When does a deliberative framework work in metropolitan strategic spatial planning? A case study of Perth’s ‘Network City’ and Greater Vancouver’s ‘Livable Region Strategic Plan’

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The literature on deliberative democracy suggests that a deliberative approach to plan-making will produce an outcome that is more rational and acceptable to a wider range of stakeholder actors than a conventional approach to plan-making. An 'ideal deliberative procedure' offers a structure for stakeholder engagement which is defined by three critical stages: problem identification, scenario selection and decision-making. The argument is that this will improve implementation. Empirical evidence suggests, however, that a deliberative-style of stakeholder engagement does not necessarily lead to greater success in implementation. The aim of this paper is to examine the interface between the process of plan-making and the formal stakeholder engagement process. A case study approach is used to examine the development of two metropolitan strategic plans: Perth, Western Australia’s ‘Network City’ and Greater Vancouver, Canada’s ‘Livable Region Strategic Plan’ (LRSP). Data was collected using open-ended interviews with professional planners, politicians, academics as well as analysis of archived documents and conference proceedings. The research reveals that the interface between the plan-making process and the formal process of stakeholder engagement is defined by a series of engagement ‘events’. These ‘events’ occur at different stages of the plan-making process and therefore have very distinct aims and engage different stakeholder actors at different junctures in the process. These stakeholder engagement ‘events’ can be strategically organized to help address the constraints that may inhibit implementation of the plan by attracting acceptance of the plan by a wider range of stakeholder actors.

Keywords: deliberative democracy, metropolitan strategic spatial planning, stakeholder engagement, plan-making

(Ignoring) Alternative discourses in local climate change policy

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Climate change is one of the most pressing contemporary issues facing Australian cities, with implications for all scales of governance, including that of the family/individual. Australian policy responses have tended to emphasise four key solutions: (i) carbon trading schemes; (ii) the adoption of ‘green’ technologies to reduce greenhouse emissions within specific industries, public infrastructure provision, and residential developments; (iii) the promotion of urban forms thought to be more energy efficient, and (iv) impact mitigation, especially for sea level rise (Byrne et al. 2009). These solutions generally appear at first glance to fall firmly within an ‘ecological modernisation’ paradigm, a particular model for understanding which is underwritten by scientific and technological discourses. In this paper we examine climate-change-related planning and policy instruments of three local government authorities in South East Queensland – the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Redland City Councils – for the influence of alternative ways of knowing, fighting and adjusting to climate change. We pay special attention to whether these governance instruments (e.g. town planning schemes, growth management strategies & corporate plans) provide space for gendered, Indigenous and ethnically diverse knowledges in the development of local responses, and ask what the implications of doing so might mean for implementing multi-scalar climate change adaptive responses in these and other Australian Cities.

Keywords: climate change, discourse, local government, policy