Neo-liberal or Third Way? What Planners from Glasgow, Melbourne and Toronto Say.

ABSTRACT  This paper focuses on the work and views of planners. Taking a neo-liberal position and in the context of inter-city competition, one might expect the current metropolitan plans for Glasgow, Melbourne and Toronto would pay scant attention to the people and places marginal to the ‘new economy’. Proponents of ‘third-way’ thinking, however, argue plans can be designed to be both competitive and socially inclusive. So what do the planners who drafted the plans say?

KEY WORDS: Glasgow, Melbourne, Toronto, neo-liberalism, third-way planning, metropolitan plans, planners

Introduction

In the more open and competitive world economy of the last quarter of the twentieth century, cities such as Glasgow, Melbourne and Toronto suffered significant losses to their manufacturing bases and now face strong competition from other cities for replacement investment. By the 1990s all three were led by neo-liberal governments wanting to dismantle barriers to such investment. Each was keen to secure ‘new economy’ activities, for example, financial and producer services. Attracting and holding the highly-mobile professional workers associated with these ‘advanced producer services’ is seen to be a key to a city’s future success (Mercer 2006). Metropolitan plans, it follows, will be designed to secure ‘new economy’ activities and their associated workers.

But what of people marginal to the new economy, people who are not well qualified and professionally mobile, people who are now old? Attention in the wider research effort is focused on those areas of the three cities where such people are most likely concentrated: older residential areas close to the CBDs, post-war industrial suburbs and new fringe suburbs. Here the views of the planners who drafted the
metropolitan and city plans are the focus. Were the plans designed to attract investment at the expense of people and places unconnected to the ‘new economy’? More particularly, are the plans socially inclusive, exclusive or neither?

This paper begins by describing how Glasgow, Melbourne and Toronto are responding to their changing economic and political circumstances seen through the lens of recently-released metropolitan and regional plans. It then briefly compares and contrasts the characteristics of neo-liberal and third-way thinking as applied to city planning before investigating whether these distinctions are apparent in the thinking of the planners responsible for preparing the plans.

**The Cities’ Recent Pasts**

All three cities, outposts of the British Empire, are heirs to the Westminster system of government. They are blest with splendid late Victorian architecture but were cursed with the Victorian city’s associated slums (Briggs, 1968).

Checkland (1981) compares Glasgow’s shipbuilding industry to the tropical upas tree under which nothing else grows. So when this industry collapsed, there was no alternative employment (Hall 1998). From the 1970s to the mid-1990s Glasgow haemorrhaged jobs and people. Many people left for cities like Melbourne and Toronto. Those who stayed and had work often moved to new owner-occupied housing outside the City. It was here, on greenfield sites, that incoming manufacturing and warehousing investment also located. The City of Glasgow’s public housing stock, 54% of all dwellings in 1981, was run down, mismanaged and so in debt that even basic maintenance faltered. It housed people who had not known work in the formal economy for two, sometimes three generations. Glasgow had many of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the United Kingdom. Its socialist council fought a failing campaign against Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s push towards an enterprise culture. The Strathclyde Region Council which covered the wider conurbation was another source of potential political opposition. It was
disbanded in 1996. Then, in 1997, a new national government was elected, headed by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, Scots both. Scotland was granted a degree of political independence, its Parliament receiving planning, transport, housing and education powers.

In the early 1990s, Melbourne, its manufacturing base no longer protected by tariff walls, suffered further from financial mismanagement at state level. It became known as a ‘rust-belt city’ with people moving to more resource-rich parts of the country. So entered a neo-liberal state government, under Jeff Kennett, elected in 1992, to scrape away the rust and simplify the planning regime (Winter and Brooke 1993). Its metropolitan planning strategy titled “Living Suburbs” (1995) said very little of substance about the planning of suburbs (Hamnett 2000).

Similarly, but a few years later, in Ontario a New Democratic Party (NDP) government watched over the demise of much of the Toronto’s manufacturing base while insisting on maintaining social service levels, so accruing high levels of public debt. The old City of Toronto, then largely limited to suburbs built before 1945, provided the bulk of the political support for this government. Its City Plan of 1991 was proclaimed around the world to be progressive and pioneering, just as the 1950s metropolitan region’s cross-subsidy financial arrangements had been (Williams 1999). The 1991 plan was, however, never realised, as another avowedly neo-liberal provincial government, that of Mike Harris, was elected in 1995. One of its first acts was to cut social support payments (Keil 2002). As in Victoria, without warning, local government amalgamation took place, ostensibly to make administration more efficient. The old City of Toronto was amalgamated with its surrounding municipalities, many of which had voted for lower taxes and fewer social services.

While being alert to the three cities’ recent political histories, one should also note their significantly different population trajectories during the twentieth century and beyond (Table 1). Glasgow now has problems holding its existing population numbers while Toronto is confronted with finding land to
accommodate massive in-migration. The niceties of planning to attract ‘new economy’ activities and their associated workers, never mind the protection of the interests of the marginalized, may be well down the list of considerations in the work of the planners.

Table 1 here

The Plans

Prior to Glasgow City Plan 1 (GCP1) (2002), there had been no enforceable strategic plan for the City. GCP1 superseded 43 local plans. It combined strategic intent with statutory enforceability. It was written by planners in the Council’s Property, Estates and Planning section, formed in 1998. As the City is a major land owner, such organisational arrangements assist planners in their negotiations with developers.

GCP1 sits alongside seven other municipalities’ Local Plans within the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan, 2006 (GCVJSP). This regional plan extends beyond the Glasgow conurbation to cover the River Clyde catchment.

GCP1 is no small-minded plan. Its key feature is the renewal of the Clyde Corridor that stretches east-west along the river for 30 kilometres, covering derelict shipyards downstream of the CBD. By opening up the old docklands, complicated because much of the space has been recently privatised, and linking it to existing and proposed freeways, the aim is to secure remnant ‘old’ industry and attract ‘new economy’ investment. GCP1 makes available a restricted number of sites along the Clyde for up-market housing, designed to attract young professionals working in the ‘new economy’. It has, though, a parallel demographic purpose: to have families living at the edge of the conurbation move back into Glasgow. Beyond the riverside stretch of semi-derelict land lie the post-war housing estates. While the emphasis is
on the Clyde Corridor, GCP1 also directed the developer’s attention here, specifically to four ‘New Neighbourhoods’, amongst the most run-down areas in the City.

The GCVJSP is based on investment and demographic trends. It is designed to ensure timely land supply and so facilitate orderly development across the conurbation. At the same time, it has to juggle the competing interests of eight councils – the City of Glasgow seeks to attract inward investment and families away from the other seven councils to boost its rate base.

Melbourne 2030 (M2030), designed to accommodate a population increase of up to one million, does not have to contend with the massive population pressures on Toronto, nor the long-time empty brownfield sites of Glasgow. It benefits from the corridor framework of suburban development put in place by the engineers of the Metropolitan and Melbourne Board of Works in the 1960s. Further, when compared with Glasgow’s and Toronto’s plans, M2030 has the major advantage of being one plan, developed by a state government department without direct input from competing local governments or suburban interests. It sits within a sub-national government public policy framework based on the Victorian Government ‘Growing Victoria Together’ (2001) which provides a whole-of-government approach to urban planning (Adams and Wiseman 2003).

Under Ontario planning legislation, all local authorities are required to write an Official Plan for approval by the Ontario Municipal Board. The Toronto Official Plan (TOP) of 2002 was written against the unexpected amalgamation in 1997 of the old City of Toronto with surrounding municipalities. While the City of Glasgow was simply losing population, the old City of Toronto was gaining more people than it was losing with young, often professional people moving into new and old apartments. As a reverse flow, immigrants, mainly from India and China, moved either directly from overseas or via older suburbs to owner-occupied housing in the new suburbs. Relatively low-cost private rental units in the old City were
thus under developer pressure to be converted into owner-occupied apartments. TOP seeks to stem this loss.

It is forecasted that 3.7 million more people will be living in the Greater Toronto Area by 2031: from 7.8 million in 2001 to 11.5 million (Ontario Ministry of Finance 2004). TOP, covering about 40% of the built-up area, is designed to achieve intensification, specifically along the waterfront, in four inner-suburban, mixed-use Centres, along ‘Avenues’ or main streets with good public transport, and in Employment Districts, areas of postwar manufacturing, now underutilized. These proposed areas of intensified development represent no more than a quarter of the spatial jurisdiction of TOP. This is to ensure existing residential areas - the Neighbourhoods - are protected.

TOP, like GCP1, sits within a regional or metropolitan plan. ‘Places to Grow’ arose out of the concerns of the Harris Government with freeway gridlock across the metropolis. It was subsequently drafted by planners working for the incoming Liberal Government’s Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal vi. Fringe municipalities will take most of the expected 3.7 million population growth. Intensification targets are set in terms of housing units per hectare and local jobs per hectare. All municipalities have to draw up conforming secondary plans which must be approved by 2015 or earlier. ‘Places to Grow’ promises a completely new land use planning dynamic in Toronto’s fringe suburbs, where a small number of large-scale developers owns most of the development land and has effectively dictated what types of housing have been built and at what density.

**Neo-Liberal Thinking**

Friedrich von Hayek, the father of neo-liberal ideas, and John Maynard Keynes, the progenitor of the welfare state, contemporaries at Cambridge University, responded very differently to the rise of fascism across Europe with its threat to liberal democracies and their citizens’ hard-won rights and freedoms. Von Hayek argued such freedoms were best protected in a free market economy, one unencumbered by state
controls. His *Road to Serfdom* (first published in 1944) was shaded, however, by Keynes’s *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (first published in 1936). Keynes argued that the state should have regulatory and financial powers to reduce market instability. It should also be the main provider of social services: the resultant Welfare State, he argued, would promote equality of opportunity, so giving all individuals, whatever their background, greater freedom to choose what they wanted to do. The Great Depression and World War II convinced voters of the sense of these arguments. Keynesian economics became the foundation of the public policies in most Western states. Post-war metropolitan plans, such as Patrick Abercrombie’s for Glasgow, gave weight to collective over individual interests.

Neo-liberalism, as it is now known, began its belated rise in the 1970s with the failure of Keynesian-inspired government policies to combat ‘stagflation’: the unanticipated parallel rises in the rates of inflation and unemployment attendant upon rising energy prices and the breaking of international exchanges nexuses. Von Hayek’s ideas were resuscitated. Market-interventionist and welfare state governments were voted out of office.

Neo-liberal policies of deregulation, privatization and lower taxes, appealing to individual self-reliance, were lauded as reversing the downward spiral of welfare capitalism and facilitating the emergence of a global open-market economy. In this environment, planners were no longer urban managers, they became urban entrepreneurs (Harvey 1989). Plans became place marketing documents. Sandercock (2005) speaks of Australian cities competing for inward investment but paying scant attention to neighbourhoods negatively affected by economic restructuring.

Neo-liberalism goes beyond classical liberalism and its promotion of free trade. It seeks to extend market values into political and social life. To Harvey (2005), neo-liberalism essentially is a political project that re-establishes and deepens the social conditions for capital accumulation. So while neo-liberals proclaim their primary aim is the dismantling of the welfare state and its plans, they appreciate the need to
effectively lobby governments to reshape social life so that free market thinking becomes the accepted, uncontested ‘norm’. Robison (2006) speaks of national governments such as Tony Blair’s in the UK and John Howard’s in Australia willingly taking on the neo-liberal agenda with its emphasis on self-reliance and entrepreneurship. In Blair’s case, softer or third-way terms such as ‘social capital formation’ and ‘place-based planning’ were added to the lexicon, terms that had appeal to a wider community. Gordon and Buck (2005) speak of this as the New Conventional Wisdom.

Peck and Ticknell (2002) describe neo-liberalism’s move from an aggressive ‘rolled-back’ phase designed to break the back of the old welfare state to a more subtle ‘roll out’ phase, one they associate with third-way thinking. ‘Social capital formation’ and ‘place-based planning’, they argue, are euphemisms for downloading resources, responsibilities and risks from central governments to the local governments and individuals. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) set up to build toll roads or undertake urban regeneration projects are cited as examples of central governments’ retreat. Along with authors like Fyfe (2005), they suggest that PPPs deepen free market-based thinking in mainstream political and social life. Social Inclusive Partnerships (SIPs) in Glasgow and Stronger Neighbourhoods in Toronto are examples of PPPs that seek to build local social capital as a basis to lift people into employment. Macleod (2002) argues SIPs have failed to lower unemployment in Glasgow’s regeneration areas. Gough et al. (2006) claim such PPPs have had little impact: ‘small areas, small achievements’. Place-based plans, they claim, are more symbolic than substantive.

Brenner (2003) relates these rolled-back and roll-out phases of the neo-liberal project to metropolitan institutional reform, as has occurred in Glasgow and Toronto. He argues that in the former phase, 1970s to 1980s, metropolitan planning agencies were abolished or downsized along with welfare programmes while, in the latter phase, the 1990s to the present, they were revitalised in order to attract inward investment while central governments continued to download their traditional welfare responsibilities. Addressing socio-spatial inequalities was not a priority of the new round of metropolitan plans.
**Third-Way Thinking**

Neo-liberal ideas were readily embraced in Britain and Australia in the 1980s, followed by third-way thinking in the 1990s as exemplified by the Blair Government. Its key academic proponent is Anthony Giddens (2000). He argues third-way thinking is a break from, and not merely a more subtle form of, neo-liberalism. While in general agreement with neo-liberals about the desirability to move away from the welfare state’s focus on redistribution towards more self-reliance in the creation of wealth, Giddens worries about the problems associated with social polarisation caused, in part, by market deregulation. He believes third-way policies can combine what he calls ‘social solidarity’ with a dynamic economy. He calls for selective central government intervention or re-regulation and implies the need for a revival of sub-national or metropolitan planning:

> Government should seek to create macro-economic stability, promote investment in education and infrastructure, contain inequality and guarantee opportunities for individual self-realization. (pp. 164)

and:

> we will need less national government, less central government, but greater governance over local processes (p. 5).

In effect, metropolitan plans should be designed to be both competitive and socially inclusive. Newman and Thornley (2005) agree: while designed to address global inter-city competition, such plans should have the potential to extract “the greatest benefits for local citizens”. (p. 276)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has adopted a similar position. In “Urban Renaissance, Glasgow” (2002) it details the city’s social problems – for example, 30% of working-age population being economically inactive (p. 42) – and then argues for greater city financial autonomy to address such issues. That said, the OECD believes there are limits to what city governments should and can do. The Glasgow Alliance, it says, is the way forward. A partnership of the Council, local
business and citizens, it has funded work-generation projects through the SIPS. The OECD speaks of the Alliance as the means of “creating Glasgow’s future” (p. 109).

A subsequent OECD report for Melbourne (2003) canvasses another feature of third-way thinking: a whole-of-government approach to place-based development (p. 321). M2030 is seen as a first step towards a spatial integration of all the state departments’ work, one that goes beyond traditional land use and transport planning integration. However, the report questions Victoria’s top-down planning approach arguing it is not “well adapted to improving competitiveness and liveability… in the global economy” (p. 323). It supports, as in the Glaswegian case, a more flexible form of governance involving local government, civil society and business. This complicates co-ordination but if done effectively can promote local areas’ sense of well-being (p.324). The nub of the report’s argument is such place-based planning fosters greater self-reliance and social inclusion. Strong initial inputs by government, if effective, will mean fewer inputs later, so reducing overall costs to governments and taxpayers.

Healey (1997) speaks of ‘systemic institutional design’ as a pre-requisite for such social capital building. Innovative public initiatives centred on area-based development projects, she argues, will only succeed with strong central government support (Gonzalez and Healey 2005). Fainstein (2001) ventures outside the Anglo-Celtic world of Glasgow, Melbourne and Toronto and speaks of the ‘enabling state’ as exemplified by The Netherlands and France where the primary focus is on promoting civil as opposed to market society, that is, thinking first about what Giddens calls ‘social solidarity’, then attending to market arrangements that help secure it. A similar distinction between mainland western European national mindsets and Australia’s is made by Gleeson and Low (2000). Arguably, such a re-prioritisation though takes us beyond third-way thinking’s Anglo-Celtic origins and its central concerns of being self-reliant and entrepreneurial.
Fainstein also questions neo-liberal critics’ singular focus on the ‘marginalised’. In terms of the global economy, she emphasises the importance of addressing the ‘insecure middle’, often well-educated people who face unemployment as their work moves to cheaper parts of the world. This same point is made by Sennett (2006): many in the ‘middle’, like the ‘marginalised’, he argues, have poor social networks, so lack the means to reconnect themselves back into the labour market. He calls for a new polity “in which all citizens believe they are bound together in a common project” (p. 164), something evident in the immediate post-World War II period but lost before the final collapse of the welfare state. This can be equated with Giddens’ idea of social solidarity, without which a truly dynamic economy cannot flourish.

Adams and Wiseman (2003) speak of the Victorian government’s ‘Growing Victoria Together’ as a possible new polity, one that draws on third-way thinking to underpin the state’s public policy. They remain, however, uncertain as to the future: “the strongest lesson of all is that this is very much a time in which, while the old world shows signs of passing away, the new world is still some way from being fully formed and named.” (p. 21)

‘Growing Victoria Together’ is an example of ‘new regionalism’ which Brenner and other critics of third-way thinking would equate with ‘roll out’ metropolitan institutional reform. Smyth at al. (2004) disagree believing new regionalism opens up ‘discursive space’ for the re-admission of social inclusiveness into local economic life. While this can reflect a diminished social role for the central government, they argue, like Adams and Wiseman, new regionalism is a break from neo-liberal thought. Whether it is a significant break perhaps depends on central governments’ willingness to selectively ‘upload’ responsibilities, as implied by Fainstein.
Possible Planning Responses to Neo-liberal and Third-way Policy Settings

Table 2 sets out possible planning responses to neo-liberal and third-way policy settings. From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that a number of important distinctions characterise neo-liberal and third-way ideologies though their repercussions have only rarely been tested in the planning literature (Boyle et al. 2008, Sager 2009).

Table 2 undertakes this task. Its emphases on the role of government, planning regulations, public-private partnerships, taxes, government-community relationships and central-local government relationships have been sketched out or alluded to above. Given this paper’s focus on people living in neighbourhoods not part of the ‘new economy’, the key policy settings to be considered below are social policy and spatial focus.

Table 2 here

In terms of third-way thinking being considered a clear break from neo-liberalism the question becomes: is social exclusion being addressed with serious intent by the planners and their plans? Put the other way around, do the neo-liberals critics’ accusation of ‘small areas, small achievements’ have substance?

Preparing to Interview Planners

Face-to-face interviews were conducted in late 2005 and 2006 with planners who had direct responsibility for composing and editing the plans and their subsequent implementation. Key authors of each plan were approached and all were prepared to be interviewed. All the planners interviewed had long-term involvement with the plans’ development. It must be remembered, though, they are public servants with government confidentialities to protect. They are employed primarily to manage planning systems, not to reflect on the impacts of neo-liberalism on public policy formulation. Thus, to provide a wider
perspective, interviews were also conducted with political advisors, local politicians and other senior bureaucrats involved in the various plans’ development.

A companion paper has been prepared to investigate what planners implementing the plans in the areas mentioned in the Introduction say about their capacity to address social inclusion. Here the views of the preparers of the plans are described and discussed.

Semi-structured interview formats were used drawing on the two ‘framing theoretical positions’ outlined above with the social dimensions of planning practice always to the fore. Base questions varied according to the work of the interviewee. The resulting transcripts are wide ranging and the intention here is to ‘mine’ them for what the planners specifically said about the social and spatial elements of their plans.

**What the Planners Said**

**Glasgow**

Two senior planners were interviewed, one central to the writing of GCP1 and 2, the other, to the writing of GCVJSP. An ex-GCC planner, a senior housing official, a Council political advisor and a City Councillor provide further comments.

**Social Policy and Spatial Focus**

As context, it is worth beginning with the non-planners and a common refrain of many of the Glasgow interviewees:

*If I was going to steer this discussion I would be looking at the redefinition of government… it is being driven as much by the basics of managing public finances, keeping expenditure and debt under control as it is about achieving the right political outcome.*
This was from the housing official. To balance financial rectitude with social progressiveness, he added: *(w)e have expanded the intermediate sector between government and the market.*

He was referring to the various housing associations active throughout Glasgow that have taken on the role of physically and socially renewing the city’s former public housing stock while building mixed-tenure or stand-alone, owner-occupied housing. Such activity was tangentially referred to by the planners but was not central to the points they wanted to make.

The political advisor was intent on realising Glasgow’s new economy, GCP1 being one means of achieving it:

*We are not doing enough to attract aspiring young people… so GCP1 set out a physical plan that would allow us to build more upmarket housing… the problems then come about with some of the sacrifices you have to make to get development going. Glasgow Harbour (an upmarket riverfront residential development) is a good example. If you load up the developer with planning gain requirements – social housing, affordable housing – then the thing would not have taken off. We were looking at $100 millions worth of public investment… all this had to be paid for by the City and has been delivered.*

The Councillor, ex-chairman of the City’s Housing Committee, had ambivalent feelings about these new, more entrepreneurial politics:

*I think a lot of Councillors’ reaction to it come from people’s experience… their world was doing deals with large businesses through trade unions… (now) there’s no guys in boiler suits… there’s more people now in the finance sector. You think well that cannot be our people but it is our people. The focus of the Council is on the people who have not joined in. It is all about empowering people and trying to involve them. It is social inclusion.*
The political tension between a focus on attracting and retaining highly-mobile professional workers and social inclusion was less apparent when talking to the planners. Like the housing officer, their start point was public finance:

*Planning is strongest if there is public expenditure to spend. When I started at Glasgow in the early 1970s there was lots of money and lots of stuff going on, then in one month it stopped…* the tap was not really turned on again until the late 1990s. From 1973 to 1996 we navel gazed, talked to everyone which to some extent, I think, was a substitute for action… Planning is only just getting back into believing that it has got some money to spend and maybe some influence.

And from another City planner:

*What did we want GCP1 to do? We knew Scottish Enterprise was fed up with Glasgow’s wish list. We knew we had to prioritise projects that take the city forward.*

Projects along the Clyde Corridor – that is, close to the River Clyde - were the priorities, Glasgow Harbour being a good example. But according to the planners this does not preclude planning for social inclusion:

*We are prioritizing, targeting areas of the city. The planners particularly those on the property side work with other professionals, other agencies, developers and local communities to actually regenerate these areas and reconnect the weaker parts of the city like Ruchill*\(^{ii}\) back into the city fabric.*

Indeed the GCVJSP planner believes the social geography of the City enables it to be competitive and inclusive:

*In Glasgow the main concentration of where houses that can be afforded, never mind rented, are actually in the central areas. And therefore, in the main people who need cheaper end houses, will find them in locations which are supported by public transport and close to most job opportunities. So in Glasgow, it*
is not a lack of affordable housing as a generality that is the problem, it is a lack of investment by the private sector.

The key question to this planner was not social inclusion but how to sell Glasgow to investors:

If I were to say to you that I could develop economic opportunities that are ten minutes from the best city centre outside Oxford Street, London, an international airport with one of Britain’s major rail fronts, is it marketable?

To the planners everything hangs on getting private money to follow public investment on the Clyde Corridor and beyond:

We will be trying to deliver on a whole range of things across many parts of the city, not just the priority areas. It remains to be seen how successful we will be because the city economy can change but right now it is buoyant. In terms of three years time, we would be very disappointed if we had not delivered on things (along the Corridor).

Neo-liberal or Third-Way?

The fact that government monies underwrite Glasgow’s urban regeneration suggests third-way thinking but the place marketing of Glasgow Harbour suggests otherwise. While there is evidence of physical and social renewal in the four New Neighbourhoods, the prioritisation of Glasgow Harbour and the commercial and social re-imaging of the Clyde Corridor more generally leads one to wonder whether the label ‘small places, small achievements’ is not far from the truth. This discounts, though, the role of the numerous Housing Associations renewing housing stock across the city, some even running work training programmes, matters not raised by the planners.

The dilemma Glasgow now faces is European Union and Scottish Executive funds for urban renewal are drying up. Planners appreciate they will become even more dependent on private investment to realise
GCP2. In this more financial straightened environment, one suspects, the New Neighbourhoods are likely to be on their own. For social inclusion to occur, more responsibilities are likely to fall upon the housing associations.

**Melbourne**

This case study begins with the views of a senior bureaucrat in the (then) Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) and a developer-planner with 40 years of experience. They provide context to the views of three planners responsible for writing M2030

**Social Policy and Spatial Focus**

The OECD report spoke favourably of M2030’s third-way credentials but according to the DVC bureaucrat, the administrative reality is different:

*There is a hostility to joined-up government because it is complex and difficult, and a medium-to-long term journey. You have the third-way partnership, place-based approach which has entered the lexicon… but… you have super-departments, competitive set-ups for service delivery, and contracting out…there is enormous tension building between policy rhetoric, the behaviour of the system at an administrative level and the actual capacity of the system to free itself of the silos accountability of the Westminster system.*

“Planning for Sustainable Growth”, part of the third-way lexicon, is the subtitle in M2030. When asked about its translation into planning practice, according to the developer-planner, it does indeed fall foul of ‘the behaviour of the system’:

*I think sustainability is left open to interpretation, depending on the issue you are dealing with.*

The most senior planner’s response to such criticisms was:

*There was a deliberate view right from the start that the implementation plans would evolve, that we had to get some runs on the board, we had to build up momentum… without totally scaring the horses… it*
was going to build up, be refreshed… and over time it would become more embedded in the way agencies would think of doing their work… It takes time. It is like cultural change…

‘Runs on the boards’ is a direct reference to thirteen Transit Cities, high-order activity centres located at major suburban railway stations:

*Government has had a Cabinet Sub-Committee for an extended period of time focused on M2030 and it has put its money where its mouth is in terms of Transit Cities.*

According to a second planner:

*Transit Cities are not necessarily located in stressed environments but they are out in areas where they can have a major effect. They are part of the second world in our Tale of Two Cities … by making (the areas around Transit Cities) more liveable we give people an alternative to the inner suburbs therefore we are hopefully creating more affordable opportunities – employment, lifestyle, entertainment - across the city.*

While catering to a wider range of socio-economic groups than Glasgow’s New Neighbourhoods, it could be argued Transit Cities has a similar political purpose: symbolic developments to promote their plans’ otherwise thin social inclusion credentials. The Melbourne planners strongly disputed this. They accepted the size of their task, the limits of planners’ powers and the failure of the Federal government to support Victorian initiatives, but stated that they had to begin somewhere and M2030 was their starting point. Indeed, like their Glasgow counterparts, they mentioned the previous lack of commitment to strategic spatial planning, adding that the silo mentality of the big-spending social infrastructure departments – health, education, transport – continue to stymie coherent strategic spatial planning. M2030 was part of a whole-of-government approach designed to spatially co-ordinate the departments’ activities.
They took particular umbrage at the accusation of ‘small areas, small achievements’. A more place-based approach was designed to complement, not replace the universal provision of services:

_Beyond looking at universal services there are places for whatever historical legacies that are under-performing and you can and should put in additional resources_ and:

_Manufacturing has restructured itself and moved into different areas… people have responded by moving to new jobs and new areas but we still have pockets… of well-above average unemployment… The question is how to address this… based on my experience it is more a local question… where the answer lies is probably in a combination of other departments working with local communities and local government…_

The Department of Human Services’ Urban Renewal Programme and the Department for Victorian Communities’ Community Renewal Programme set up under the ‘Growing Victoria Together’ banner were cited as part of the answer but these were not directly relevant to the planner’s tasks in M2030:

_There is still a long way to go for planners to understand that level. There is initially a need to understand the language of community development…_

This last point was further elaborated on by the third planner interviewed. She argued:

_It is more than language, it is about discovering how your interests intersect and when they run contrary to each other… Once we have got to that stage, we (the planners) can respond more effectively because we have something to consider in a land use sense, something that can be integrated into decision making…_

In other words, as a public servant she appreciates working towards a whole-of-government approach based on ‘Growing Victoria Together’ but as a land-use or physical planner, it is for her to determine
what common interests she has with other professionals. Planning for social inclusion is important but it is not a planner’s major concern.

Interestingly, none of the Melbourne planners broached the issue of ‘attracting and holding the highly-mobile professional workers’ of the new economy:

No sense of that, just an open for business attitude.

Planning for the Melbourne planners is not about picking ‘winners’, it is about maintaining sufficient land supply so housing is as affordable to as many as possible. They said trying to influence ‘who lives where’ is not a planning matter while providing well-laid out suburbs, ideally with a variety of housing for people to select from, is.

Neo-liberal or Third Way?

Under Kennett, ‘minimum intervention in the free market’ was the catch cry, the exception being the place marketing of Melbourne, particularly the central city. The planners writing M2030 saw it as a clean break from neo-liberal thought but one not directly concerned with social inclusion: that was for the Department for Victorian Communities and others to deal with. Their professional task is physical planning and through M2030 their focus was to contain urban sprawl without putting up land prices.

Toronto

Two TOP planners and two ‘Places to Grow’ planners were interviewed. A former planner now working with Toronto City Council in community development, a social planning consultant working in the new suburbs and a NGO policy adviser provide critical comment.

Social Policy and Spatial Focus
Long length of service gave the City of Toronto planners the historical perspective to query the assumed ‘welfare state through neo-liberalism to third way’ sequence. They viewed the Harris administration’s push for smaller government, deregulation and the downloading of services to local government as an aberration in Toronto’s civic and planning life.

Interviewer: Are you suggesting that was something outside the normal, historically?

Planner: Absolutely. When we had conservative governments before in Ontario they were very progressive. They were the ones… that funded Transit. They were the ones that funded Metropolitan government.

With the return of a Liberal (liberal rather than conservative) provincial government that “gets it”, the planners, while recognising the government’s constraining financial situation, hoped it would try to ‘upload’ at least some of governments’ past responsibilities..

They spoke of the increase in social polarisation in their city. Their own research revealed a severe lack of social service support in the numerous clusters of privately-rented high-rise apartment blocks to which new migrants gravitated. They spoke of their two hundred or so community consultations at neighbourhood centres involving young people from visible minority communities. These had enabled them to open up some political ground allowing them to set out in TOP some protections for private-rented apartments close to the CBD. Such protections, a City planner claimed, were the most effective way plans could promote socially- inclusive outcomes in existing built-up areas. The City planners clearly had a significantly broader view of their professional responsibilities than their Glaswegian and Victorian counterparts.
Protection of the Neighbourhoods, mainly middle-class residential areas within walking distance of the city centre is another major feature of TOP. The proposition that TOP favoured middle-class and propertied interests elicited a strong response:

_OK I agree with you a more open economy might lead to greater social polarization but I need to remind you about Planning 101: if you do not have the middle class buying into your policies, you are not going to go anywhere … you have to have political clout and a capital budget to address meaningful change._

His colleague insisted middle-class buy-in does not necessarily translate into middle-class area benefits:

_Interviewer: Does TOP protect middle-class residential areas?

_Planner: No. Exactly the opposite. I did a correlation after the Council meeting that approved the plan, comparing higher income wards against votes against the plan and, with one exception, it was an exact correlation._

The assumed privileging of economic priorities in TOP to attract foot-loose capital and professional workers was also challenged:

_Economic issues are the major focus of TOP, yes. The region is growing, so how do we manage it? The employment areas are mainly in the mature suburbs and that is where we are going to grow jobs. It is important that people not have to travel further out to work, especially the 25% of households in the City who do not have cars. You need jobs where there is transit… 20% to 40% currently take transit to get to work in these areas._

Access to affordable rental housing and to workplaces for people dependent on transit are elements of the social inclusion agenda that the City of Toronto planners have tried to hold onto in difficult political and financial circumstances. But the push for smaller government had had its effect on the City planners:
We used to make more of a difference. With amalgamation we not only lost a lot of very experienced people but our numbers dropped…the planners now cover huge areas, they are so whacked by applications they don’t spend nights in their living rooms any more.

However, the most senior of the City planners was politically resilient:

If you are serious about getting to where you want to get… you will have to commit funds to (TOP) from all kinds of sources… I have strong views about amalgamations but it could still work if you gave it the right powers, the right governance, the right revenue streams…

It was the senior ‘Places to Grow’ planner who provided a cross-light on the City planners’ views. She spoke of the extensive community consultations with regard to the redevelopment of the Toronto waterfront but with a somewhat different purpose:

This is what you do if you want to get Toronto to the level of other world cities. It is cutting edge. When you are building (world class) communities you work with them.

The ex-planner also had misgivings about the City planners’ interests in and abilities to influence social outcomes:

When planners are talking community services, they are talking day care, schools, hospitals, libraries basically. That is such a limited and incomplete concept of community services in a city like Toronto.

and:

While it might have vision, TOP is a very limited tool, it has very limited scope – I know that is a heresy to some planners. The direct planning tools to implement it are limited.

‘Places to Grow’ has social purpose. It requires that there is one local job for every three new residents before local government plans for residential developments are approved by the Province. Similarly residential densities of 50 persons per hectare to support viable transit are a pre-requisite for approval.
Those involved in drafting ‘Places to Grow’ appreciated the plan’s intentions but:

(we have three million people coming in the next twenty five years; what are we going to do with them?)

Concern centred on the social implications:

I would say we are good on the economic and the environmental. On the social I would say it is not so as the main purpose of this plan is more about trying to accommodate the growth.

There were reservations to about being able to implement the plan, specifically the willingness of local municipalities and their residents who voted in the Harris government to comply:

I think this plan is probably a bit too high level – it is up to a municipality when they get this to say how they are going to do it.

Developers have massive land holdings and so influence. A social planner when asked what degree of co-ordination there was between physical and social planning in new residential areas said:

Very little. I am only called in when there is a problem. Developers do not want social problems.

There are strong echoes here of Melbourne’s ‘Tale of Two Cities’.

Neo-liberal or Third Way?

The City of Toronto planners had the greatest willingness to engage politico-economic debates but they did not want to dwell upon the subtleties of neo-liberal discourse:

Competition and social inclusion and blah blah.

Another found conversations with academics writing about the neo-liberal ascendancy in Toronto acrimonious and unproductive.
They were hopeful of a return to ‘normalcy’ after the Harris years: planning practices underpinned by ‘the right governance and right revenue streams’ and like the Glasgow planners just wanted to get on with the job which in Toronto’s case, was planning for a mix of house types and tenures in neighbourhoods accessible to workplaces, wherever possible, by transit.

Such views were embodied in the principles underlying ‘Places to Grow’. But its planners working in the Ontario Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal were much more sanguine, being faced by rapid population growth and recalcitrant municipalities protective of their low-density living environments.

Perhaps the most telling comment was that of the NGO policy adviser working in partnership with the City in the Stronger Neighbourhood Initiative:

*Our relationship with the City of Toronto is very strong but I think what contributes to this is our mutual sense of powerlessness.*

The world has moved on and whatever the Toronto City planners’ hopes, Canadian central governments, like their counterparts in the UK and Australia, have downloaded traditional welfare responsibilities and are unlikely to take them up again. Partnerships which in third-way thinking are signs of strength and cohesion might be better thought of as evidence of the continuing retreat of governments from intervention in the market place.

**Discussion**

Interviewing planners can allow one to go beyond what plans state (Searle 2004) to what planners intend to do. Plans are written for a broad range of stakeholders. They can easily ‘speak’ of cities being planned to be both competitive and social inclusive, this partly to allay potential critics. But do the planners responsible for writing them believe their own rhetoric? Or given the neo-liberal ambition to sweep away all vestiges of welfare state thinking, do planners see themselves more as urban entrepreneurs or place
marketers? Or are plans simply political documents representing the views of the party in power, professional planners concentrating, as they traditionally have done, on the orderly development of land?

As a group, the planners who helped write the plans expressed limited interest in the academic debates behind the interviews – “no sense in that”. They were, understandably, ambitious for their plans. They were very aware of the need to ‘sell’ their visions to government and community alike. They had a sense that the city plans were evolving documents. The plans were seen as a means of achieving a more whole-of-government approach, one in which the planners would gain authority as drivers of the spatial expression of their governments’ ambitions. They recognized that without political and financial support, plans are dead documents. They were, with the partial exception of the City of Toronto planners, political pragmatists.

Were they writing their plans with their world city rankings in mind? Planners in Glasgow generally and certain ones in Toronto felt their cities were dropping down the rankings and believed working to attract and hold young professionals in advanced producer services would boost global competitiveness. The most senior planner in Melbourne was aware of the situation but said it was better to focus on more bread and butter issues such as competitively-priced land and inter-departmental co-ordination to facilitate the orderly development of land: do these properly, he implied, inward investment would follow.

Is social inclusion given weight by the planners? In Glasgow only four rundown neighbourhoods amongst thirty or so classified as severely socially disadvantaged were prioritized in GCP1. The commitment to them was scaled down in GCP2, ostensibly because other such neighbourhoods wanted similar support. Some of Melbourne’s Transit Cities were funded but they are time-distant by public transport from the new suburbs. In Toronto, the ‘Places to Grow’ planners fear social considerations will not be adequately addressed and the ex-planner suggested that TOP planners over-estimate the potential
of their plans to have direct and positive social impacts. The accusation of ‘small plans, small achievements’ is, at best, only partly deflected.

But this assumes planners are directly concerned with the re-integration of people and places marginalised by the more open world economy. Many of the interviewed planners, particularly in Melbourne, queried this assumption. Planners, they say, should work with other government agencies, NGOs and businesses so concerned but they should be not deflected from their primary focus on physical planning.

So do planners in Glasgow, Melbourne and Toronto favour the neo-liberal or third way approach to planning? The Glasgow planners were keen to distance themselves from the City’s socialist past. They appreciated the burst of public monies into regeneration projects but would relish Harvey’s descriptor, ‘urban entrepreneurs’, happy to negotiate with developers if that kick-started the redevelopment of the extensive brownfield sites that surround the city centre. The one Melbourne planner prepared to discuss the political economic history of the city said of third-way thinking: “I reckon. That is what the plan is attempting to do.” But the Melbourne planners were perhaps the least committed to socially-inclusive development and place-based planning: they were matters for other government departments to consider and fund, and for other professions to take the lead on. The City of Toronto planners challenged this narrow view of planning practice. In the pre-amalgamated City there was a long tradition to inclusive planning echoed, but still to be implemented, in ‘Places to Grow’. They would see their practices as neither neo-liberal or third way but as Torontonian.

**Conclusion**

One concludes that the terms neo-liberalism and third-way thinking should be thought of as ideal types, not to be confused with grounded realities. They have proved to be useful framing positions to better understand planning practices in different cities. No set of planners falls neatly into either category and as
such, the research approach has helped reveal hybrid forms of government, of overlapping rather than clear-cut and coherent planning strategies (McGuirk 2005 and Raco 2005). These ideal types necessarily underplay local historical, geographical and institutional circumstances. In particular the assumption that inter-city competition and social inclusion are primary issues in contemporary planning approach put some planners on edge. Melbourne and City of Toronto planners, for their different reasons, found them irksome.

That said, talking to planners and listening to their stories within the context of the two framing positions was illuminating (Sandercock 2003). Bringing theory and practice together tests and refines theory and promotes more reflective practice, the basis of better planning.

References


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Sennett, R. 2006 The Culture of the New Capitalism, Yale University Press, New Haven.


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1. The choice of cities relates to student exchanges RMIT University in Melbourne has had with universities in Glasgow and Toronto. Fortuitously, all three released city or metropolitan plans in 2002.

2. The presence of such services is used in ranking world cities: Toronto is classed as a ‘major world city’, Melbourne a ‘minor world city’ while Glasgow shows limited evidence of world city formation (The Globalization and World Cities Study Group and Network 1999).

3. The Mercer “Worldwide Quality of Life Survey” in 2006 covered 218 cities. The survey is conducted “to assist multinational companies in assessing comparative international quality of living standards for their expatriate workers.” Melbourne was ranked 11th equal, Toronto 15th equal and Glasgow, 51st equal: [http://across.co.nz/qualityofliving.htm](http://across.co.nz/qualityofliving.htm)


5. In 1997 Canada entered into a Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and the USA. This certainly contributed to the loss of manufacturing jobs from Toronto to cheaper land and labour sites elsewhere, some to greenfield sites outside the city limits. This outward movement reduced the central city’s tax base and exacerbated urban sprawl and regional traffic management problems.

6. The Ministry’s previous title under the Harris Provincial Government was Superbuild.

7. Ruchill is one of the four ‘New Neighbourhoods’.

8. Govanhill Housing Association is an example with education and training programmes directed at young women of Pakistani backgrounds.

9. Four housing associations are centred in Drumchapel, one of the New Neighbourhoods. One has a strong record of housing otherwise homeless people though to the disquiet of many well-established tenants, another with nurturing small businesses in purpose-built premises.

10. These protections were challenged by developers through the Ontario Municipal Board and watered down.

11. Refer to the Canadian Institute of Planners’ Professional Code of Conduct and compare it with the British and Australian equivalents.
Table 1: Metropolitan Population Growth and Projections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Glasgow</th>
<th>Melbourne</th>
<th>Toronto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>761,712</td>
<td>510,580</td>
<td>208,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1,089,555</td>
<td>1,330,800</td>
<td>1,117,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001*</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>3,162,000</td>
<td>5,221,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2031</td>
<td>c. 1,200,000</td>
<td>4,900,000</td>
<td>7,450,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Glasgow Guide: Population and Size; Victorian Year Book; City of Toronto Archives: Toronto History FAQs; Australian Bureau of Statistics; the General Register Office, Scotland.

* Within the continuous built-up area
### Table 2: Policy Settings and Planning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Settings</th>
<th>Neo-liberal Characteristics</th>
<th>Possible Planning Outcomes</th>
<th>Third-way Characteristics</th>
<th>Possible Planning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of Government</td>
<td>Smaller Government</td>
<td>Reduced Central Government planning capacity. Contracting out planning functions.</td>
<td>Smaller but better integrated government functions</td>
<td>Plans that spatially integrate government departments’ priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Policy</td>
<td>Minimal social policies as a buoyant free-market economy should benefit all social groups</td>
<td>Areas not linked to the now more open free-market economy becomes ‘spaces of social exclusion’.</td>
<td>Social policies targeted at potential ‘spaces of social exclusion’.</td>
<td>Competitive, socially-inclusive cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Regulations</td>
<td>Deregulation</td>
<td>Plans with fewer directives Simplified planning regulations.</td>
<td>Some Re-regulation</td>
<td>Plans that give more certainty to investors and more direction to local government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>Lower taxes</td>
<td>Less maintenance of existing public services. Limited provision of public services in growth areas. More private provision.</td>
<td>Lower but ‘better’ targeted taxes</td>
<td>Some focus on urban renewal projects. Developer Contributions to social infrastructure in new suburbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government – Community relationships</td>
<td>Self-help</td>
<td>Emphasis on owner-occupied housing, private schools, private health insurance.</td>
<td>Self-help with wider social purpose</td>
<td>Housing Associations, Mixed-tenure housing areas, Strategic re-investment in social infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central-Local Government Relationships</td>
<td>Downloading central government responsibilities</td>
<td>Local governments contract out of selected services.</td>
<td>Marginally better funded, but more accountable local government</td>
<td>Some limited control of local government over local plans. Local planners gain financial acumen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial Focus</td>
<td>Place Marketing</td>
<td>Large downtown projects built at the expense of government investment elsewhere. Planners as urban entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Place Making</td>
<td>Government seed funds socially-disadvantaged geographic communities with the aim of empowering local people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author