SHAPING MELBOURNE’S FUTURE?
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Town Planning, the State and Civil Society

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS book has been a long time in the making. Ever since Peter Hall and his colleagues (1973) published their monumental study of the actual effects of town planning policies and controls on the social and economic geography of England, I had wanted to follow up their inspiring example in some way or other. All sorts of things prevented my tackling such a job for a long time—a move from a full-time research job in London to a demanding teaching and administrative role in Liverpool and a mid-life critical transfer to self-employment in the early 1980s, with the associated demands of deadlines and global commuting. It was a move to Australia in 1985 which provided both opportunity and stimulus. The opportunity came from my re-entry into conventional academic life at the University of Melbourne; the stimulus, from the realisation that if careful, theorised studies of town planning practice were thin on the ground in my old home country, they were almost unheard-of in Australia (McLoughlin, 1983, 1986).

Therefore I set about devising a study of Australian practice and its results. The first necessary step, for a newcomer especially, was to test the depth of this research gap by means of the tried-and-tested method of a literature review (Huxley and McLoughlin, 1985). This confirmed what I had suspected, viz that there were no serious studies of town planning practice in Australia. But the review also yielded a rich bonus in showing the great strength of Australian urban studies.

Thus armed with academic credibility, together with a group of colleagues I successfully applied for a research grant from what was the Australian Research Grants Scheme. This enabled us to appoint our first full-time research assistant—Margo Huxley—without whose contributions the work could never have been done. The small team was augmented from time to time by a series of local and international visitors and by several research students who had deliberately shaped their projects to relate to our major questions. Academic relationships with other individuals and institutions proved rewarding and exciting; links with practice were a little more difficult to build, because we were not only breaking new ground in the subject matter of the project, but also because Australians had virtually no tradition of links between research and practice in the field of land-use planning, like those which had been part of my daily experience in Europe.

The research effort peaked in the period between 1986 and 1988, when it was supported by external funds. It was mulled over extensively and written up by myself (with a great deal of helpful contribution, criticism and comment from
others) during a sabbatical semester at the University of New England in 1989. The following year was a break from the concentration of the previous five, and it was not until 1991 that this text was finally put together.

Whatever the shortcomings of this book and the research on which it is based, I am sure nevertheless that it has all been worthwhile. The daily grind of academic life—meetings, lectures, seminars and dwindling resources, the occasional trips and the hosting of innumerable visitors, the totally spontaneous conversations which are often the most fruitful springs of fresh ideas—in all of this over the last eight years or so I have increasingly been reminded of the words of Eric Reade, that:

even an approximate knowledge of the difference which planning makes is very much better than no knowledge at all. And further [that] if planners would only attempt to discover what difference planning makes, this would be far better than their merely asserting that it is beneficial (Reade, 1982b: 67).

Patsy Healey, another friend and fellow-enthusiast in researching town planning practice, has said that:

any study of public policy must be related to and evaluated in terms of its effects, with respect both to physical constraints and to distributive consequences . . . [concerning] . . . whose interests are furthered and hindered by state programmes and the way they operate. It is also of normative significance since planners, politicians and interest groups from time to time seek to discover what the effects of public policies have been. It is also a central principle of democratic accountability that public policies should be available for evaluation (Healey, 1986a: 103).

As I reflect on practice from day to day, and on its changing social context, I become more and more convinced of the need for careful and continuing studies of that practice. In Chapter 1, I sketch some of the confusion and disorder of urban policy in Melbourne, and reflect on the postwar period as a whole in the closing chapters of the book. Town planning practice could be and should be so much better informed and soundly based; so too should the education of the students who must soon take over the tasks of helping to formulate and implement land-use policies. How else are we ever to improve all this without serious studies of past performance? Without it we shall very likely continue to lurch from one alarm and bushfire-fight to another.

The research and the book were and are interdisciplinary by necessity. No single academic subject can possibly comprehend and explain the modern metropolis, though my debts to such academic sources are made explicit throughout the text. But, by similar reasoning, I hope that the book will be useful to a wide variety of readers in the social sciences—sociology, economics, politics, geography, history, law—as well as in urban studies and planning. I have directed parts of the conclusions to practitioners in the hope that they too will find it a useful reflection on what they do and a stimulus to what they might change in future. In the last analysis, a public service is only as good as its collective skills, and the praise or blame for their successes or shortcomings must be directed in large measure to people like myself who do the research and teaching.

A great many people and a few institutions have helped in the making of this book. The University of Melbourne provided a generous ‘setting-up’ grant to get a new professor started, and their help was followed by that of the Faculty of Architecture and Planning which bridged the gap while outside funds were sought. These came in the form of annual grants in 1986, 1987 and 1988 from what was then the Australian Research Grants Scheme which provided the full-time
research assistance already mentioned. The Melbourne City Council's support, whilst modest financially, was of great symbolic significance to the researchers, as was its valuable membership of a small steering committee and its constructive comments on many working documents.

Many institutions gave generously of the time and skills of their officers and members, and without the support of the local government authorities of Berwick, Broadmeadows, Brunswick, Bulla, Caulfield, Coburg, Dandenong, Essendon, Keilor, Malvern, Oakleigh, Pakenham and Waverley this work would be the poorer. The Urban Land Authority of Victoria was also very helpful. The Department of Geography and Planning at the University of New England at Armidale in New South Wales provided a splendid setting for the writing of the first complete draft of the book and I would like to thank everyone there, especially David Lea and Jack Hobbs.

A host of individuals have helped in several ways over the years; their contributions have been so rich and diverse that it is impossible to categorise them. My heartfelt thanks go to Ian Alexander, Martin Auster, John Bayly, Mike Berry, Tannetje Bryant, and the late Fred Cawcutt, Stewart Clegg, Teresa Coldebella, Sandy Cuthbert, Janet Dore, Des Eccles, Ruth Fincher, Roger Gibbins, Sir Rupert Hamer, Geoff Harris, Patsy Healey, Jeff Henderson, Alastair Hepburn, John Humphreys, Alan Hunt, Les Kilmartin, Ross King, the late Sir Alfred Kemsley, Toni Logan, Nick Low, Nicole Meredith, John Noonan, Liz Neumann, Ewan Ogilvy, Eric Reade, Tony Sorensen, Ken Tandberg, Jim Walmsley, Louis Wassenhoven, Judy Wilks, Ray Wyatt and Zhao Min.

The research could not have been carried out without the skilled assistance of Margo Huxley and Gracinha Gaunt, nor the secretarial skills and enthusiasms of Bernadette Ferguson, Beulah Dickson, Morag VanderZee, Maggie Francis, Megan Wheeler, Karoly Lockwood and Alison Temperley.

Leigh Conran has excelled in bibliographic and indexing work; so too has Chandra Jayasuriya in the cartography; both were supported by a grant from the University of Melbourne's Office for Research, Publications Sub-Committee.

Des has been a very present help in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness and many other adversities as well as sharing in the joy of it all, while Margo has lived with the book and read the whole of the final draft and was, as ever, fiercely but lovingly critical. I alone am responsible for this published text.
ABBREVIATIONS AND NOMENCLATURE

AAT Administrative Appeals Tribunal
ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACTU Australian Council of Trade Unions
AFL Australian Football League
ALP Australian Labor Party
BHP Broken Hill Proprietary Company Ltd
BLF Builders Labourers' Federation
BOMA Building Owners' and Managers' Association
CBD Central Business District
CPA Communist Party of Australia
CRA Conzinc Riotinto Australia
CRB Country Roads Board
CURA Centre for Urban Research and Action
DLP Democratic Labor Party
DURD Department of Urban and Regional Development
EPA Environment Protection Authority
GMH General-Motors Holden's Pty Ltd
GRC Geelong Regional Commission
HCV Housing Commission of Victoria
IDO Interim Development Order
LGA/s Local Government Authority/ies
MAPI Member of the Australian Planning Institute
MCC Melbourne City Council
MH Ministry of Housing
MMBW Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works
MMPS Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme
MPE Ministry of Planning and Environment
MPH Ministry for Planning and Housing
MSD Melbourne Statistical Division
NCC National Civic Council
NSW New South Wales
NT Northern Territory
Abbreviations

PAB  Planning Appeals Board
RAPI  Royal Australian Planning Institute
RCA  Road Construction Authority
RTPI  Royal Town Planning Institute (London)
SAM  Socialist Alternatives for Melbourne (Collective)
SEC  State Electricity Commission
SCC  State Co-ordination Council
SPC  State Planning Council
TAFE  Technical and Further Education (College of...)
TCPA  Town and Country Planning Association
TCPB  Town and Country Planning Board
TNC  transnational corporation
TPAT  Town Planning Appeals Tribunal
UK  United Kingdom
USA  United States of America
UYV DRA  Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority
WA  Western Australia
WRC  Westernport Regional Commission

Throughout the book I have used the term ‘Melbourne’ to mean the Melbourne metropolitan area or region. This varies somewhat between the jurisdictions of different bodies—for example the Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD) of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the various Victorian ministries and quangos, Telecom Australia—and so on. Here I am usually concerned with the jurisdiction (at a particular time) of the planning authority—the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) until 1985 and the Ministry of Planning and Environment (MPE) and its successors in office from 1985 onwards. When I want to talk of ‘Melbourne’ in another sense I shall be specific by saying ‘the City of Melbourne’, the ‘Melbourne city centre’, the ‘CBD’, and so forth.

I have seldom, if ever used the term ‘planning’ unqualified even though this has meant a somewhat tedious repetition of ‘land-use’, or ‘town’ or ‘physical’ planning; these expressions are synonymous unless the context indicates otherwise. This is a deliberate decision on my part and follows from the arguments of critics like Eric Reade (for example in 1987) who have discussed at length the conceptual and practical troubles which haunt the field by the conflation of ‘planning’ as a generic term (for professional-ideology purposes) with ‘town’ or ‘land-use’ planning which is a far more specific practice. I beg the reader’s indulgence.

‘State’ with a capital letter denotes a specific entity such as Victoria or New South Wales; ‘state’ refers to the social-scientific concept.