GLOBALISATION, WORLD CITIES AND URBAN PLANNING.

Developing a conceptual framework.

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By Peter Newman and Andy Thornley.

Introduction.

Five years ago we wrote our book Urban Planning in Europe in which we explored the influences on urban planning across Europe. Our aim was to examine the relative impact of broad economic forces, national systems and local politics on urban (in this paper we use the adjectives urban, city and metropolitan interchangeably) planning processes. We are now embarking on a new project which expands our geographical coverage. We are interested in the way in which strategic planning priorities are determined in the major cities of the developed world. So once again we are interested in the interplay of different levels of influence. In this new project we will need to pay more attention to changes at the global level. We will also need to incorporate new debates in the theoretical literature and developments in planning practice.

In this paper we set out our first thoughts on the kind of conceptual framework that will be needed for this project. We introduce the debates that we believe will be relevant and at the end of the paper draw out some points from these debates which might be useful in the construction of a suitable framework for the detailed work on planning in particular cities. Two particular concerns are noted here. The need to integrate the work done at different levels as we wish to focus on the way urban planning responds to influences across different spatial scales and, secondly, the need to interpret the debates in a way that allows us to make connections to strategic urban policy. We give some attention to work already done that seeks to research the comparative dimension of urban policy across the developed cities of the world.

Before embarking on a discussion of the conceptual material it is necessary to clarify the object of analysis. First we are interested in city wide strategic policy. Secondly we focus on spatial policy, i.e. those policies that have implications for specific geographical areas within the city and are often, though not always, expressed in some kind of framework for development. This can theoretically take a number of forms from a detailed strategic plan, through rather vague mission statements, to almost ad-hoc decisions over major developments. Thirdly we concentrate on the policy priorities expressed in these strategies. We want to examine how these priorities differ in relation to the relative importance of economic, environmental and social objectives, how they treat long and short term issues and the degree to which they respond to global or local influences. Our focus will therefore be on the way these policy vehicles encompass priorities over objectives and the pressures and influences that determine these priorities. In other words how is the urban planning agenda constructed.

Of course we cannot encompass all cities across the globe. We will only be covering cities of one particular kind. The cities we wish to cover are those that are considered to be leaders in terms of economic dynamism and global reach, often referred to as global or world cities. However these terms are, as we intend to show, rather vague definitions. Our coverage will be limited to the three major developed regions of the world, North America, Europe and East Asia. In each region we will examine the leading city and several others that can be said to be challenging these dominant cities or that have some particularly strong role in the region. The main questions we will explore are the degree to which cities such as these are developing similar urban planning strategies and priorities, and the ways in which urban planning agendas are changing. We will seek to explore the reasons for any similarities and differences in approach between cities and over time.

The formulation of metropolitan strategies will take place within the context of urban
politics and will be shaped by the degree of power that is brought to bear by different interests. However the interplay between interests and planning priorities is not confined to the boundaries of city politics. So in order to gain a full understanding of what shapes a particular strategic planning agenda we need to also examine broader pressures. These may derive from both political, economic, environmental and cultural sources. City politics interacts with national, regional and global politics. Many of the economic interests that seek to influence the local agenda will also stem from the national, regional or global level. Many environmental pressures operate at a scale beyond the city itself. Cultural traditions may also have an important influence on priorities and the way decisions are made. Thus to understand fully the influences on the strategic planning agenda we need to explore both the local political arena and the way in which external forces impinge upon it. The external forces may take the form of agencies that seek to influence or control the local political decisions and priorities, such as national governments, pressure groups or particular powerful business interests. There may also be forces that are shaping the way cities are changing both internally and in relation to each other. City politicians and planners will need to adopt a position regarding how they respond and react to these reshaping forces. Planning strategies or non strategies are articulated in forms of discourse which themselves change over time. Neo-liberal ideas have been in the ascendancy, but we are interested in how other ‘causal stories’ of the relationships between the global and the local are brought into urban planning and help express city priorities.

We need therefore to develop a conceptual framework that allows us to explore the formulation of priorities regarding strategic urban planning in the context of both the operation of city governance and changes in the external environment. The framework needs to encompass global/local interaction. This involves a number of different levels - global, sub-global regions, national, regions within nations, and the city. An important dimension will be the interaction between the levels and combined effect on strategic planning priorities. In the rest of the paper we outline some of the literature that we think could be useful in developing our framework. For ease of presentation we set this out in three sections global, regional/national and city, although as already mentioned our main interest is in the way these levels interact and come together at the city scale. We start to raise some issues about such a synthesis in the final section.

The global level.

Globalisation has become the major debate of the last ten years. The processes of global transformation are generally seen to operate in a multi-layered way (Held et al, 1999) covering economics, politics, culture and environment. Economic globalisation, which is often seen as the most advanced aspect, itself contains different dimensions such as trade, finance, or production. Increases in migration and the global reach of organised violence are also common themes. The discussion on globalisation also contains many contested issues. It will clearly be necessary to draw on these debates in a focused way, concentrating on those aspects that impinge most on local decision-making about strategic spatial issues. In exploring the debates on globalisation we are particularly interested in the impact this process has on cities. According to Knox, ‘world city formation is the urbanisation of global restructuring’ (1998,120).The processes of global restructuring can be argued to have an economic and an institutional dimension. The restructuring of space involves a restructuring of governance. Pressures on cities can be seen to operate in two dimensions. There are the pressures that are placed on cities in relation to their social and physical structures, such as major development projects, social polarisation or gentrification. Then there are the influences that are brought to bear on the decision-making processes. Clearly these influences interact. The physical and social changes take place within a political context. Decisions are being made on whether to promote certain projects and whether to undertake certain policies and these will effect the degree to which the forces of globalisation are accentuated, modified or prevented.

Thus of particular concern is the debate over the degree of control over the globalisation processes. The approach adopted will effect both the substantive issues covered in spatial policies and also the processes by which priorities and decisions are made. To what extent do
city governments have to respond to what are regarded as inevitable or even 'natural' processes? Can they control such trends and impose their own local political agenda. Here we will need to explore the different reactions to the globalisation process. A useful starting point are the categories of Held et al in which they talk about hyperglobalisers, transformationalists and sceptics (1999). These categories relate to the degree of intervention considered desirable or possible and the range of opportunities and possibilities that are available. This is obviously a crucial issue in exploring the role of politics. A major debate to be covered here is the question of the role of the nation state, is it disappearing (Ohmae), remaining a dominant force (Hirst and Thompson) or undergoing a process of restructuring in which there are shifts of roles both upwards to global or sub-global regional level or downwards (Giddens). Arguments about the inevitability of urban restructuring are challenged by some writers who, like Friedman argue that 'urban outcomes are to a large extent a result of public policies' (1998 p1). Similarly Harloe and Fainstein (1992) point to the high degree of public sector involvement in the revival of London and New York as world cities. These debates clearly have effects on how we view the strength and autonomy of city governance in the face of globalisation.

One of the themes of the globalisation discussion is the impact of improved technology in telecommunications and air transport in generating fast global transactions and greater personal mobility (e.g. the work of Castells). This has generated a body of literature that explores the impact such processes, and the resultant restructuring of business operations, have on cities. This is usually dated from Friedman and Wolf's article in 1982, and has been developed by authors such as Sassen. Much of this literature has focused on exploring the developing hierarchy of cities throughout the world based upon particular criteria. One important strand of debate is that which identifies at the top of the hierarchy a new 'transnational' urban system (Sassen, 1999). This proposition implies that cities in this system have become disconnected from their regional and national contexts and share core features. Competition between cities in these hierarchies is an important theme as is the exploration of the impact on the economic and social structures of cities. Key themes here have been the concentration on the one hand 'command functions' - financial activity, professional services and HQ and regional offices and their demands on cities e.g. Transport - Airports, access from airport to city, movement around new centres, Facilities - Telecommunications, professional services, eating places, good housing, Buildings - High quality offices, hotels, leisure centres, tourist magnets, e.g., shopping, sports- and, on the other hand, the processes of social polarisation. One possible result is a separation between the 'new' activities and the rest of the city and a creation of a 'new spatial order' (Marcuse and van Kempen, 2000.4). City planners seem to face a number of challenges from economic restructuring. However, the nature of some of these features - polarisation for example - has been vigorously contested (eg.Hamnett, etc) and the global city model seen as too reductionist and ethnocentric (White, 1998 469).

Twenty years of work focused on the changing economic hierarchy and its impacts is paralleled by concern about global environmental issues. City planners have become conscious of international treaties and environmental internationalism shapes the demands of local lobbies. There has been a growth in international treaties, conferences and environmental pressure groups and these have had an important impact on political debate and 'environmental globalization has shifted the balance of power in the formation of the political agenda' (Held et al. p.410). Many of the problems discussed are truly global in that they are interconnected (Held et al). However many others although occurring repeatedly across the world are in fact local in their origins and effect - e.g. the impact of cars on pollution or the impact of sewage on beaches. Some of these have cross border effects such as industrial pollution of rivers or acid rain. These border problems have led the EU for example to adopt environmental policies for implementation across member states. Each country makes its own, though varied, contribution to the overall environmental problem through for example its consumption patterns or industrial activity and this has led to the view that the global problems can only be dealt with by the summation of action by each nation state, city or individual. The Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 is particularly oriented to cities. However city governments are often driven by their perception of the need to compete in the global economy and tend to view environmental regulations as
counterproductive. Debate about environmental issues is most often expressed as a conflict between neo-liberal economics and environmental sustainability. There is a tension between environmental objectives, which are long term, and promoting economic prosperity, which has possible short term political and economic benefits (Low et al., 2000). Other organising concepts - the concern for environmental justice (Keil, 1998) for example - emphasises both struggles over quality of life in world cities and the potential for alternative formulations of environmental issues and local action. The way in which such issues are treated in the strategic planning frameworks is one of the key issues we will be exploring in the case studies.

The regional and national level.

Two sets of arguments take us on to a regional level of analysis. The first exemplified by Hirst and Thompson argues that the increasing internationalisation of trade and financial flows is largely concentrated in the developed world and in distinct trading blocs. Thus Europe, a US dominated north America and Japan dominated Asian zone account for much of the increasing flows. In contrast, Scott (1998) argues from the economics of regional agglomeration to construct an idea of regional motors surrounded by prosperous hinterlands (Tokyo-Osaka, Southern California, the Milan-London banana) with outlying islands of relative prosperity (Singapore) and extensive frontiers to be exploited. The contemporary geography of global capitalism can thus be shaped into regions.

International trade and regulatory organisations have grown in number and in influence. Some argue that the particular form of contemporary economic globalisation is a policy choice. The World Bank enforces an agenda of ‘structural adjustment’ in return for economic aid. But in addition to enforced macro economic policy other trends in governance have become widely adopted across the globe. Administrative decentralisation, privatisation, greater involvement of business have become almost universal features of city government (Harris and Fabricus 1997).

International regulation also has an important regional dimension. Global pressures in the north America, Europe and east Asia regions are mediated to some extent by NAFTA, the EU and ASEAN. This emergent regional policy has differing degrees of impact on city planning. In Europe this is most developed and in some aspects of regional treaties constrain local options. Of growing significance also are voluntary networks of co-operation. Some span the three global regions others aims to enhance competitiveness within the trading blocs. International planning may constrain some choices but, on the other hand, we have argued elsewhere that the problems of competition and polarisation thrown up by global restructuring increasingly require interventions from higher level governments.

Increasing international government raises issues about how we treat the national level. We can see decision rights being passed up to an international level and down to sub national levels. The idea of ‘hollowing out’ (Jessop) of nation states has some purchase. On the other hand international treaties are negotiated by these nation states and, certainly in Europe national welfare states and planning systems mediate international pressures. Conceptualising the national level is bound up with how we see the city level of decision making? Certainly this can no longer be seen as a purely municipal level. Cities are penetrated by supranational forces and international decisions. Nation states recognising the economic importance of cities have become more involved in promoting their urban assets. Rather than becoming weaker Brenner argues that states are better seen as being rescaled. States have become ‘denationalised’, with greater concern at supranational and sub national levels. We find supranational, national regional and local levels all involved in promoting cities. An important point here is that we should see contemporary restructuring as having both economic and institutional dimensions. For many cities processes of institutional change are incomplete. In the world cities these processes of change may be particularly enhanced. Brenner argues this forcefully,
‘As densely organised forcefields in which transnational capital, territorial states and localised social relations intersect, world cities are geographical sites in which the socio-political stakes of this politics of scale are particularly substantial in both geopolitical and geoeconomic terms.’
Brenner 1999 446/7

These high stakes create sites of conflict. UK economic policy can be argued to favour London and the South East, thus raising questions about how far world city and national interests are compatible (Taylor, 1997). In addition the current reform of the government of London is a national political issue, and candidates for mayor raise the question of London being weakened by contributing too much of its resources to the nation. Regional reform could be seen as a step in the direction of much more autonomous city government thus confirming the view of those who like Friedman see waning national states and increasingly influential trading cities (1998, p24). This argument is put most strongly by Pierce,

‘Across America and across the globe, citistates are emerging as a critical focus of economic activity, of governance, of social organisation for the 1990s and the century to come’

Such views probably underplay the continuing strength of national interests and national policy. White for example argues that it is the French political elite’s pursuit of social polices that stops Paris matching up to the global city model. However these debates mean that we have to focus quite clearly on the exact ways in which supranational, national and local levels interact in particular cities. The particular approach taken by planning depends upon both city and higher level politics. This will require a study of: the relative importance of national/regional/city state, how much the national planning system matters.

The city level.

There are important debates about the politics of world cities which sit in this area between nation state and city levels. Keil argues for a transformation of politics. World cites represent a ‘post-national state’ (1998b,631), in which we find intensified political action. This politics involves action from church, labour and environmental groups. The politics of LA may have been out of step with traditional models of class based urban politics but its contemporary politics is very much the product of world city status. Thus world cities themselves transform how we think about urban politics. The impacts of global forces can be argued to have had fundamental impacts on traditional concepts of politics by driving a wedge between the nation state and the city (Holston and Appadurai, 1999).

The politics of planning is clearly influenced by what is argued to be a transformation of citizenship. Increased flows of immigrants may be more concerned with substantive economic and social rights than the formal citizenship that was guaranteed by nation states. Middle class workers with international work contracts are at once disengaged from formal local politics but also demand a particular quality of city life. The growth of BIDs in commercial areas and CID and gated communities of residents point to new exclusionary forms of citizenship. Sassen sees a transnational grid of cities in which an international business elite construct new ‘urban glamour zones’ including the shopping and entertainment they require. The excluded also make demands on space and create the potential for conflict.

In Europe formal citizenship is more and more the realm of supranational government, it is at city level that actual questions of access to jobs and services are answered. Rights of entry to world cities are regulated by international treaty but local regulation, at the micro level of the BID for example, defines rights of access to certain parts of the city. At city level the ‘dual city’ hypothesis of the early 1990s still holds sway with some authors. Critics have argued that fault lines are more complex than the glamour zone / war zone contrast would have us believe and that city politics are therefore all the more complex. For example, Logan emphasises the long history of immigration and spatial segregation in New York, which has always had world city characteristics.
Holston and Appadurai argue that identity politics have become more important than formal citizenship. This new urban politics though is not necessarily entirely constructed around the impacts of economic globalisation. Bailey (1999) for example argues that whilst many geographers have been preoccupied with the place of cities in economic hierarchies other factors shape identities and identity politics. Gay politics may well adapt to local agendas but at the same time has a ‘deep agenda’ which does not derive from the politics of economic positioning.

At city level economic and social change impact on civil society and political expression. Cities are increasingly dependant in their interaction with the global economy but at the same time to survive they must have a solid relationship with their local society and its inherent interests (Borja and Castells, 1997). Thus political mechanisms, democracy and participation are also key aspects of city management. Pressures on planning come both from the need to integrate city economies with global forces and from the need to integrate fragmented interests within the city. City competition and the penetration of international institutions add to the challenges facing city leaders. There are differing accounts of how governance is being reshaped. For Keil world cities are the sites at which the ‘post-national’ state is constructed, and places that generate distinctive politics, including neighbourhood versus world class culture, immigration and citizenship rights, and sustainability. Different political theories shed light on this new politics. From a regulation theory perspective cities are seen as increasingly polarised and government changed by fiscal crisis and entrepreneurialism. Differences between cities include the extent to which there is a broad mobilisation of local actors in processes of government (though those forces mobilised are most often limited to business leaders, Mayer). Such analyses tend to the structure end of a structure-agency continuum. Jessop tries to combine structural constraint with the reflexive capacity of actors to define their interests and identities (Jessop, 1997). Thus alternative and oppositional politics can be imagined. This sort of approach helps those who would like the strong autonomy of actors in regime theory to be grounded in understanding of the structural constraint of changing capitalism. Keil would argue that the common ground between regulation and regime approaches is the world city. LA is both site of regulation and site of opposition and new politics.

An alternative formulation of the relationship between economic forces and policy choices is elaborated in the comparative city studies of Savitch and Kantor (1999). They look at New York and Paris and then a range of medium sized cities. ‘bargaining advantages’ arise from market position, intergovernmental support and local (political) cultures. Savitch and Kantor identify those cities in which a social agenda is more likely to arise. But the more vigorous social orientation is in cities with strong market position (eg Paris, Toronto - these cities also attract groups with high environmental/social values and who press policy makers). They conclude that in the long term wealth is needed to pursue social agendas,. But not all rich cities support social spending (New York) - the difference is that Paris has support from other levels of government. City leaders may have an impact but the constraint of either higher level government, popular reaction or market place limit choices.

At city level then we are interested in the constraints on choices, how economic change shapes political forces and at how planning expresses these pressures. The literature of city politics suggests ways in which differences between and within cities might be accounted for. There are also differences in world city building over time. In the 1980s London (docklands), New York (Battery Park City), Tokyo (Tokyo Bay), Paris (La Defense) and LA (Downtown) all planned substantial development projects to maintain competitive edge. In the 1990s it is possible to discern a different, more managerial response; a shift from building world city citadels to managing the forces of globalisation through for example, efficient administration, governance reform, and security and quality of life programmes.

Bringing it all together?
As we mentioned in the introduction, in developing our conceptual framework we need to try and integrate the debates that take place at each level with a focus on those aspects that impinge on strategic urban planning. In this section we attempt to bring the debates together under two main headings - the global/regional/city impacts of globalisation and institutional responses.

Global/regional/local

There are three sets of challenges to urban planning. The first arises from the redefinition of a global hierarchy of cities. The world cities are in competition with each other and with regional rivals. Competition around economic development seems to be the inevitable response. The second set of challenges come from the impacts of economic globalisation within the world cities, the creation of a ‘new spatial order’. These impacts are vigorously debated but the creation of new zones, economic and spatial polarisation present profound challenges. The third challenge comes from environmental globalisation and the sustainability of concentration of development in a few world cities. These three sets of challenges are mediated by very different urban contexts. Each world city reveals ‘unavoidable continuities’ of urban development (Beauregard and Haila 2000). Many urban processes have been unfolding for longer than the period of ten or twenty years that we associate with contemporary globalisation. London, Paris and New York were world cities a hundred years ago. The built environment changes slowly and ensures continuities. Urban cultures also have histories and the ‘habitus’ of Bourdieu (1990) contrasts with the ‘runaway’ globalisation of Giddens (1999). Industrial and economic organisation also provide regional mediation of global forces (Esping Anderson).

Institutional Responses

As we have noted there are differing views on the ability of public policy to steer the forces of globalisation. This is an issue of structure and agency for the differing perspectives of regulation and regime theory. The debate has another dimension. Keil argues that the world city constitutes a new site of political expression where economic and environmental changes interact with institutional change. There may be, as Brenner suggests some lag as institutional forms catch up with economic reality, but we need to see globalisation as engendering both economic and institutional restructuring. We can no longer look at a separate city level. The world city is better imagined as a sphere of overlapping supranational, national, regional, city levels and, within the city, self governing zones. The denationalisation which Brenner identifies does not mean that nation states have disappeared but that as Barnes and Ledebur (1997) argue national level regulation no longer fits the new economic landscape of city regions. Strategic city planning may be undertaken at different levels and responses to global forces developed within or in opposition to the sets of institutions focused on the world cities. Economic competition is just one of the ‘causal stories’ which link the local to the global (Clarke and Gaile 1997).

Related to the particular institutional structure of world cities - the ‘densely organised forcefields’ - is the question of conflicting ideas. A dominant set of ideas has been that associated with the ‘mega project’ of world city building (see Olds). Keil identifies alternative voices in LA. Urban planning as an overarching discourse concerned with optimising land use choices is severely challenged by the politics of world cities. The former beliefs of public officials may now find themselves no longer relevant. Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) for example argue that urban segregation may now have advantages for minority groups. Urban planning is faced with challenges similar to those which undermine traditional concepts of citizenship. The ambitions of city planners change as do the criteria for judging success. The tools available for planning to intervene in the market, in the new mode of operation in the globalised world, will vary from city to city. The form of this intervention will be some kind of...
control mechanism based upon legal provision or some kind of influence based on political legitimacy or financial resources. As mentioned in the introduction our focus is on the strategic policy that is constructed to support this intervention, and this can vary in its strength. The policies, and the priorities expressed in them, are formulated in a political context. The debates over the changing nature of this political context are therefore key to our discussion. Planning lies at the interface of market and politics. It is a vehicle for influencing the market drawing its legitimacy from politics. Urban planning is in the business of moulding and shaping these activities. Should they be encouraged, modified or prevented? The reaction to this question will depend on the form and degree of planning and the priorities expressed in its mission statements.

In relation to trends in European cities in the early 1990s we argued that local spatial planning will not be enough. The sphere of international regulation has important implications for urban planning. On the other hand we believe that spatial policy can make a difference in either progressive or regressive ways. We expect social and environmental issues to rise up the agenda of the world cities as it becomes more apparent that world city making cannot be achieved with economic development alone.

Diagram of debates and literature.

Global Economy and Environment
- transnational city
- city-region economies
- global/local sustainability
- new spatial order

Urban Planning in World Cities
- international regulation
- multi-level
- autonomy of public policy?
- competing causal stories
- legitimacy

Institutional Change
- structural adjustment
- denationalised states
- post-national states
- micro regulation
- citizenship/social movements

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