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HOW MUCH OF 'CITY OF CITIES, A PLAN FOR SYDNEYS FUTURE' IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN?

Abstract: *A continuing issue in metropolitan strategic plans is how much of them will be implemented. This appears to depend on how far planners are able to understand and shape the future of the city; whether appropriate planning and decision-making frameworks and mechanisms exist or can be put in place for making proposals happen; and what kind of methodology, content and process is used in preparing a plan. These themes are employed to analyse the way four of the major issues attending the future of Sydney are dealt with in the recently released metropolitan strategy 'City of Cities'. These are economic development and its spatial representation, housing, water management and use, and transportation. The first two of these represent innovative exercises in the linking of economic activity and living with land use, density and location. The second two reflect more abstract challenges in framing proposals to acknowledge the increasing constraints of natural resources upon which the city depends. The review ends by suggesting that changes to the planning process would improve the chances of implementation, and the effectiveness of the outcomes.*

Introduction

Much comment about metropolitan strategies is about how realistic they are in terms of implementation. Paterson (2000) maintained that plans and planners do not have the capacity to bring about significant changes in cities and Michael Costa, the present Treasurer of New South Wales is reported as saying that metropolitan plans are harmless as they are likely to be overturned by the next change of government anyway (Malkin 2006). These intellectual and political judgements have been contested by others (e.g. Mees 2000a, Gleeson *et al* 2004), and a recent inquiry into the sustainability of local councils in New South Wales concluded that 'Some of Sydney's strategic plans have contributed positively to shape the Sydney region while others have remained on the drawing board or been abandoned by an incoming State government' (Allan 2006, p.152).

The likelihood of implementation seems to involve three considerations. Firstly, whether planners have adequately understood the forces shaping and driving cities and devised proposals to more effectively direct these. Secondly whether policies, decisions, investment, projects and operations, particularly by governments will support and drive the plan. It is within this context of understanding and perception that planners devise a methodology and process for plan-making and communication. Hence the importance of this third element, in 'reading' the plan (Searle 2004) and in examining the suitability and effectiveness of its content, argument and structure.

This paper deals with four of the major topics contained in the current metropolitan strategy *City of Cities* (NSW Department of Planning 2005), and comments on how realistic the proposals seem to be. These are economy and employment and their link with centres and corridors; housing; management and use of water; and transportation. A final section uses these conclusions to suggest changes to the process of

metropolitan strategic plan-making in order to improve the chances of implementation.

City of Cities (hereafter called the plan) is centrally about economic development. 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' (www.metrostrategy.nsw.gov.au). The most noticeable and strongest feature of the plan is in classifying economic activity and developing a differentiated typology of centres and locations to which different kinds of businesses are linked. These form the first two sections of the plan and are closely associated.

Economy, employment, centres and corridors

Proposals

Earlier studies have identified the importance that advanced business services have in global economic activity, and their marked clustering tendencies (Spiller 2003, 2005). This concept is carried forward and extended in the plan to identify the higher-order industries of this kind and where they are located. Thus 'Global Sydney' (central Sydney and North Sydney) is a location for concentrations of information technology and communication, multimedia, tourism and hospitality, cultural industries, finance and business, and health and education (p.48). This concentration is extended south to the airport and north west to Macquarie Business Park to form a 'Global Economic Corridor' containing other clusters of these and other higher-order industries. The plan estimates 700,000 jobs were contained in this corridor in 2001 and 850,000 will be in 2031.

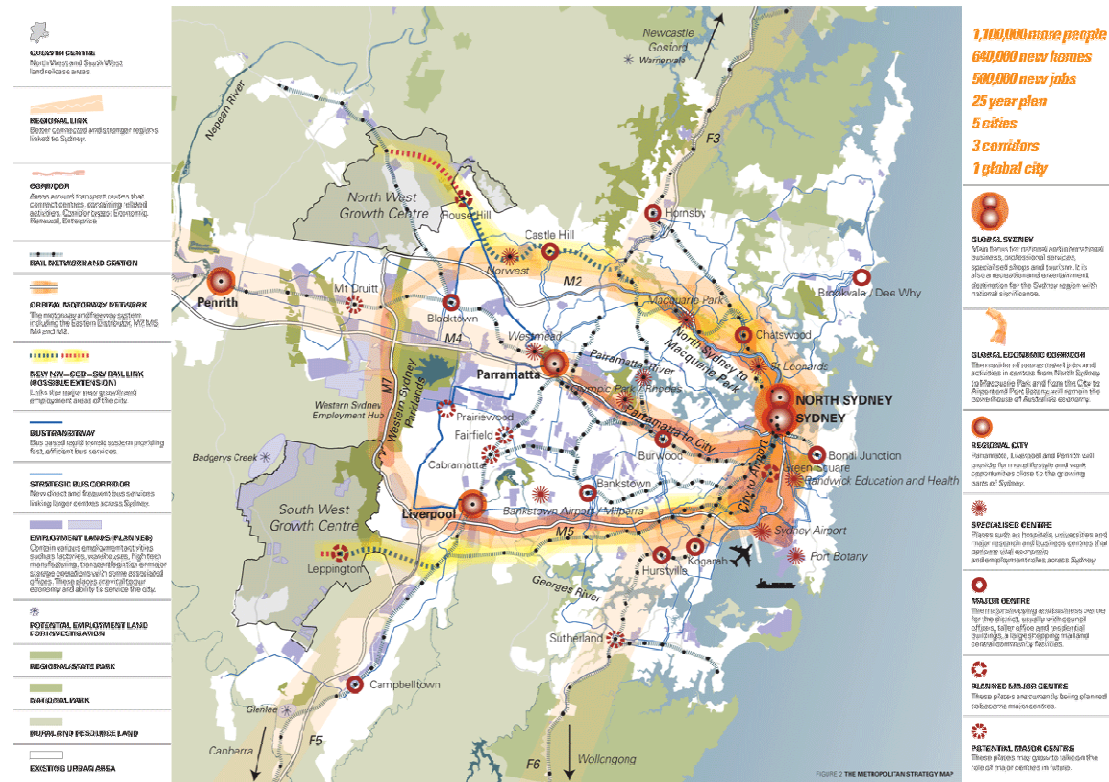
The other complex of employment identified is that of 'Western Sydney', the suburban area stretching to the west of Olympic Park, just to the east of Parramatta. This is estimated to contain 663,000 jobs in 2001 and projected to have 900,000 in 2031. This suburban economy is driven by the consumption demands of the growing population, and the continuing decentralisation and establishment of manufacturing, commercial, warehousing, storage, and distribution operations.

The spatial representation of the Sydney economy and its various components is a particularly useful one and reflects research and argument of this kind into concentrations of employment, clustering, and the development of suburban economies around the changing dynamics of housing and labor markets. (Freestone 1996, O'Connor 1997, O'Connor *et al* 2001, Fagan *et al* 2004, Dodson & Berry 2004, Forster 2004). This theme becomes the main component in the metropolitan strategy map, a simplified version of which is shown in Figure 1.

Twenty seven 'strategic' centres of various kinds are nominated and employment 'targets' for each set for 2031. The most important are the two centres of Sydney and North Sydney making up 'Global Sydney'. Four regional centres are designated, three in the west at Parramatta, Liverpool and Penrith and the fourth north of Sydney at Gosford in the Central Coast of New South Wales. There follows nine specialised centres of different kinds such as Sydney Airport and Randwick Education and Health. Finally there are twelve major more general purpose centres. The plan seeks

to strengthen their role so that the share of total jobs in strategic centres is expected to increase from just over 40 per cent to almost 45 per cent (p.94).

Figure 1: Main elements of the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, 2005
(source: NSW Department of Planning 2005, p. 10-11)



Apart from the ‘Global Economic Corridor’ already defined as extending south and north west of ‘Global Sydney’, other corridors of growth and renewal are defined. They are variously categorised as ‘Economic’ ‘Renewal’ and ‘Enterprise’. One Economic Corridor along the M5 joins Sydney Airport with Liverpool to the west. Another extends north-south along the M7, the recently completed western section of the ‘Orbital Motorway Network’. The important Parramatta-Sydney road and rail corridor is the sole Renewal Corridor, although other routes are identified as Potential Renewal Corridors.

Comment

The purpose of analysing the major characteristics of Sydney’s economy, including its spatial representation, is that this can then be used as a basis for developing a pattern of economic activity largely housed in centres and corridors of differing character and importance. This is also supported by the main transportation links underpinning the plan.

Given the importance of the strategic centres in the future, it is curious that so little information is given concerning their individual character and rationale for selection. This is despite the troubled history attending activity centres in Melbourne’s planning

past (McLoughlin 1992) and the substantial research effort later invested in their description, classification and future role (McNabb *et al* 2001, Victorian Department of Infrastructure 2002, Victorian Department of Sustainability & Environment 2003). Of the three regional centres designated in western Sydney, Parramatta has long been recognised as a second order CBD after central Sydney. But little concrete evidence is given for the selection of Liverpool and particularly Penrith for their starring roles, apart from the fact that they are ‘river’ cities (pp. 297-8).

Western Sydney bears the brunt of growth in employment and residential population. Outside Sydney City and the Inner North subregion (largely Global Sydney), the West Central, North West and South West subregions are anticipated to house about three quarters of the expected growth of jobs, if Gosford-Wyong is excluded. It is only possible to estimate the increase in dwellings on the same basis using the data provided in the plan, but a comparable proportion of new housing is located in these subregions. This means a major effort in job creation in the region where unemployment is already relatively high. Few of these are likely to be advanced business services and it is to be expected that there will be an increase in the existing large-scale travel to jobs (p. 105) outside the area for this kind of employment.

The plan indicates the further work needed to make or help all this happen as it is unlikely that nominations as strategic centres and zoning by itself will bring about the desired outcomes (Goodman & Moloney 2004). A number of important additional measures are proposed to help this come about, without any indication of how important each is to the implementation of the proposals contained in the plan. Considerable weight is placed on the development of an Innovation Strategy ‘consistent with the principles and directions of the metropolitan strategy’ (p.68). Another is the preparation of a State Infrastructure Plan, which would in part act as a framework for ‘magnet’ infrastructure policy to help clustering of vital industries in suitable centres and corridors (p.70).

Finally the 2031 targets and locations for employment and housing are essentially scoping exercises that properly seek to place anticipated growth in appropriate locations. How these opportunities are realised essentially depends on how developers, entrepreneurs, the market and governments take up and support them over time. Some centres will more than fulfil expectations, others will change in unexpected ways, and yet others will remain much as they are with some modest growth. These dynamics alter some of the assumptions and relationships built into the plan. While the necessary monitoring and adjustment process is outlined in the last section of the plan dealing with implementation and governance, such exercises in the past have not been very effective. Progressive adjustment of the framework could be helped by subregional planning, and the shorter-term understandings contained in the rolling Metropolitan Development Program which deals with the capacities of areas for residential growth and renewal over the next few years, and whose scope is to be extended to employment lands (p.66).

Housing

Proposals

It is proposed in the plan that 60-70 per cent of new housing will be existing urban areas, mainly around centres and in corridors amounting to about 445,000 dwellings by 2031. This gives a balanced approach between new releases of greenfields land, and renewal and infill in existing suburbs. The latter will thus be predominantly in the form of attached housing of one kind or another – terrace houses, villas, townhouses, flats, units, apartments.

Housing densities in existing urban areas are relatively high in central Sydney, from there north to Chatswood, east to the coast, and to the immediate south and west of the City. The plan acknowledges that there may be difficulties in redeveloping areas of existing flats, and argues that there is much potential for renewal in the middle and outer suburbs to the west. Here the low density separate housing which exists is “the first development since the land was cleared and transformed from agriculture and pasture” (p.136). The housing targets for dwelling increases here amount to 205,000 of the 445,000 needed in existing urban areas. When account is taken of the dwellings removed in the renewal process, considerably more than this net increase will need to be built.

Comment

Housing affordability in Sydney is poor (Yates *et al* 2006). Attached housing could well be built generally in the numbers and locations indicated as it is cheaper than separate housing, and probably more responsive to planning direction than business is for example (Bramley & Kirk 2005). This housing is presently predominantly for rental (Randolph 2005), and would be available for those unable or unwilling to buy a dwelling. But there could be a rise in home-ownership of this kind of housing through purchase by those wanting to buy a dwelling but unable to afford a separate house. However, what is the kind of demand for higher density dwellings?

In contradistinction to the careful differentiation of the different kinds and characteristics of economic activity and their spatial representation that is present in the employment and centres sections, there is no such analysis in this section. Much emphasis is placed on population projections, the decreasing size of households and the growing number of single and couple households. The view of higher density housing as creating inclusive and intimate neighbourhoods and ‘pavement cafes’ (see Breheny 1996) is also evident. The smaller size of attached dwellings, with only one or two bedrooms generally (Randolph 2005) is seen as an appropriate response to this trend. However, the assumption of the fit between increasing numbers of smaller households and higher density housing has been questioned (Wulff *et al* 2004) and there are local examples of concentrations of families with children living in attached housing (Gooding 1990, Randolph & Holloway 2005a).

More particularly, recent research has shown that the higher density housing market is far from homogeneous, and can be segmented into a number of sub-markets each of which is represented in several different locations in Sydney (Bunker *et al* 2005a, Bunker *et al* 2005b). The most important of these is a suburban, low income rental

market characterised by a high proportion of immigrants, followed by a higher value, high amenity, inner city and waterfront market dominated by people with an Anglo-Celtic background. These two contrasting sub-markets show the importance of recognising the social impacts and implication of building large quantities of attached housing. For example by adding more higher density housing to areas of existing concentrations of disadvantage in the lower value middle western suburbs of Sydney (Randolph 2002, Randolph & Holloway 2004, Randolph & Holloway 2005b), this could compound the existing problems of stress, difficulty and wellbeing that these areas and communities face.

An analysis of the social profile of people presently living in high density housing in the three nominated regional centres of Parramatta, Liverpool and Penrith has been carried out (Bunker *et al* 2005c). The data used to construct a social profile for each area were taken from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing as well as the Australian Bureau of Statistics Index of Socio-Economic Disadvantage (ABS 2003). The lower the Index the more disadvantaged is the population. The average for the Sydney Statistical Division was 1,017.

The case study area of Parramatta comprised six CDs in and around this historic settlement and major centre which has been supported for many years as the second most important location in Sydney outside Global Sydney. The picture is of a relatively disadvantaged migrant population mainly from Asia with low incomes, employment skills and limited connections with Australia society. There are few children and a high rate of turnover of population. The Index of Socio-Economic Disadvantage for the suburb had a value of 936.

The Liverpool case study area consisted of eight CDs to the west of the railway station. This was another migrant community but in this case most came from continental Europe, with some from Asia and Oceania. Moreover, a fifth of the population consisted of children, with many single parent families. This is a welfare dependent community, with a low score of 842 for the suburb on the Index of Socio-Economic Disadvantage.

The Penrith case study area consisted of three CDs again near the railway station. In contrast to Liverpool and Parramatta, this was a predominantly Anglo-Celtic population with over half the households consisting of only one person, nearly two and a half times the average for the Sydney Statistical Division. There were few children, and this was another low income population, with low employment skills and high unemployment. The low score of 897 for the suburb on the Index of Socio-Economic Disadvantage reflects the many single person households of unskilled young and middle-aged adults.

These snapshots show the importance of differentiating among the households and people living in higher-density housing, so that proposals for substantial increases in these kinds of dwellings are informed by present circumstances and future prospects, and then accompanied by the same kinds of supplementary supporting measures as those proposed in terms of economic activity. Otherwise the social outcomes will be regressive and social sustainability impaired.

There are important institutional circumstances affecting the future supply of higher density housing that need to be considered. Will investors provide the capital to build large quantities of higher density housing? Will there be a rise in the home-ownership of such housing? How can the Strata Title legislation be changed to cover so many different kinds of higher-density development? Will this become a fourth level of government? How can approval for redevelopment and renewal of existing higher density buildings be facilitated without compromising standards (p.139)? How can outsourcing of maintenance be arranged? How can litigation be avoided?

Water management and use

Proposals

Before the release of *City of Cities*, the component dealing with the sustainable use of water had already been covered in the Metropolitan Water Plan (NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning & Natural Resources 2004). It is included in *City of Cities* under the heading 'The Work So Far' (p.12). The Water Plan contained a number of measures both to manage and reduce demand and to improve supply. The supply measures included accessing deepwater at the bottom of the dams, raising the height of the Tallowa Dam on the Shoalhaven River to the south of Sydney so that additional supplies could be pumped from there to Sydney, implementing new recycling initiatives in urban development in western Sydney, and the building of a desalination plant.

On the demand side there has been the successful application of management policies and programs which has saved 20 per cent in water consumption in the period 1991 - 2004, much of this in the business and industrial sectors (Turner *et al* 2005). BASIX, the Building Sustainability Index has required all new separate houses to achieve a savings of 40 per cent in mains water supply compared with the average consumption of similar dwellings since July 2004. This requirement was extended to all dwellings from October 2005, and to all alterations and additions from July 2006.

Comment

Some of the supply side proposals contained in the Water Plan are in some disarray. The proposals for extracting more water from the Shoalhaven are meeting fierce opposition from local community and environmental groups. The proposed desalination plant at Kurnell became firm government policy, then modified as a 'switch-on' facility to run only in times of drought or water shortages, then shelved. It ran into strong opposition from a number of commentators who criticised its heavy energy demands, its high maintenance costs, the difficulty of running it only occasionally, and the discharge of saline water into the neighbouring marine environment. It is apparent that Sydney is finding increasing difficulty in increasing the supply of freshwater.

While the proposed demand management measures are to be welcomed, the Water Plan itself estimates that further savings are likely to be of the order of another 10 per cent against the 10-year average in the year following the introduction of mandatory water restrictions. Research has shown that the assumption that much water is used on the gardens or for external use is exaggerated. In fact the *per capita* use of mains

water is roughly the same for those living in separate houses as in attached dwellings, given the smaller size of households in the latter (Troy *et al* 2005). Even if this external use were eliminated, it would be hard to maintain high levels of reduction in consumption (Troy *et al* 2005).

These circumstances suggest that water management and use will need to evolve much further beyond the sensible demand management measures already introduced. Actions already taken or in train will provide savings, but further decisions will be needed well before 25 years, given the growth in population and the uncertainties brought about by climate change. A range of suggested policy measures of this kind has followed recent research on the causes and characteristics of residential water consumption in Sydney (Troy *et al* 2005). These comprise:

- Educational Campaign
- The supply obligation of the water supply authority should be limited to the volume of potable water needed for the health of the population (this is estimated to be about 20 per cent of total consumption)
- Consumers should be required to accept some responsibility for their own consumption behaviour by making use of the water resources available locally (through rainwater tanks and storage and recycling of grey water)
- Waste water flows should be reduced to minimise pollution of receiving waters
- Any program of development should be capable of being progressively introduced
- Equitable pricing regime
- No human consumption of recycled water

Transport

Proposals

There is considerable attention to the movement of freight in the plan, with 86 per cent of this being carried presently by road (p.162) and that proportion having steadily risen over the years. It is intended to reverse this trend, and the plan makes much of upgrading and extending the metropolitan rail freight network (p. 190).

Regarding public transport, *City of Cities* develops strategies to connect the nominated centres together more effectively by heavy rail and strategic bus corridors. New urban development in the north west and south west is to be served by extending existing rail lines, scheduled for 2017 and 2012 respectively though a final decision on the timing of these projects will depend on 'continuing detailed planning, financial and economic studies' (p. 165). A new rail link under the harbour is scheduled for 2017 to accommodate these additional services. Rail services will also be improved by greater reliability and timetabling to more effectively reflect changing travel demands. A number of strategic bus corridors giving fast access to centres was identified in the *Review of Bus Services in NSW* (Unsworth 2004). The metropolitan plan adopts a network of some 43 strategic corridors providing improved bus priority which will be progressively implemented from 2006 to 2012. The strategic network is to be integrated with local systems through bus contract reform.

Transport is to be improved within 'Global Sydney' by improvements to bus services in conjunction with the opening of the Cross City Tunnel, including extension of bus lane operating hours.

Public transport is to be more effectively integrated with improved interchanges and integrated ticketing. A metropolitan parking policy is to be developed and implemented to encourage the use of public transport from and to centres.

Comment

Travel and transport is possibly the most important issue facing Sydney. A recent study by the Centre for International Economics (2005) for the *Sydney Morning Herald* estimated that vehicle travel is costing more than \$18 billion a year through congestion, accidents, greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, and threatens to stunt the State's economy. Distances travelled in Sydney are expected to rise by 29 per cent between 2005 and 2020 and social costs by 32 per cent.

The transportation proposals represent an amalgam of various plans and projects, based on trying to more adequately cope with current conditions. Some may not happen, and the urgent proposals for the movement of freight by rail are dependent on federal funding. Others will be delayed. The major rail links to serve the new north west and south west sectors are programmed far into the future and by then travel patterns by car in those areas will be well established. The suburban economy of western Sydney depends on vehicles. Global Sydney is congested with no clear policies about it. Incremental decision-making in March 2006 to make the Cross City Tunnel work led to the abandonment of some proposed bus-only lanes. Ease of movement around Global Sydney should be a prime objective of the plan.

Importantly, the current public transport arrangements identified in the plan question the ability of trains and buses to attract an increase in patronage. Some 70 per cent of infill housing in the plan is to be constructed outside the strategic centres in neighbourhood centres and suburban areas (p. 141). These neighbourhood centres and suburban areas will be linked by buses feeding into local train stations and partially reflect the 'urban village' concept heralded by some commentators (e.g. Newman and Kenworthy 1999). However, the ability of the public transport system to attract patrons under this scenario will depend crucially on the integration between bus and train systems and their capacity to link neighbourhood and suburban households with employment opportunities.

The plan looks forward to 2031, but has no indication of the likely responses by households and businesses to the increasing cost of fuel and congestion, and how these might be supported and shaped by government policies. There is a wide literature on this, (e.g., Mees 2000b, Low *et al* 2005), and while this may be a breaking story in Australia it is one that has been experienced in Europe, for example for many years.

Summary

The plan is uneven in scope and driven by the need to enhance Sydney's role as a global city. The metropolitan economy, employment growth and their links with identified centres and corridors is well argued, although the role, size and function of centres is not well substantiated. This spatial representation is then linked to the growth of housing stock. These links become increasingly tenuous and fragile, and contain little feedback. In particular employment and housing growth of the kind identified are likely to lead to regressive social outcomes and miss an opportunity to more effectively link housing needs with metropolitan planning.

The plan is disappointing in regard to water management and use, and transportation. These are areas where important pivotal decisions need to be made in the next decade, beyond the scope of the proposals contained in the plan. Such necessary responses, particularly in the field of transportation are likely to alter some of the assumptions behind the generation of the seemingly precise and well articulated targets of employment and housing growth in the centres, corridors and other locations identified.

Thirdly, the plan in part acknowledges that other circumstances, besides those contained in the plan could be of even more importance in addressing some issues than the physical arrangements on which the plan concentrates. Thus the plan admits that the planning system alone cannot solve Sydney's housing affordability. Indeed the proposals in the plan work in other ways. The BASIX provisions, however admirable in intent add capital costs to development. The proposals to charge levies and contribution for the infrastructure provided by both Councils and State instrumentalities do likewise. In a similar vein, the importance and influence of the proposed Innovation Strategy and the State Infrastructure Plan may be more influential in terms of future economic growth than present ideas about the distribution of employment. Will the Strategy and the Plan happen?

The planning process

In a time of growing uncertainty with the need for flexibility and creative opportunism, it is puzzling to find the plan assuming such an old-world character as a long-term plan with strongly articulated targets of employment and housing on which the implementation of the plan seems to depend. It is true that the plan promises annual updates and five-yearly reviews. But that usually leads to increased efforts to achieve it together with minor modifications. Inevitably the plan begins to lose credibility as major changes in trends or circumstances take place. There can be major policy reversals such as the abandonment of the decision to build Sydney's second airport in the south west of Sydney promised for commissioning in 1998/99 in the 1995 Sydney strategy *Cities for the 21st Century* (Department of Planning 1994). The current plan bears the marks of the relatively recent and sudden decision to virtually abandon sea-born freight movement in Sydney Harbour and transfer operations elsewhere including an expanded Port Botany with all the attendant problems of increased freight and general traffic to the south and west. The State government has no control over proposals for substantial commercial development at Sydney Airport and industrial and business expansion at Bankstown Airport, because they are on Commonwealth owned land. Plans rarely have the robustness to ride with

these changes and absorb and adapt to them. So eventually a new plan is made. They have become more frequent. In the last twenty years *Sydney into its Third Century* (NSW Department of Planning 1988), was followed by *Cities for the 21st Century* (NSW Department of Planning 1994), *Shaping our Cities* (NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1999), and now *City of Cities* (NSW Department of Planning 2005).

In the plan the Metropolitan Development Program monitors housing development including reasonable rolling forecasts of the location of potential additional dwellings some eight or nine years ahead. This well-established program, operated in conjunction with local Councils is a valuable indicator of short-term trends, and its scope is to be extended to employment lands in the plan. It might be better to set *indicative* targets for employment and housing some fifteen years ahead and revise these as time goes by and the MDP shows the extent and type of actual and short-term development. Well-chosen strategic centres and areas could be paid special attention and support if it turns out that they are truly effective levers in achieving economic, social and environmental sustainability.

This flexibility does not pervade the plan, rather it is a long-term blueprint relying heavily on prescriptive targets for employment and dwelling growth. This process, seems more appropriate for planning localities, estates, and transport systems and in delivering projects rather than shaping the progressive decisions needed to deal with the potential of a dynamic evolving metropolis facing major uncertainties which must be resolved as it charts a transition towards sustainability.

Strategic planning processes that select a leading variable as the rationale and shaper of the plan must also painstakingly consider the interrelations with linked and connected decisions and issues (Bunker 1994). While this does not deny the importance of the main driver of the plan, it forces a balanced, integrated and comprehensive approach. It then enables crucial decisions to be made in the short term but it also constructs and carries out a work program that explores, defines and removes uncertainties of different kinds so that strategic decision-making can continue (Friend and Hickling 1998). The first uncertainty (UF or uncertainty about facts) is about what is happening in the city, likely to happen and why; the second (UR or uncertainty about other policy options) is about possible decisions in related fields of choice (e.g. pricing versus regulation versus training programs versus project construction); and the third (UV or uncertainty about values) with the values placed on particular issues, states or conditions. It is interesting that two of these three would be regarded as community preferences and political judgements.

City of Cities outlines a direction and a starting point. It seems contrary to then adopt a formal management approach to implement the long-term design solution it depicts. The rationale is that the 'planning system is being progressively **transformed from a process driven approach to an outcomes focused service**' (Iemma 2006, emphasis in original). Local governments, acknowledged as important partners in implementing the plan are to do just that. A more directed but fluid, dynamic and consultative process from now on, with increasingly defined, linked and shaped strategic interests would better serve Sydney.

Conclusion

The strength of *City of Cities* is that it sets a direction and the first steps in taking the metropolitan economy forward so that it remains competitive. However it is an uneven strategy, set within a conventional plan-making process which projects Sydney forward in terms of an end-state distribution of population and jobs and arrangement of land uses and broad communications twenty five years hence. The work program to take things forward is based on achieving that scenario and contains a formidable list of matters to be resolved.

An alternative methodology would be to acknowledge that there are matters of primary importance that need further understanding and action within the trajectory of economic development. Most conspicuously, housing conditions and social wellbeing need similar consideration to that shown to employment growth, and this understanding would progressively enrich and modify indicative targets and arrangements for living and working. This *could* be a major theme in subregional planning

Similarly the proposed Innovation Strategy would presumably consider matters such as skills training and labour market programs. The further development of the suburban economy of Western Sydney is a crucial element in the plan, and targeted educational and labour market programs may be more important in both economic and social terms than infrastructure projects, assumed 'trickle down' effects or centres planning (Dodson & Berry 2004).

Finally policies and priorities about future communication, transportation and travel remain largely unresolved and are likely to be the most important factor in achieving the ambitions of the plan.

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