need to integrate land use and transportation planning were a very

\(^1\) The first and third of these plans were prepared by the central department in conjunction with regional bodies and the second by the Regional Economic Planning Council.
important factor – sometimes the dominant factor – in the creation of metro governments in Britain, Canada, France, Sweden (Stockholm), Denmark (Copenhagen) and elsewhere. These metro governments were in some cases indirectly elected by the existing local authorities, although they were directly elected in Britain. The British metros as already noted have been abolished, but metros continue to exist elsewhere and exercise important planning powers.

I have reviewed the experience of planning in some metro governments elsewhere (Self 1982, Ch. 3; 1987). There are a number of reasons why planning by a metro government has sometimes not been as successful as was hoped or expected. One is that a metro government occupies the role of pig-in-the-middle between the national or state government and what are often powerful city or borough governments. The political consciousness of citizens at the metro level is often rather weak for bolstering metro in inter-governmental conflicts. Secondly, there is the point that the boundaries of metros often cover primarily a built-up area and do not extend into the growth zones of the surrounding region. It is partly for this latter reason that the most successful metropolitan planning in Britain has been done by regional rather than metro bodies, although the latter of course did not have a long life.

Metro planning, however, has had its successes, particularly in Canada and in Sweden. It provides a significant framework for financial equalisation within the metropolis (if the will is there) to add to its capacity as a physical planning authority, as is shown by the history of Metro Toronto.\(^2\) Besides its financial scheme, Metro Toronto financed the suburban education services when these were very expensive, and then took over the administration of welfare from the central city when its costs were soaring. The attempts to integrate physical planning and transportation were not very successful initially. Thus despite formal integration at every level, including the creation of a single department and coordinating

\(^2\) Besides its financial scheme, Metro Toronto financed the suburban education services when these were very expensive, and then took over the administration of welfare from the central city when its costs were soaring.
committee, the original Greater London Development Plan with its large orbital motor ways represented the victory of highway planning techniques. However, the incorporation of these highway proposals within a comprehensive plan did provide the opportunity for vigorous local objections at the public inquiry, as a result of which most of the Inner Ringway was deleted. Subsequently, the metro governments of London, Stockholm and Toronto all became pioneers in the development and implementation of a balanced transportation policy, with a substantial stress upon public transport.

The Changed Climate of Metropolitan Planning

Metro planning now has to contend everywhere with a changed and very difficult economic and political climate. There are three relevant factors:

*The Decline of Economic Growth.*
Declining economic growth would not be so serious for metro planning if low or nil growth rates were linked with a fairly stable economy and society. A stable society is not necessarily a discontented one and there would be scope for gradual environmental and social improvements. Today, however, the low growth rates are accompanied by rapid technological changes, strong international competition for increased productivity, and much instability in capital and monetary flows leading to rapidly shifting concentrations of unemployment and the erosion of the economic base of many local communities. Current patterns of economic change also seem to be producing increasing inequalities of wealth which are reflected in the urban distribution of income, mobility and access to services. These differences are likely to be not simply reflected but aggravated in the distribution of urban goods and bads, inasmuch as the critical choice of housing is linked with private capital which is much more unequally distributed than income, while richer areas benefit and poorer areas suffer from cumulative externalities and differential political influence.
The Crowding-out of Public Investment by Financial Policies

In 1983 the OECD stated:

*This situation will necessitate large expenditure on infrastructure provision in new growth areas and increasing maintenance and renewal costs for existing facilities in older areas.* [OECD 1983, pp. 11-12]

In fact, in most countries capital expenditures have borne the brunt of budget cuts, and public investment in the cities is quite inadequate to meet the urgent requirements which OECD went on to list. Public authorities depend increasingly, as a matter of both policy and necessity, upon attracting private investment, but such investment is not easily harnessed to the renovation of the basic infrastructure or to social facilities or priorities.

The Dominance of Market Philosophy

This circumvents the scope for planning because of the unpredictability and frequently short-time horizons of market decisions. These are matched today by the rapidity of technological change and planned obsolescence. Political and social attitudes to the future have also become foreshortened. Planning may have been guilty in the past of excessively long time horizons, but any effective physical planning needs at least a longer time span than is currently viewed as realistic.

New Conceptions of the Metropolis

The planning policies which were previously followed in many European countries, with their emphasis upon major new growth areas and strong measures of rural protection of green belts, have come to seem out-dated. They are often blamed also for having contributed to, or even caused the problems of economic decline and social deprivation which now afflict the big cities. But there is no new orthodoxy to replaced earlier planning concepts, beyond one of the need for flexibility and opportunism in order to comply with the concept of market-led growth. Planners are expected to get out of the way of such growth, although they may have the opportunity to achieve some 'planning gain' from private investment if
they know what they want and have the powers and skills to bargain effectively with developers (although in Britain even the concept of 'planning gain' is currently under attack). There are also some positive examples of planning authorities taking the initiative in achieving mixed developments which both stimulate the economy and improve the environment, sometimes through enlisting the skills of private consultants.3

A dominant planning priority, in Europe as in Australia, is to favour urban containment policies on the grounds of economy in public services; drawbacks of further urban expansion in terms of long journeys to work; environmental obstacles to indefinite urban growth; and the rapid growth of new and smaller households, typified by older people and single parent families.

However, it is usually recognised by planners that urban containment can be only a very partial solution for urban growth problems because of the ageing and smaller size of existing households in inner areas; political opposition by existing residents to denser development; the slow rate of change of the built-up urban fabric; and high land costs which in the more attractive inner areas are usually rising much faster than land on the urban fringe. Thus, urban containment policies may gradually change the residential pattern of inner areas, but will doubtfully do more in most cases than check further population decline. Even so, there is no real agreement as to precisely how these inner areas ought to change, any more than there is recognition of pending growth pressures or agreement upon how to deal with them.

It is sometimes supposed that the growth of big cities in the western world will slow down or even cease, and that there is already appreciable migration to small towns or the countryside itself. However, planning studies show that the growing towns and villages lie overwhelmingly within the expanding orbits of metropolitan areas, and that rural areas beyond these orbits are still in decline. The real truth is the extensive size

3 See, for example, The Planner, June 1987.
of the metropolitan orbits themselves and their changing structure. Hans Blumenfeld (1985, pp. 6-9), for example, points out that three-quarters of the US population now inhabit the enlarged orbits of metro areas, if these are defined as a fifty mile radius for the smaller metros and a seventy mile radius for the larger ones (over 2 million population). In many metro areas, a second urban ring has grown up around the original central city shaped to some extent by movement along large orbital highways. A third type of metro expansion can be seen in and around existing or new towns still further out. Finally, there is a large and growing 'rurban' fringe. Moreover while residential densities continue to decline in inner areas, they are increasing in outer suburbia although the density decline becomes sharp in the 'rurban' fringe.

The giant exploding metropolis is seen by some people as a desirable outcome of popular preferences made increasingly possible by modern communication technologies. On this approach, urban containment policies may be somewhat mistaken if they fly in the face of what is presumed to be consumer demands.

This issue of urban structure is also very much a political one in many European countries and in the USA. Suburban and exurban residents resist the incursion of lower income people from the inner city, particularly of course different ethnic groups but also all occupants of public housing. Their trump cards in Britain and some other European countries have been the needs of agricultural conservation and the value of green belts. The agricultural card has now lost much of its value in view of the explicit EEC requirement to reduce the total of agricultural land under production. The green belt card is still played strongly in Britain. A plea for strong urban containment policies so as to protect the countryside and green belts comes in a recent pamphlet by rural based Tory MP Wets under the beguiling title THIS PLEASANT LAND! (Conservative Political Centre, 1987). The MPs are Wets because they support strong planning controls for this particular purpose contrary to the Thatcher market philosophy.
It has in fact always been a problem of green belts and rural protection, when effectively applied, that they raise land prices under free market conditions. This situation has contributed to the escalation of house prices in southern England. The *quid pro quo* for such containment policies was a large new towns program plus selective measures of town development for smaller centres. However, these selective measures have now been disbanded, and in a market situation attempts to keep people in the inner city by denying them alternatives are very discriminatory. This raises the question of whether the earlier planning policies were after all wrong in principle. These policies did not create the pressures of urban dispersal, as can be seen by the fact that the large decline in GLC population by 8 million to little more than 6 million has largely occurred since dispersal policies were curtailed. The old policies channelled and coordinated a 'natural' dispersal process into new developments beyond the green belt, thereby opening up new opportunities for inner city residents which were superior to those of outer suburbia. However, it was a clear defect of such policies that they failed to deal with the spiralling land prices.

**Problems of the Inner City**

It is in the inner areas of large cities that past planning policies seem most obviously to have failed. Among the present problems of these cities may be listed:

- The collapse of manufacturing industry and consequently high unemployment rates, especially among unskilled and less skilled workers.

- A serious housing situation, caused partly by the degeneration of older properties, the conversion of rented properties to owner occupation and consequent shortages of suitable rental housing. These difficulties have been much compounded by the past mistakes of housing policy, particularly the construction of high system-built blocks of flats which were expensive and have proved widely unpopular. In Britain many of
these blocks have already been demolished and others let at low rents to students or single persons.⁴

- Many unused sites due to unfulfilled zonings for shops, schools, parks and other purposes.

- The destructive effects of traffic blight or 'corridor communities'.

Not all these problems, especially the first, can be ascribed to planning failures. Other areas besides the inner city, such as suburban public housing estates and some smaller industrial towns, are suffering from the first two problems.

Public policies switched from comprehensive redevelopment to conservation and rehabilitation as funds dried up and the mistakes of housing policy became apparent. They have also switched from the earlier forms of compensation for social deprivation (such as educational priority areas and new social investment) to the promotion of industrial development. Economic policy has come to be seen as the central requirement of inner city areas; however, its limitations under present conditions are also apparent. The amount of industrial land and factory space now made available in inner London by competing but hopeful local governments much exceeds any likely demand for it. The competition for mobile industry is to a considerable extent a zero-sum game within a metropolitan area, and devices like enterprise zones to some extent merely divert firms away from better planned areas into an industrial no-mans land.

Many planning expedients for inner cities have been tried, but as the OECD has said there has been no Abercrombie plan for inner areas (that is, a convincing prescription for their future; but see Town and Country Planning Association, 1986).

⁴ Similar mistaken housing policies were pursued in many European cities. For the causes of these housing blunders see Dunleavy (1981).
Many inner city areas are now inhabited by three very different types of residential community. First, there is the remainder of the old working class, now an ageing and predominantly unskilled group due to the exodus of the more skilled workers and their young families to newer areas. Secondly, there are the new immigrant communities. These unlike the first group have a strong kinship structure and active community life, and to a large extent they occupy, not public housing, but large and frequently decayed older properties. Some of these ethnic groups have very high unemployment, others with entrepreneurial skills much less. Finally, there is the impact of gentrification. Professional or upper income groups have absorbed some of the best available housing, but they have also had some favourable effects upon local investment and public facilities and sometimes provide political leadership for the struggles of the other groups. For example, one of the few striking successes of urban protest movements in London – namely the prevention of large offices near Waterloo Station and the substitution of cooperative housing, parks and cultural facilities was much helped by the leadership of a few professional people in this generally declining working class area.5

These three very different types of local residents vary in their significance both between cities and within the area of any city. Where they are all represented within the same area, as does happen, local government becomes more politically charged and sometimes leads to strong pressures for environmental improvements and better public services.

What do People Want?

The problems of inner cities raise the old question of what kind of environment people actually want or prefer. Many planners can be criticised for environmental determinism, but it would not be true that earlier planning policies lacked popular justification or support. The new town policies, for example, certainly reflected the widespread demand for

5 Perhaps protest movement is the wrong description since the local residents' preferences were legitimately enshrined within the local development plan, which then had to resist successive assaults from office developers encouraged by a sympathetic Minister (see Tuckett, 1986).
better, lower density housing and shorter journeys to work, and subsequent social surveys in these towns showed their residents to be satisfied with the results. The technocratic rot in planning set in with mass produced system housing and with the American transportation studies which assumed that the only relevant demand input was the 'desire lines' shown by motorists travel patterns, projected forward into larger and more spread urban systems.

Today, planners have good reasons to be more humble. Social surveys are at least more likely to help them than formal consultation procedures over local plans. This is because skillful social surveys can provide some insight into housing, environmental and access preferences of individuals, and their trade-offs between different desiderata, whereas formal planning procedures are dominated by property interests unless good information can be provided about the wishes of those less informed. In particular, social surveys are needed to clarify the preferences of the growing majority of households which do not fit the traditional standards of the nuclear family, including immigrant groups.

Public policies have been excessively guided by the interests or preferences of affluent white males. Linked with this is the fact that 'cosmopolitans' and 'locals' have different environmental preferences and most planners like other professionals are cosmopolitan. The affluent increasingly maximise private consumption, but poorer people depend much more on collective goods. As the poorer are also as a rule 'locals' in their attitudes and behaviour, the quality and the familiarity of their immediate environment is in fact more important for them than it is for 'cosmopolitans'. The quality of public transport, local parks, the safety of the streets, the availability of public telephones, easy and safe access to schools and shops, not to mention such possibilities as cycle tracks for children or cheap land for vegetable allotments – all these facilities are far more significant for those tied closely to their local environment than they are for the mobile cosmopolitan (see Ravetz, 1980, pp. 296-98). Popenoe's (1977) social survey of the residents of an American Levittown and of one of Stockholm's planned satellites brought out the success (in this case) of a private developer in giving people the kind of housing they
prefer but the complete failure of a private enterprise system in almost every other respect. The Stockholm area scored highly on all the matters such as access, safety, social facilities, and a pleasant and protected environment on which Levittown failed.

Some Implications for Metropolitan Planning

Where does this analysis leave planning policies for the future? Much will depend upon our economic assumptions and social values.

Is high unemployment here to stay? Is the search for market led economic growth so desperate and so imperative that all other policies must be subordinated to its pursuit or doled out as reluctant palliatives to the poor? Personally, I do not accept this conclusion.

Conversely, how important is environmental quality? Many environmental variables do not show up, either positively or negatively, in the economic statistics of wealth, but environmental quality can be claimed a public good of great and growing importance. Thus, the avoidance and reduction of air, water and noise pollution, good social facilities and convenient and safe access to them, and a well-kept and safe public estate can be said to constitute an important part of the living standards or welfare of individuals, particularly as has been said for those who depend most closely upon their local environment.

There is also value in social stability which market theory in its stress on consumption maximisation and its minimisation of the high costs of social change tends to disregard. Equally, of course, stability should not be equated with the maintenance of urban ghettos which most people want to leave. Inner city policy will only be acceptable when people stay there willingly. This implies that in the European context, at least, further population exodus from the inner cities must be accepted. The vacant land in these areas is something of an illusion when account is taken of their total environmental capacity — for example the need for traffic segregation and the case for more 'greening' of the cities. In the long run, the economic future of these inner areas may be mainly as chosen
residential areas for both service and professional workers in the city centre. This seems in most cases a more likely future than the revival of manufacturing activity, although some forms of manufacturing will doubtless remain.

The limits to urban containment emphasise the need to recognise the continuing pressures for urban growth and, in the absence of effective land value legislation, it becomes necessary to err on the generous side in allocating land for this purpose so as to check spiralling land prices. Given the changed position of agriculture it is also possible to open up areas of land for small part-time holdings or hobby-farms, an opportunity which could mean much more to some of the urban unemployed as well as some urban workers than it does to those rich who now enjoy this privilege on a larger, often tax supported scale. In the urban region of the future there needs to be scope for a variety of small settlements built by cooperatives or communes as well as by private enterprise or local government. The expanding urban system needs to be linked through a balanced system of public transportation and highways, and related to a set of accessible sub-centres, some of which will necessarily be larger than the centres of smaller cities.

The Scope and Possibilities of Metropolitan Planning

A major problem for physical planners is what Painter (1979) calls the impossibility of urban policy. By this he partly means that cities are shaped by 'sectoral politics' – by the decisions of housing, highway, transport, water, educational and other agencies which have their own goals, methods and clienteles that are largely impervious to the views of planners or planning agencies. Hence, cities are shaped by a series of largely separate and often contradictory policy inputs deriving from different sectors. The input of the planning sector as such may be quite minor and modest, although the situation doubtless varies with the status and powers of planners, the political system and the machinery of government.
This argument raises the question of what we mean by planning. Thus, planning is often used to refer to all those public decisions which have a sizable development impact, so that housing, transportation, and similar decisions are often attributed to planning and planners, and have indeed been so treated at points in this and other papers. Such treatment is, of course, a conventional way of regarding this issue, and one which leads many bad or unpopular development decisions to be laid on the shoulders of the planning agency. A closer look at this problem requires us to separate the machinery of physical planning from other forms of machinery which crucially affect urban development decisions. However, such a separation still leaves open the point that by various devices of coordination, a more comprehensive form of planning and implementation may be (and has on occasion been) generated than an inspection of the powers of physical planners as such would suggest. It is also true no doubt that a stronger role for physical planners usually goes with stronger coordinating machinery of this kind.

Physical planning's answer to this problem of limited jurisdiction and influence has generally been to ally itself to that policy sector which seems at the time to be closest to its own concerns and interests, or alternatively for such linkages to come about through the ways in which urban issues are politically or generally perceived. This evolution of planners' alliances with particular sectors, or its dependency upon them, continues to evolve and international experience reveals some interesting common themes in its course.

Originally, physical planning was primarily linked with public health, and many regulations of urban development and measures of slum clearance were enacted primarily on health grounds. The next stage of evolution was a close linkage between planning and housing policies, which reached its apogee after 1945 during the era of massive public housing. The idea of environmental improvement was for a long time linked with a notion of housing improvement, and schemes for garden suburbs or cities, urban redevelopment and so on were viewed in these joint terms. In particular, the welfare of lower income groups would seem to depend upon joint housing and planning measures, and the implementation of many
ambitious post-1945 plans turned upon the execution of large public housing programs. New towns, for example, were often conceived in this way, which in some peoples' eyes has led to an under-valuation of their potentiality in other contexts. There was for a long time close cooperation between the planning and housing departments of local authorities, and central Ministries (for example, in Britain and France) often combined both functions.

This particular linkage lost its salience when public housing programs declined and also became unpopular through the failures of high rise housing. The next dominant linkage was between planning and transportation. This reached its apogee in the 1960s with the publication of Buchanan's 'Traffic in Towns' and with large land use transportation studies. A good example already quoted was the way in which the creation of the GLC was largely premised upon the need to integrate physical planning and transportation at the metropolitan level (the same argument was strongly deployed in the Stockholm reform). Moreover, the GLC deliberately placed both departments under the same committee of the Council and, when this failed to achieve enough integration, formally amalgamated the two departments, although placing the new body under two different heads. The effect of this integration was unhappy, since the harder techniques of the transportation planners dominated the softer ones of the physical planners and the consequent Greater London Plan emerged under the influence of American highway planning. However, later attempts to integrate these functions at the metro level have been somewhat more successful in a number of places.

The next strong linkage occurred in the 1970s between physical planning and the rising requirements of environmental protection, who formed natural bedfellows. Coupled with the new stress upon conservation of old buildings, and the protection of the architectural and landscape heritage, this arrangement gave the impression of planning as being predominantly, if not exclusively, concerned with 'amenities' and the cultural side of the urban heritage, down-playing its earlier links with social and economic goals. Thus, Mackay (1982) ends his comparative study of European planning by urging planners to keep out of the economic and equity issues...
which they cannot control, and to concentrate upon preserving the cultural heritage. More recently still, the link between physical planning and economic development initiatives has been strongly expressed, although this seems to be more a matter of responding in the only acceptable way to urban problems of decline than any real integration of economic and physical development policies. Previously, the situation was that environmental planning moved from the bottom upwards as urban areas expanded, while economic planning moved from the top downwards as its regional dimensions became of more account. Thus, physical and economic planning met in a somewhat hazy but potentially productive way at the metropolitan or regional level. This is still a real possibility for metro planning, but its potentiality is at present disguised by the much more localised stress upon often conflicting development initiatives.

Finally, we may note that planning is often linked in governmental machinery with the oversight of local government. This is in fact a very rational arrangement, not only because national planning policies (if such exist) have in many countries to be primarily realised through local government, but also because planning offers in theory the broadest base for the oversight of local government generally. This conjunction of responsibilities in the British Ministry of Local Government and Planning (later Department of the Environment) did quite a lot to strengthen planning generally in an earlier period. Such a fusion of powers has less impact in Australia, because of the smaller powers and lower status of local government.

This analysis raises fascinating issues about the optimal linkages of a physical planning agency with other departments. Another approach of course is to treat physical planning as a central staff function, relieve it of operating responsibilities and tie it in with other conceptions of overall planning, such as corporate planning and strategic planning.

It is going too far to say that effective metro planning is impossible because of the limitations or weaknesses of such linkages. Effective policies have indeed become possible when,
• planning is widely accepted or respected and has known goals;

• planning has a strong ministerial, regional and local government status;

• this is backed up by special agencies for purposes such as new towns, land assembly, conservation of green spaces and urban renewal;

• planning is expressed through influential regional or metro plans; and

• is linked to other agencies by strong coordinative committees working with the support of political leadership.

These conditions did exist to a considerable extent in the earlier planning of London, Paris, Stockholm and some other cities (Self 1982, Ch. 4.). Clearly, they are hard to recreate today, but the need for strategic metropolitan planning has not gone away.

The future planning of growth will call for the kind of machinery and powers embodied in earlier legislation, such as that for new towns, with the important difference that the relevant planning bodies will now be facilitating development by other groups and agencies rather than building towns themselves. A key role needs to be played by processes of land assembly and allocation at controlled prices, which (however difficult politically) is fundamental to the viability, credibility and equity of any planning system.

The Land Issue

Land values in metro areas are rising faster than inflation, but the unearned increment of these values still usually goes into private pockets. This is not only inequitable – private land owners did not cause the growth of the city nor do they pay for it – but the arrangement is highly inefficient in a period when public funds are inadequate to pay for the high cost of
infrastructure additions and replacements which result from urban growth and change.

The usual answer to this problem is to seek developers contributions or 'planning gain'. This system is certainly better than nothing and it needs to be critically used and improved. Yet developers pass on their costs to purchasers in one form or another and there are only very limited effects on land prices as such. To really influence land prices, it would be necessary to abandon planning since, if there were a much greater supply of land for development, development contributions would exert a depressive effect upon land prices. This is the basis of the frequent and not unjustified criticism that planning is itself (as the system stands) inequitable and discriminatory against the poor.

The most effective system is the Swedish one for ten-year rolling programs of land acquisition by local governments at prices exclusive of the development value attributable to future use. The land can then be allocated for either private or public uses as required. This policy with some modifications was also the basis of the UK New Towns legislation and of the British Community Land Act (Haar 1984, Chs. 2, 4, and 7). These British policies failed for two clear reasons which also apply to the Whitlam efforts at land reform in Australia. One is that development values have come to form part (and a very lucrative part) of the portfolios of institutional and other investors. Consequently, the introduction of land legislation can only be gradual (as the UK Act provided) and before the new system can solidify a political change of government is likely to occur. A second problem is that the Treasury must put substantial funds into the program before it becomes self sustaining when it will in fact become very beneficial for public service finance; but Treasuries grudge the initial outlay (as happened in Britain) and apparently lack the necessary foresight. Interestingly enough when such a system has been implemented, the Treasury will then see its advantages. Thus, in Britain the Treasury was opposed to the repeal of development charges by the Conservative government (Cullingworth 1976-79).
A more limited but quite effective system is the French 'Zones d'Amenagement Differe' (ZAD), areas within which public bodies can acquire land at prices which exclude any recent increase in development values and where public authorities have the first right to buy the land and use it for either public or private purposes. ZADs have been extensively used (OECD 1983, p. 34). Another system which is of considerable relevance for urban containment is the German method of pooling land ownerships in specified areas and then reassigning ownerships, with the proviso that the local authority can retain up to 30 per cent of the new land value as betterment (OECD 1983, pp. 31-32).

In the absence of effective land value legislation and techniques, the planners' pet tool of 'public consultation' becomes something of a sham since on the whole it is only those with material interests at stake who have the motivation, knowledge and resources to participate actively in the planning process. Moreover, the existence of large land profits which can be easily made or augmented by planning decisions is a standing temptation to political and bureaucratic corruption. Planners quite correctly regard this issue as a political one, but unfortunately for them they cannot conscientiously ignore or stay neutral on an issue which goes to the heart of their rationale as a profession, and it is somewhat disgraceful that they usually are silent about what they must know to be an ineffective and inequitable planning system.

The Machinery of Metropolitan Planning

There is a further organisational problem about metro planning in that there is usually no strong political or institutional focus for its practice. The experiments with metro governments have offered one possible answer to this problem, but it is an answer which appears to have not much relevance to Australia.

This conclusion would not be altogether correct. There are two possible approaches in Australia towards creating a more democratic input into metro planning. One would be to adopt the Brisbane model, at least partly, and to create stronger central cities within metro areas. The city
governments of Melbourne and Sydney have suffered continually from the polarisation between the interests of property in the CBD and the interests of surrounding residents, but if the city took in a much wider range of residents this would become less of a problem. A city government is after all a real expression of democratic vitality. Surely, no great city should be without an effective city government even if its boundaries (as is generally true in the world) fall well short of the expanding urbanized area. A relatively strong city government is not necessarily the poor promoter of metropolitan planning its restricted area might suggest. At any rate, the examples of Stockholm City and of the London County Council (the GLCs smaller but more powerful predecessor) suggest otherwise.

Secondly, that is an obvious case for a regional planning body comprising all the local governments within the metro area. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works was a halfway house towards this concept, now abolished instead of being further developed.

Given Australian conditions, the more familiar and accepted need is that of strengthening the machinery of State metro planning. The concept of a Cabinet committee plus an inter-departmental official committee for the coordination of metro planning now takes precedence over the older idea of a separate metro planning authority composed primarily of relevant officials. The new approach can be seen as more politically relevant, but it is only so if there is a strong Minister for Planning and metro planning machinery is taken seriously politically and has a strong official status.

The Planners' Future Role

These ideas may seem quite a distance from the present role and status of town planners. Currently, planners have been forced back to a restricted concern with land use regulation, but even here planning decisions are often overruled on appeal and big decisions are taken away from the planning authorities and dealt with by a fast-circuit political process. Having little independent philosophy of their own (or not being able to
show it), planners are also increasingly subservient to the political and organisational goals (or rather interventions) which they are handed.

Secondly, public planners have lost ground in status and effectiveness to private consultants, and planning itself has been partly superseded by 'policy analysis'. As a personal example, the London School of Economics M.Sc. course in Urban and Regional Planning which I helped to start was initially funded by government because of the need for more official town planners. In fact, many of its alumni work as policy analysts and only a minority are in the public sector.

This switch to policy analysis is understandable and up to a point desirable. Planning has laid too much stress on regulation of land use and too little upon influencing the many other policy decisions which in total more strongly shape the physical environment. Today, in particular, the only way to achieve positive results in the city is through skillful policy analysis and influence. For example, a policy such as urban containment can only partly be pursued through changing land use rules and requires financial measures to change the climate in which individuals, firms and public agencies make their decisions.

Perhaps planners should be left to their fate. After all, planning in its heyday was the product of independent visionaries and entrepreneurs, some of them amateurs and some members of related professions. Planning seems to have lost its way since it became bureaucratised and professionalised.

If metro planning is to recover some appeal, the essential condition is that it should be able to offer a mixture of both substantive and redistributive gains. Planning cannot have an effective impact if it is (a) simply subservient to dominant interests; or (b) is concerned only with the welfare of the majority; or (c) views planning as a zero-sum game for redistributing the goods and bads of urban life. The goals of planning are the three Es: efficiency, environment, equity. The first two goals have to deliver substantive gains in terms of the general functioning of the urban system and environmental enhancement (or at least the avoidance of the
ever present danger of degradation). The third goal has to offer specific and differential gains to the present losers in the urban race and urban policy-making.

This may seem like a counsel of perfection but in fact it is only what planning once claimed to deliver. To move back towards this position, some tips for planners might be helpful:

• Don't bother about enhancing the prestige of a specialised but narrow profession. Be polyvalent and modest.

• Encourage and welcome the emergence of a strong, independent and idealistic voluntary organisation like the British Town and Country Planning Association. Australia suffers greatly from the lack of such a body, which at least keeps professional planners on their toes and mindful of their social ideals.

• Be sure that planning education includes some critical understanding of the techniques of related professions, such as transportation, cost benefit analysis, or social policy. Dutch planners now have to take at least one such specialisms.

• Insert some knowledge of planning into the curriculum of other professions. Promote the study of an integrated approach to environmental planning, such as the British School of Advanced Urban Studies was originally set up to do. (The idea was abandoned because the Department of the Environment lost interest in it).

• Set up a strong policy unit in the planning department which is specifically concerned with policy analysis and the influence of other public policies upon urban growth and change.

• Acquire an understanding of the influence of public financial techniques upon urban issues. Colonise the Treasury – if you can!

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6 For earlier goals, see Self 1961.
• Work hard on the concept of 'coordination by ideas' so as to influence other decision makers. Luther Gulick saw this as the principle on which the far flung British Empire was run, if so it surely could get somewhere within the confines of a State administration.

• Produce bolder and more open-ended metro plans which draw to public and political attention the problems of urban growth (environmental limits and effects, costs and so forth) and the options for changing and steering cities. Widen the range of such options to include the possibilities of bolder public initiatives.
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