

Making 'Global Sydney': spatial imaginaries, worlding and strategic plans

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the expression of global spatial imaginaries in urban policy and planning. Following recent calls to understand how the global is 'made up' in and through cities, we argue for the usefulness of the concept of 'worlding' (Roy & Ong, 2011). By analysing how strategic spatial plans envisage 'Global Sydney', the paper reveals a constitutive spatial imaginary informed by the articulation of three interrelated elements: global city standards, comparative techniques and extra-local policy models. Unpacking how cities are selectively worlded through spatial imaginaries, the paper advances an approach to urban-globality as actively cultivated and differentially produced.

Introduction

On the release of PricewaterhouseCoopers' Cities of Opportunity Index, the *Sydney Morning Herald* recently proclaimed that transport and infrastructure was "better in Mumbai than Sydney" (Munro, 2012: n.p.). Three days later, the same news outlet ran with a different headline: "World loves Sydney after all" (McKenny, 2012: n.p.). The second story referred to the City Reputational Index, compiled from a survey of people asked for their impressions on a number of cities around the world. Eclipsed only by Vancouver and Vienna, Sydney's placing at third was helped by high scores on the quality of its business environment, its political-legal institutions and, incongruously, considering the results three days prior, its infrastructure. Just over a week earlier, Sydney was placed among the world's top 10 global cities in a report by consultant AT Kearney (SMH, 2012: n.p.). Its jump from 16th in 2008 to 9th in 2012 offered encouragement. But with the likes of New York, London, Paris, Tokyo and Hong Kong still ranked higher, there was cause to

take stock. Although the Index confirmed Sydney as “one of the greatest cities in the world”, according to the head of the Sydney Business Chamber, being ranked 9th signalled the need for urgent action: “[it is] a competition in which we can’t stand still for a second” (SMH, 2012: n.p.).

Permeated with references to London, Vienna and Mumbai, this fairly typical fortnight suggests the extent to which urban political debates routinely exceed administrative boundaries. As political spaces and objects of governance, cities reveal themselves amid spatial imaginaries comprised of perceived global city standards, comparative techniques and extra-local sources of ‘best practice’. Sydney, for example, has developed over time into a knowable, governable entity with the assistance of imaginaries that stretch far beyond an apparent territorial remit. However, such admissions continue to sit awkwardly with predominant styles of urban research, which by and large have tended to employ territorial, localist understandings of the urban. Brenner and Schmid (2011: 11) point out that urban research “has long presupposed the existence of a relatively stable, putatively “nonurban” realm as a “constitutive outside” for its epistemological and empirical operations”. As a result, there has been reliance on ‘gestural’ analyses (McCann, 2011a: 114), where in-depth local analyses gesture up to “the wider global context as “obviously” playing some constitutive role in the local process”, and globally-oriented analyses gesture down to “quickly sketched examples from specific cities or territories to bolster or validate the global analysis”. In an effort to move beyond bounded territorial understandings and gestural analysis, researchers increasingly focus on how the urban and the global are constitutive of one another—how they are ‘made up’ (Fariás & Bender, 2010; McCann & Ward, 2011). While this has been catalysed by the empirical fact that the city “is everywhere and in everything” (Amin & Thrift, 2002: 1), critical urban researchers from a range of disciplines have hit fertile ground by asking basic but deceptively complex theoretical questions of the urban itself (Ward & Imbroscio, 2011).

In this paper, we add to understandings of how the urban and the global are co-constitutively ‘made up’ by analysing the way strategic spatial plans envisage ‘Global Sydney’. We align our paper as part of a general shift from ‘global’ to ‘globalizing’ cities, approaching the global as a contingently realized, emergent property present in all cities, rather than a categorical trait associated with a select few. After narrating this shift, we draw on Roy and Ong’s (2011) formulation of ‘worlding’ to situate our analysis. At its broadest, worlding is the “ongoing art of being global” (Ong, 2011: 3), denoting the “array of problem-solving and spatializing practices that are in play in shaping the urban field” (Ong, 2011: 10). Framed by this perspective, the paper approaches planning as a type of elite, state-authored worlding practice. Using the

case of Global Sydney, we reveal a constitutive spatial imaginary informed by global city standards, comparative techniques and extra-local policy models. While recognizing the variety of actors, institutions and political economic forces that activate and steer planning projects, like the one surrounding Global Sydney, we focus specifically on strategic spatial planning documents. In doing so, the paper attempts to demonstrate how strategic spatial planning documents are themselves sites of worlding, serving as expressions and agents of global urban imaginaries in their own right.

Making up the global

While cities have long been acknowledged for their relationship to the wider world, from the 1970s critical urban researchers began to embrace the global as a central concern (McGuirk, 2012). Accounts emphasized the rescaling of state capacities in response to “accelerated world-scale capital accumulation” (Brenner, 1998: 3) and the shift from nationally-anchored Fordism to globalized post-Fordism (later understood as globalized neoliberalism). Governing capacities were migrating away from the national scale toward supra-national and sub-national scales, particularly that of the urban, which came to occupy a fundamental, strategic position in the contemporary political economy (Jessop, 1993; Peck & Tickell, 1994).

As the imperatives of global capitalism were reaching into the urban, cities were argued to be increasingly reaching out to the global. This dialectic combination comprised the New Urban Politics (Cox, 1993) and with it the foundation for a rich seam of research. Urban governance was no longer defined by managerialism and its inwardly focused, redistributive politics. Instead, urban governance was markedly entrepreneurial, oriented to external constituencies and characterized by a politics of economic growth and inter-urban competitiveness (Harvey, 1989; Hubbard & Hall, 1998). The “core message of contemporary urban policy”, for Cochrane (2011: 739) at least, had become “an explicitly globalized one”. Urban policy and governance was repurposed to the task of attracting mobile elite workers and sources of capital to secure local prosperity, requiring vigilant scanning of the policy landscape for ideas to bolster competitive advantage (Peck, 2002).

Nowhere is the mix of strategic economic position and entrepreneurial governance more apparent than among ‘global’ or ‘world’ cities. Distinguished by their influence on and embeddedness in global networks, global cities are commonly seen to “embody a successful formula of urban entrepreneurialism ... which guarantees a place on the global map of investment, development and economic growth” (Roy, 2011c: 9).

Such cities, the subject of a voluminous literature (Knox & Taylor, 1995; Brenner & Keil, 2006), are accorded special status due to their ability to “construct, assemble, and channel flows of information, goods, and influences” (Simone, 2001: 16). An influential subset of the global cities literature has set about indexing and ranking cities against certain attributes—the concentration of advanced producer service firms, for example (Beaverstock et al., 1999)—which are thought to signify global city status.

The global cities literature, and the conception of the global it advances, has had substantial influence. In the realm of policy and practice, urban rankings of the sort produced or inspired by global cities researchers are now a standard part of public discourse, reinforced through popular media and policy-making (McCann, 2004a; McManus, 2012). For urban research, McCann (2004b: 2317-8) notes that the global cities literature has had “great influence on how urban studies scholars conceptualise the relationship between urbanization and globalization”. Precisely because of this influence, a range of research accounts have emerged seeking to critically reflect on, and in many cases move beyond, the vision of urban-globality that attends orthodox global cities research (Robinson, 2006; Roy, 2009; McFarlane, 2010). The global city debate, according to Keil (2013: 796), has “moved into poststructuralist and postcolonial territory ... reviv[ing] urban studies in encouraging ways by asking questions about geography, ethics, methodology, [and] comparativism”.

The consensual core of this otherwise heterogeneous work is two-fold. First, it challenges orthodox global cities research for promoting a narrow understanding of globality itself. Owing to its primary empirical foci (economic forms of global activity) and representational strategies (categories and hierarchies based on quantitative analysis), global cities research “generally adheres to a rigidly dualistic categorization of the urban world as comprised of global and non-global cities” (McCann, 2004b: 2316). For Robinson (2006), this relates to a widely held dualism between modern and developmental cities. Left unquestioned, this optic sidelines the many ways in which cities display globalizing characteristics and overlooks the practices, processes and contingently realised alignments that are acknowledged as central to globalisation (Larner & Le Heron, 2002).

Second, orthodox global cities research is questioned for the manner in which the specific development trajectories of anointed Global Cities are used as the basis for theorization. Those associated with the post-colonial tradition in particular argue that by universalizing the experience of a relatively small collection of apparently ‘global’ cities, primarily large post-industrial cities of the global North, researchers

‘provincialize’—render particular—the experiences of much of the urban world. Importantly, this ‘regulating fiction’ (Robinson, 2002) structures *what* and *where* counts in the production of knowledge about the urban. To remedy these apparent shortcomings, Roy (2011b) has identified the need to overcome a constrained and constraining ‘geography of authoritative knowledge’, while Robinson (2011c) has made sustained calls to ‘internationalize urban theory’.

On the journey toward internationalised urban theory, authors are increasingly appreciating, like Ong (2011: 12), that there is “no singular or fixed standard of urban globality”, rather that there are “many forms of “the global” in play”. Those inspired by the post-colonial imperative align with a broader array of urbanists preoccupied not with an elite order of Global Cities but with the processes and practices of ‘globalizing cities’. Decentring hierarchical categorisations, these accounts focus on globality as a multiple, emergent property detectable in all cities.

As part of this shift, researchers have begun to explore urban-globality through the lens of policy and policy-making. Work on ‘urban policy mobilities’ has received significant attention of late, focusing on the processes and practices involved in mobilizing and territorializing urban policy models and expertise (McCann & Ward, 2011; Peck, 2011; Temenos & McCann, 2013). An allied literature examines the practice of planning in a global context (see the recent *IJURR* symposium on this topic (Harris & Moore, 2013)). Researchers are increasingly responding to the notion that planning is “a global enterprise ... shaped by global flows of capital, labor, ideas, information and symbols” (Roy, 2011a: 406). While such flows are by no means new to the practice of planning (Nasr & Volait, 2003), many have noted that contemporary planning has become more thoroughly, even fundamentally, ‘transnationalized’ (Healey, 2010; Miraftab, 2011; Parnreiter, 2011).

Reflecting this realisation, it is now a “key planning theory and practice question”, according to Gunn & Hillier (2012: 359), to ask “how new agendas travel and are adopted through the planning system”. Urban strategic planning has received particular attention for both its global ubiquity and its global constitution (Parnreiter, 2011; Robinson, 2011b; Gunn & Hillier, 2012). Parnreiter (2011: 417), for example, contends that strategic planning has become a constellation of cross-border origins, circulations, networks and infrastructures, and is thus innately transnational. In the context of transnational flows, researchers have been called upon to analyse the way travelling planning knowledge is locally interpreted, adapted and repurposed (Gunn & Hillier, 2012).

Common to these accounts is an implicit argument against planning's 'modernisation myth' (Healey, 2011: 188). Wary of seeing transnationalism as a rational-modernist *telos*, planning research has come to emphasize the contingent, if politically structured, global terrain on which urban planning imaginations are framed and contemporary planning techniques, models and discourses set in motion. There is increasing recognition of human desires and imaginations in the practice of planning, as well as "uneven process[es] of transnational norm-making" (Parnreiter, 2011: 419) which influence the formation and articulation of those very desires and imaginations. With all this in mind, we might say that planning researchers are moving away from singular understandings of the global to investigate, instead, the many forms of 'the global' in play.

Imaginative acts, worlding cities

In the wake of this theoretical shift toward urban-globality understood in terms of multiple permutations, processes and practices, a number of analytical approaches have surfaced. One way researchers are exploring urban-globality is through the concept of 'worlding'. Developed at length in Roy and Ong's (2011) *Worlding Cities*, 'worlding' eschews globality defined through a narrow suite of attributes and categories, focusing instead on the ongoing 'art of being global'. In doing so, the concept confronts the shortcomings of extant approaches to urban-globality in two ways.

First, being concerned with the "discourses and imaginaries of urban studies", worlding operates as a means of critiquing the role and representation of particular cities in "the canon of urban studies and its archives of knowledge" (McCann et al., 2013: 585). This application, advanced by Roy (2011b, 2011c) in particular, is engaged as an explicit "counterpoint to the framework of global/world cities that has become commonplace in urban theory" (Roy, 2011c: 9). Noting the tendency to neglect cities outside the global North on the basis of their being "structurally irrelevant to the commanding heights of the global economy", Roy (2011c: 9) utilizes the concept of worlding to "recover and restore the vast array of global strategies that are being staged at the urban scale around the world". By focusing attention on the ways by which cities become global, worlding offers a means of overcoming latent epistemological blindness.

Second, worlding presents a way of approaching the urban. Arguing against the study of urban situations in relation to fixed global standards or "as singular moments in a unified and integrated global process", Ong (2011: 2) uses the concept of worlding to keep sight of "complex urban situations as particular

engagements with the global”. Seen as a “source of ambitious visions, and of speculative experiments”, the urban is approached as “a milieu that is in constant formation, one shaped by the multitudinous ongoing activities that[,] by wedding dream and technique, form the art of being global” (Ong & Roy, 2011: xv). Here the urban is a zone of intervention, “a particular nexus of situated and transnational ideas, institutions, actors, and practices that may be variously drawn together for solving particular problems” (Ong, 2011: 4).

Accordingly, cities are rife with worlding projects, each vying to be realized and each having different chances of success. In the case of strategic spatial planning, some projects and visions, particularly those backed with elite expertise and governmental authority, are well positioned to be realized. However, worlding projects should not be seen as exclusive to elite actors and institutions. Simone (2001: 17), for example, deploys worlding as a way of explaining the “totalizing sense of exteriority” enveloping the lives and aspirations of ordinary urban Africans, which he suggests is constitutive of new urban-global subjectivities (see also Roy, 2011b). He demonstrates how that sense of exteriority, even for marginalized urban actors, is actively cultivated and tactically engaged—termed ‘worlding from below’—just as it is imposed and inflicted.

For this paper, the focus on metropolitan strategic planning represents the inverse: ‘worlding from above’. As visions produced primarily by collections of elite interests, metropolitan strategic plans are empowered to ‘world’ at the expense of certain other actors and visions. Noting that policies “are both enabled by and productive of specific geographical imaginations” (Bialasiewicz, et al., 2007: 406), we analyse spatial policy imaginaries as strategic and political tools deployed by actors to achieve political objectives through the “incremental production of political space” (Boudreau, 2007: 2596). While there are numerous actors and institutions that influence strategic spatial plans, our purpose here is not to explore the political labour surrounding their production but, rather, to trace the ways in which strategic spatial planning documents themselves align with and mobilize particular global urban imaginaries. For Wetzstein (2013: 75), the creation and circulation of spatial imaginaries is “integral to contemporary urban governmental strategies” insofar as they focus “attention on, and [channel] investment in, particular places, spaces, and activities”. Like him, we analyse global spatial imaginaries to reveal “the constitutive power of particular conceptions of spaces, places, and place relations as well as the performative roles of consolidating discursive governing practices” (Wetzstein, 2013: 72). To do this, we attend to the way Global Sydney—the term for Sydney’s Global City project—has been imaginatively ‘worlded’ by analysing the articulation of global city

standards, comparative techniques and extra-local policy models in recent strategic spatial plans. Before discussing each of these in turn, the following section provides contextual detail on Global Sydney and its strategic planning.

Global Sydney and strategic planning

Similar to many other cities, a range of actors and institutions have ‘vigorously pursued’ Sydney’s role at a global level (Thornley & Newman, 2011: 61). There exists an extensive academic literature focusing, in particular, on Sydney’s global economic integration, as well as the role of international migration, corporate headquartering, industrial restructuring and socio-cultural diversification (Connell, 2000; M^cGuirk, 2004; 2005; O’Neill & M^cGuirk, 2005; McNeill et al., 2005; Forster, 2006). From the early 2000s, the push for a “Global Sydney” was promoted across public and private sectors as a means to facilitate economic growth and address declining levels of productivity. This push was propelled by a number of additional economic challenges facing the city, including resource booms and associated economic prosperity in states such as Queensland and Western Australia, continued growth of Melbourne and other cities in the Asia Pacific region, and intensifying inter-urban competition affecting portions of Sydney’s economic base (such as banking and corporate governance) (SGS Economics and Planning, 2004; Industry and Investment NSW, 2011; Committee for Sydney, 2013a). In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis, the global status of Sydney continues to be mobilized as a tool to facilitate economic growth and encourage business confidence (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2010). As such, Sydney’s planning has been heavily influenced by the quest to secure global city status, which remains evident in ongoing policy ambitions at all levels of government (for detailed treatments, see Searle & Bounds, 1999; M^cGuirk, 2004, 2007; Haughton & McManus, 2011; Acuto, 2012; Searle, 2013).

At the state level, positioning Sydney as Australia’s *only* global city is a longstanding foundation of metropolitan planning, economic policy and politics (M^cGuirk, 2004; 2005). The opening pages of a recent metropolitan planning policy underscore the importance of global city status:

Sydney is Australia’s global city and one of the world’s most highly-regarded. It is renowned for its unique combination of a competitive economy, dynamic society and a unique quality of life. Our transformation into a global economic centre has fashioned a city that is a magnet for people, businesses and millions of visitors each year (Kristina Keneally, NSW Premier, Foreword, NSWDoP, 2010: 1)

Sydney's global character is also entrenched in local government rhetoric, articulated recently in the City of Sydney's¹ long-term vision, *Sydney 2030: Green/Global/Connected* (City of Sydney, 2008). As we explore later, the strategic directions of the City of Sydney's vision—regarding global competitiveness and innovation, integrated transport, and culture and creativity—align closely with the state government's vision for Global Sydney. The perspectives of both levels of government are echoed by key institutions such as the Sydney Business Chamber, including in its recent report titled *Global Sydney: A Five Year Strategy for a Vibrant & Competitive City of Sydney* (SBC, 2012). Additionally, the Committee for Sydney (2013b)—an advocacy group who promote “Greater Sydney's interests and future prosperity [by] engaging in policy discussions that affect the global competitiveness of Sydney as a business centre and as a place to live” (p.14)—also supports the prevailing vision for Global Sydney. Within its broader priorities, the Committee for Sydney advocates for “an integrated transport network for a global city” (p.5), as well as initiatives that will “attract and retain global talent” (p.8), in the belief that these measures will “ensure the new metropolitan plan is fit for purpose to guide the successful growth of a global city” (p.6). In short, local government and private sector conceptions of Global Sydney tend to be remarkably consistent with the vision promulgated by the state government's recent metropolitan plans.

Following the election of a Federal Labor government in 2007, Australian cities received greater attention due to renewed national interest in planning policy (Bunker & Ruming, 2010). At this level, the desire for ‘global’ status for Australian cities came in response to changing global economic conditions, with cities seen as crucial generators of economic growth and as globalized nodes connecting the national economy to international markets (DIT, 2011a; DPMC, 2011). For the federal government, the realization of global status rested on effective metropolitan strategic planning. In December 2009, the federal government negotiated with state and territory governments, resolving to reform capital city strategic planning “to ensure Australian cities are globally competitive, productive, sustainable, liveable and socially inclusive” (COAG, 2009: 20). This was later formalized in the *National Urban Policy* (DIT, 2011a). Further echoing the state government's vision for Global Sydney, discussed in more detail below, the *National Urban Policy* states:

¹ The local government area covering the Central Business District.

We are now operating in a global economy where we compete for commerce and skilled labour. We must strive for maximum amenity and liveability for our urban communities and to attract visitors, whether they are here for business or leisure. (DIT, 2011a, p. 8)

While it is unreasonable to expect perfect alignment in visions and objectives between scales of government and between public and private sectors, given their different constituents and the level of contestation inherent in the urban policy arena, there are remarkably strong similarities in the case of Sydney. What is more, all tiers of government, and key segments of the private sector, identify strategic spatial planning instruments as central to the articulation and achievement of their global-urban ambitions. As government-endorsed urban visions, strategic spatial plans seek to manage spatial change by providing “direction and justification for the flow of regulatory and investment activity” (Healey, 1997: 10) and, as Sandercock and Friedmann (2000: 530) point out, are ‘first and foremost political documents’. Strategic spatial plans are “involved in the task of balancing broader economic pressures and local tensions” (Newman & Thornley, 2011: 2) and increasingly coalesce around generic understandings of how cities should operate in an era of globalization (Marcuse, 2008). Within an international context, Searle and Bunker (2010) identify Australian metropolitan strategies as perhaps the most ambitious examples of state-sponsored global aspirations and imaginaries, given that they tend to specify land use and infrastructure provision in more detail than their international counterparts.

While one of the defining characteristics of state government metropolitan planning in Sydney is the high rate of strategy turnover, this paper focuses primarily on two recent documents: the *Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036* (NSWDoP, 2010) and a discussion paper titled *Sydney over the next 20 years* (NSWDoPI, 2012). Developed under a Labor State Government, the *Metropolitan Plan* was released by the NSW Department of Planning in December 2010. Following the 2011 state election, which saw the Liberal/National Coalition gain government, a new round of planning reform was initiated. The reform process included both a review of the regulatory and legislative planning frameworks, along with a new metropolitan strategic planning process (Ruming, 2012; Steele & Ruming, 2012). *Sydney over the next 20 years* represents the first urban policy vision expressed by the new government and is the foundation of new metropolitan planning processes. With reference to these two documents, the remainder of this paper discusses how Global Sydney is articulated in metropolitan strategic spatial plans.

Unpacking Global Sydney: standards, comparisons, models

Informed by the framework outlined previously, we position Sydney's metropolitan plans as part of the "ongoing art of being global" (Ong, 2011: 3), attending in particular to the spatial imaginaries that constitute Global Sydney as a political project and object of governance. We explore these imaginaries by identifying and analysing three interrelated elements—global city standards, comparative techniques and extra-local policy models—each of which are enrolled in the 'incremental production' of Sydney as a global-urban political space (Boudreau, 2007).

Global city standards

Internalized and reified by policy actors, global city standards are those characteristics recognised as constituting global cities. Such standards frame urban imaginaries and are disciplinary, working to prioritize and valorize certain developmental pathways. Internationally, global city standards tend to emphasize: large and multicultural populations; locations of multinational corporations; sites of global governance; finance and business centres; locations linked into global digital communication networks; sites of new media and cultural/creative industries; centres for innovation, research and development; and destinations for global tourism (Scott, 2001; Taylor, 2004; Marcuse, 2008; Thornley & Newman, 2011). While many global city standards are evident within metropolitan plans for Sydney, we highlight just three: global corporate governance, attracting an educated and skilled workforce, and efficient infrastructure.

First, one of the most pervasive global city standards relates to Sydney's role as a centre for global corporate governance, with the *Metropolitan Plan* and the *Discussion Paper* both setting aspirational targets for corporate governance. These include at least maintaining the percentage of (1) foreign and domestic banks whose Australian headquarters operate from Sydney (at 80%) and (2) the percentage of Asia Pacific regional headquarters of multinationals in Australia that operate from Sydney (at 60%) (NSWDoP, 2010: 46; NSWDoPI, 2012: 6). Metropolitan planning strategies respond to this global city standard by seeking to facilitate capitalist development and installing corporate governance as an essential component of Sydney's developmental trajectory. Set against New York and London, the *Metropolitan Plan* focuses on strengthening Sydney's performance as a centre for corporate headquarters:

Sydney is Australia's financial capital with 44 per cent of the national finance and insurance industry and a financial services workforce almost half the size of New York's and London's ... Sydney must continue to strengthen its leading role in this area. (NSWDoP, 2010: 45)

In striving to compete as a centre for global corporate governance, one of the central functions of planning policy is to enable the supply of appropriate and technologically-advanced office space (Carroll, 2007; McNeill, 2007):

[New developments] must contribute appropriately to the overall supply of office space to ensure the best interests of a globally competitive Sydney are met. (NSWDoP, 2010: 45)

Sydney must provide the settings for jobs that are both accessible to the workforce and well networked with the markets. (NSWDoPI, 2012: 15)

Revealing the spatial selectivity associated with Global Sydney, and perhaps reflecting the influence of powerful groups with vested interests in commercial development (see Gurran & Ruming, 2013), metropolitan planning initiatives recognize that the part of Sydney that truly meets the conditions of a corporate governance centre is a very small part of the city—the Sydney and North Sydney CBDs:

The CBDs of Sydney and North Sydney—the financial, economic and cultural heart of Sydney—are termed ‘Global Sydney’ and occupy the highest place in Sydney’s centres hierarchy ... The success of Sydney’s other cities and centres rely on the continuing strength of activity in Global Sydney and this economic corridor. (NSWDoP, 2010: 28)

The strong association of Global Sydney with corporate governance functions means its imagined spatial extent is significantly limited. Perhaps in reaction to the previous strategy’s (NSWDoP, 2005) neglect of relationships between Global Sydney—i.e. the Sydney and North Sydney CBDs—and surrounding economic centres, the *Metropolitan Plan* mobilizes the notion of the Global Economic Corridor stretching from Port Botany in the south to Macquarie Park and Parramatta in the north and north-west (see Figure 1). Such efforts to prioritize corporate governance as the foundation for global city status therefore direct attention to certain locations and establish hierarchical relationships between those locations and the metropolitan area beyond. Ongoing debate about balancing the prioritization of Global Sydney with economic development and ‘good jobs’ in the city’s western suburbs (Saulwick, 2012) showcases some of the tensions accompanying the spatial selectivity of global city projects.

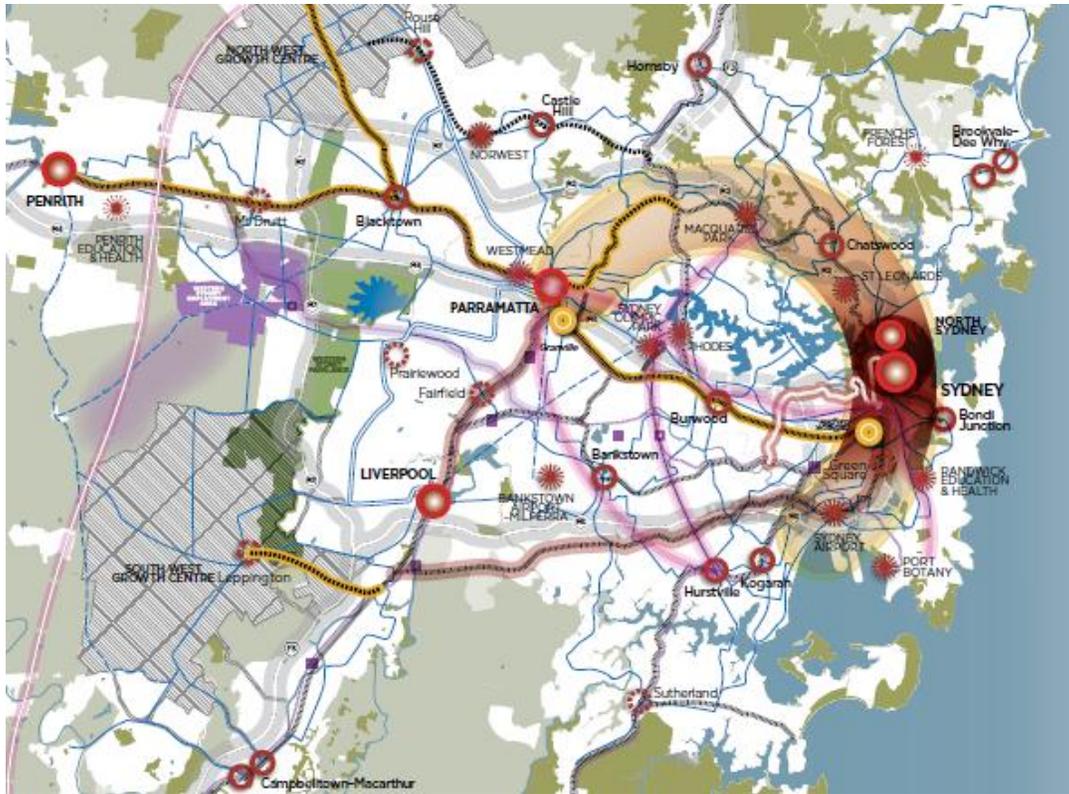


Figure 1: ‘The Vision’ from the Sydney *Metropolitan Plan*, showing the extent of Global Sydney and the Global Economic Corridor (NSWDoP, 2010: 18-19)

A second global city standard addressed in metropolitan planning documents for Sydney relates to the need to attract an educated and skilled population capable of maintaining Sydney’s role as a major economic and corporate governance centre. Noting the potential for ‘brain drain’ to other global centres, the *Metropolitan Strategy* (NSWDoP, 2010: 128) places Sydney in the context of a broader strategic vision by the NSW Government for economic prosperity driven by “growth in highly skilled, high–value–added industries”. Redolent of contemporary metropolitan planning exercises elsewhere around the world, a skilled and educated population is seen as essential to Sydney’s global city status, its economic success and, by extension, the economic success of the state of New South Wales. As part of this, the *Metropolitan Plan* recognizes the need to accommodate for expected growth in creative industries and associated workers, noting that:

Globalization and new forms of communication are leading to ‘bottom–up’ development of a variety of smaller cultures and subcultures that need spaces to connect, create and perform. (NSWDoP, 2010: 211)

The *Metropolitan Plan* reveals an imaginary populated by the neighbourhoods of New York City, which are referred to as standard-bearers for cities looking to attract and retain creative workers:

New York is just as famous for the local neighbourhoods of Greenwich Village, Soho and Brooklyn as places for artists and the creative industries as it is for its icons—such as the Statue of Liberty, Times Square and Empire State Building. (NSWDoP, 2010: 49)

Reflecting growing awareness of the linkages between global city status and highly skilled and/or creative workers, McNeill (2011) shows how large-scale planning and economic development ambitions are increasingly seen within Sydney's policy circles as needing to be supported by initiatives attentive to the 'fine-grain' of city life, to create a social and cultural environment that is attractive to such workers. This thinking owes much to influential work emphasizing the importance of cultural industries and knowledge workers for urban competitiveness and economic development (eg. Florida, 2005). In recent times, these perspectives have been a central focus for many governments seeking to secure global city status (Luckman et al., 2009).

Third, and informed a great deal by the previous two, Sydney's metropolitan strategic plans view efficient transport infrastructure as a key global city standard. As well as being necessary to attract mobile workers, efficient infrastructure is positioned as a necessary condition for effective integration into the global economy, working to reduce economic transaction costs and thereby improve competitiveness (DIT, 2011a). This is articulated in the *Metropolitan Plan*, which flags the need for an:

integrated land use and transport strategy which will strengthen access and capacity in existing and new locations across Sydney, providing further competitive advantages to firms seeking to engage with the global economy. (NSWDoP, 2010: 17)

Supporting efficient interactions between transport systems, particularly airports and ports, is identified as a necessary condition for Sydney's access to global markets for goods and services as well as global circuits of capital:

These international gateways are critical to Australia's global trade, balance of payments and quality of life (NSWDoP, 2010: 54)

The efficient movement of people and goods through Sydney's ports and airports is essential for a competitive and productive economy (NSWDoP, 2010: 153)

As the opening paragraph of this paper pointed out, the extent to which Sydney's transport infrastructure meets such conditions is debated. Indeed, this is one of the few areas where the *Metropolitan Plan* acknowledges that Sydney does not meet perceived global city standards, evidenced by attempts to join the new metropolitan strategy with the *Transport Master Plan* (Transport for NSW, 2012). The *Transport Master Plan* identifies the supply of adequate transport infrastructure to support Global Sydney as a key challenge:

As the heart of Global Sydney and the centre of the NSW economy, we need to support the success and strength of Sydney's CBD by providing good access to the CBD (Transport for NSW, 2012: 79)

While these notions of Global Sydney, interwoven through the three global city standards outlined here, are profoundly impacted by hegemonic imaginaries of global cities, we suggest that these imaginaries are not pre-existing or somehow self-evident. They are, following Ong (2011: 12), particular 'forms of the global in play', which have become internalized and reified in Sydney's metropolitan planning, installing particular functions and areas of the city as global as well as prioritizing particular, primarily economic, relationships within an imagined global hinterland.

Comparative techniques

If global city status depends on meeting or surpassing certain acknowledged standards, comparative techniques provide the means by which performance is assessed and measured. Comparative techniques help establish the benchmarks for global city success, but importantly they entrain urban-global imaginations and direct the aspirations and energies of policy actors. Comparisons drawn between Sydney, New York and London, as mentioned earlier, direct attention in particular ways. In strategic plans, such comparisons are often formalized with the adoption of indices and league tables that codify global city performance in relation to certain criteria. As Sydney's strategic planning shows, these techniques exert powerful influence over the diagnosis of opportunities and problems and the setting of policy priorities.

For instance, the *Metropolitan Plan* uses global indices and league tables extensively, giving them a central role in assessing Sydney's performance as a global city. Positioning Sydney somewhere near the top of the global hierarchy, the *Metropolitan Plan* flags the need to maintain and improve the city's position:

While highly ranked in most global comparisons, Sydney must adapt to changing international circumstances while protecting and building on its environmental, social and economic advantages. (NSWDoP, 2010: 5)

One of the most prominent comparative devices used is an index produced by the Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC), which is reported as having placed Sydney in the third tier of global cities:

In 2005, the Global and World Cities research group ranked Sydney as an Alpha world city, the third tier below Alpha++ (London, New York) and Alpha+ cities (Hong Kong, Paris, Tokyo, Singapore), based primarily on the provision and connectedness of a city's advanced consumer services such as accountancy, banking and finance, advertising and legal firms (NSWDoP, 2010: 47)

In the *Metropolitan Plan*, the GaWC Index is used as a headline indicator of global city status, installing Sydney within a set of hierarchical relationships to other global cities. Insofar as policy actors use the Index to benchmark performance, reacting to the criteria of the Index has become a preferred route toward global city success. Beyond the GaWC Index, a series of other global indices are mobilized within the *Metropolitan Plan* (see Table 1), each with their own calibration of criteria used to assess global city performance.

Table 1: Indices used in the Sydney *Metropolitan Plan* (NSWDoP, 2010)

Index	Rank	Objective/Purpose
Mercer Quality of Living Survey	10 th	Used as benchmark to measure the “enhanced liveability” aim. The <i>Metropolitan Plan</i> notes that Sydney’s index increased from 105 to 106.3 between 2005 and 2010, however, its ranking fell from 8 th to 10 th) (NSWDoP, 2010, p. 247).
AT Kearney Global City Index	9 th	Used together to measure Sydney’s progress against the aim to “maintain or improve the ranking of Sydney across the three main comprehensive global city indicators surveys” (NSWDoP, 2010, p. 248).
PricewaterhouseCoopers Cities of Opportunity index	7 th	
Mori Foundation Global Power City Index	10 th	
Anholt-GFK Roper, City Bands Index	2 nd	Not used as performance measures or benchmarks, but mobilised to present Sydney’s global position in a variety of global indices measuring different aspects of the global economy (NSWDoP, 2010, p. 47).
GAWC Global City Index	7 th	
Economist Intelligence Unit, Best Cities List	9 th	
Competitiveness Index, Chinese Academy of Social Services	33 rd	

In specifying Sydney’s strategic planning as a particular engagement with the global, it is important to note that, across cities, the use of comparative techniques differs markedly. For example, the list of performance measures and targets in *The London Plan* (Greater London Authority, 2008: 393) is more focused on metropolitan and national (UK) differentials. On the other hand, *The Auckland Plan* operates in a fashion similar to Sydney’s strategic planning documents, with global indices identified as central in monitoring the success of the plan (Auckland Council, 2012: 358). Seen through the lens of global urban hierarchies, the aspirational objectives of cities such as Sydney and Auckland are, in a sense, performative. They work to strengthen the status of cities at the top of the hierarchy, which barely recognize such indices within their planning strategies given that they are unlikely to lose their position, as well as the indices themselves, reinforcing their status as appropriate measures of global urban performance.

In the case of Sydney, the use of comparative techniques to justify global city aspirations is not limited to state governments and metropolitan planning. Importantly, such global rankings are mobilized by the federal government in its attempts to promote global cities. For example, the 2011 *State of Australian Cities*

Report (DIT, 2011b: 6), uses multiple global indicators² and reports that “Australia’s largest cities are in the top 10 of most global liveability rankings and have retained or improved their position”. Interestingly, while strategic planning for Global Sydney has by and large been international in its orientation, the *State of Australian Cities Report* notes that other Australian cities out-performed Sydney on such global rankings, which suggests how global comparisons are also used to promote intra-national urban competitiveness. Traditionally, urban rivalries have persisted between Sydney and Melbourne, however in recent years cities such as Adelaide and Perth have also entered the fray as they have performed particularly well on global indices of liveability.

Far from offering an innocent, impartial window into urban-globality, comparative techniques elevate certain criteria to the status of impeccable indicators of global city success, which in turn channels the attention of policy actors toward initiatives that help better fulfil those criteria. In Sydney, the comparative techniques embedded in the *Metropolitan Plan* articulate a pathway for meeting global city standards, which themselves reflect an emphasis on capitalist economic development, as distinct from other standards and pathways relating to social and community development, for example. With their inherent selectiveness downplayed, comparative techniques associated with strategic planning tend to mute urban-global pathways inconsistent with the developmental trajectory implied by global city indices. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, at the same time, alternative urban-global realities are being recognized in other policy areas. The recently released *Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper produced by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2012) mobilized a different suite of comparative techniques and conceptualized Australia in the context of economic and cultural centres in Asia. Such an initiative may prove significant in resetting the learned behaviour of looking toward cities such as New York and London as offering the template for global city success, installing a new set of comparator cities sourced from the Asian region.

Extra-local models

While global city standards serve to identify particular problem areas for intervention and comparative techniques allow for progress to be tracked, they both work to influence the types of policy models seen as desirable and appropriate for aspirant global cities. Policy models are, in effect, resources drawn upon to

² Including: The Economist—*Quality of Life Index*; PricewaterhouseCoopers—*Cities of Opportunity*; Wilkinson and Pickett—*Income inequality and social outcomes*; Mercer—*Cost of Living*; The Economist—*World Wide Cost of Living* (DIT, 2011b, p. 140).

realize global city projects. In the case of Global Sydney, particular extra-local policy models are engaged to help meet accepted standards and to perform better against the comparative metrics adopted in strategic plans. Given the relatively poor state of Sydney's infrastructure when assessed against its global city competitors, the city's strategic plans have had a strong emphasis on the conceptualization of models for effective infrastructure planning and provision. In particular, Sydney's strategic plans imagine effective infrastructure through a focus on networked transport infrastructure. According to the *Discussion Paper*:

The best cities in the world are cities that are easy to get around. These are cities with transport networks that people and businesses can rely on every day. Sydney must develop more efficient, more extensive and more usable transport networks if it is to remain one of the world's great cities. (NSWDoPI, 2012: 18)

The *Metropolitan Plan* and *Discussion Paper* incorporate terms such as the 'networked city', transport corridors, transport-oriented design, centres and nodes—all of which represent accepted and relatively unchallenged models for urban form transferred from global cities in Europe and North America (Jenks et al., 2008) to the existing urban fabric of Sydney. The notion of the 'network city', sometimes referred to as a 'city of cities approach' (NSWDoP, 2010: 25), operates as a dominant transport infrastructure model for metropolitan planning in Sydney. The *Metropolitan Plan* stresses the importance of improving Global Sydney's connection to regional cities and other centres within the metropolitan region:

[A] Connected and Networked City [is a] multi-centred city concept assumes increasingly distinct but not independent cities. Strong public transport links are essential within and between Regional Cities to reduce car dependence and ensure the productivity advantages of a 'one hour city' are not lost through poor connections across the entire Global Sydney region. (NSWDoP, 2010: 39)

Recent work has shown connections from the global city into the supporting network of Regional Cities and centres are as important to a global city's success as the links to other global cities. (NSWDoP, 2010: 48)

In this case, connections between Global Sydney and apparent subsidiary urban centres are prioritized because of their importance in maintaining the status of Global Sydney. This reflects the practice of other

global cities, as Pain (2008) noted in the context of London's global city planning, which had an analogous focus on the area of South East England. Seen as global best practice, the networked city approach is deployed as a deliberate effort to support the global status of the area demarcated as Global Sydney—the Sydney and North Sydney CBDs—and the Global Economic Corridor. The *Metropolitan Plan*, for instance, reassures that “the city of cities approach does not diminish the global and iconic status of Sydney's CBD and its vibrant financial, business services and cultural hub” (NSWDoP, 2010: 25).

In promoting the model of the networked city, the *Metropolitan Plan* emphasizes the potential for transport nodes to act as catalysts for wider redevelopment. Using the example of London's Eurostar train station development, the plan weaves a narrative that links networked transport infrastructure with the achievement of global city standards, including the attraction of businesses and certain residents:

In London, a Eurostar train station providing fast access to Paris was located at Ebbsfleet in East London near the M25 orbital motorway ... This station was located as a catalyst for one of the UK's largest regeneration projects, Kent Thameside, in a socio-economically challenged area near London. It acts to attract businesses and residents nearby by offering fast access to central London as well as Paris and Brussels. (NSWDoP, 2010: 48)

However, in Sydney's strategic plans, the blueprint for the networked city appears to reside in so-called competitor cities in Asia rather than London. Citing the experiences of Shanghai and Tokyo, the *Metropolitan Plan* highlights the benefits associated with having high-speed rail and communications infrastructure linking global cities to other urban centres:

Some of Sydney's competitor cities such as Shanghai and Tokyo have, or are building, significant fast rail and communications networks between cities and within the economic zones that service their global city centres. Shanghai is reducing travel times across its supporting city ... While these cities are much denser and not directly comparable, Hangzhou performs a similar role for Shanghai as Newcastle and Wollongong do for Sydney. (NSWDoP, 2010: 48)

Despite the acknowledgement that Sydney is ‘not directly comparable’ to cities such as Shanghai and Tokyo, the appropriateness of the model remains relatively unchallenged. Compared with acknowledged

competitor cities, the lack of premium infrastructure in Sydney registers as an obvious and somewhat self-evident impediment to the maintenance and improvement of global city status. However, in a sign of how fraught the implementation of such solutions are, more recently the network city model has been dealt a significant blow, with a preliminary federal government investigation (DIT, 2013) confirming the significant costs and questionable immediate benefits associated with a high-speed rail service connecting major cities along the east coast of Australia. This ambition for Global Sydney appears unlikely to be realized anytime soon.

Conclusion

Informed by recent calls to understand how the urban and the global are co-constitutively ‘made up’, this paper analyses the spatial imaginary underpinning Global Sydney as a political project and object of governance. Keen to avoid the study of urban situations “as singular moments in a unified and integrated global process” (Ong, 2011: 2), we turned to the concept of worlding, which helped position Sydney’s strategic plans as being ‘particular engagements with the global’. One key reason for unpacking the spatial imaginary associated with Global Sydney is to destabilize the obviousness of the global, in spite of the fact that Sydney’s strategic planning documents in many ways reflect dominant conceptions of global cities as command and control centres within a globalizing capitalist system. By touching on the roles of global city standards, comparative techniques and extra-local models in establishing Sydney’s place within an imagined global hinterland, we demonstrate the particularity and, perhaps, the peculiarity of the global as it has been thought about in relation to Global Sydney. We suggest that future work might similarly benefit from an appreciation of urban-globality as actively cultivated and differentially produced in attempting to grasp emergent relations between the urban and the global.

Although strategic plans, as they appear on the page, seem a long way from concrete outcomes, Gregory (2009: 370) reminds us that imaginative work is not necessarily “without concreteness”. As imaginative enterprises, strategic plan-making, like all policy-making, creates political and spatial realities, and in turn these realities have material consequences (Bialasiewicz, et al., 2007). For example, continued frustration about the lack of economic opportunity in Sydney’s western suburbs is but one potential outcome of Global Sydney’s pre-eminence in policy and planning (Saulwick, 2012). But rather than seeing the spatial policy imaginaries articulated in strategic plans as being translated neatly into concrete practice, we highlighted strategic plans—as empowered, state-authorized examples of ‘worlding from above’—as artefacts that provide “the conditions of possibility for current—and future—action” (Bialasiewicz, et al.,

2007: 417). In this sense, the paper offers insight into the establishment of those conditions of possibility, the ‘incremental production’ (Boudreau, 2007) of Sydney as a global-urban political space. We see further work to be done on how strategic plans, as particular engagements with the global, become politicized, concretized and performed into being. Likewise, with the immanent release of a new metropolitan plan for Sydney³, there is value in tracking the continuity and change between strategic planning exercises across time to assess the durability and character of urban-globality.

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³ See <http://strategies.planning.nsw.gov.au/MetropolitanStrategyforSydney.aspx>

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