

The Bellwether Zone?
Planning Infrastructure in South-East Queensland

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ABSTRACT: The paper addresses the growing public, scholarly and policy concern over the impact and implications of urban growth in the ‘population powerhouse’ of South East Queensland (SEQ), the fastest growing urban region in Australia. Drawing on the work of Graham and Marvin (2001) around ‘splintering urbanism’, the new tendency of infrastructure development, with its contemporary economic and policy authority, to shape the conditions for planning are explored. We essay a striking example of splintered infrastructure development in the SEQ region and assess the implications for planning and for growth management generally. We choose the term ‘infrastructure development’ rather than ‘infrastructure planning’ because the genesis, financing and construction of contemporary infrastructure reflects both 1) the splintered qualities outlined by Graham and Marvin (2001), and 2) deep, occasionally catastrophic, anomalies sourced in contemporary financing models. This cannot be described as ‘planning’. In this sense, contemporary infrastructure development is simply a new form of urban development that is eclipsing planning. We do not think this phenomenon is confined to SEQ, and we consider parallels in other Australian jurisdictions.

...although the map is there, the journey is darkening around us...

(Mead, 1998)

Introduction

This year Queensland celebrates 150 years of state independence. Like other Australian states caught in the global spectre of a climate and financial crisis, Queensland is facing uncertain and challenging times quite different from those experienced by the early, founding pioneers. After two decades of unprecedented growth-led progress, prosperity and development, the last few years have seen the ‘smart’ state confronted by an increasingly urgent sustainability crisis. This includes the worst drought in 100 years; subsequently in 2009 catastrophic floods that have resulted in much of the state being declared a state of emergency; the highest homeless rate in Australia (Smail, 2008); and the recent loss of the State’s much coveted financial triple-A credit rating. In the midst of a global financial recession, pressure is building in Queensland for changes to the way the State ‘does business’. In 2009, the 150th anniversary of self-government offers an opportunity to critically reflect on the gamut of Queensland ambitions, achievements, controversies and challenges to find better ways to “chart the next phase of the journey” (Bligh, 2009, p.1).

One significant (and controversial) effort to steer a new direction for 21st century Queensland is the State document, *Our Renewing Queensland Plan*, which was outlined in parliament in June 2009. The central message of the plan is the need for the state to strike a balance between shouldering the bulk of the financial burden of building and operating infrastructure with the need to continue delivering the capital works and services required by a growing population in tough financial times. This is a task made even more difficult by a global recession that had resulted in:

- A total loss of \$14 billion amounting to a third of the Queensland annual budget; and

- A further \$2 billion decline in GST receipts since the federal budget was brought down (Bligh, 2009, p.1)

In order to resolve this dilemma the *Renewing Queensland Plan* lays out a strategy to limit the need for public capital investment by selling Queensland assets. Through the sale of key infrastructure identified as needing substantial capital for growth such as Queensland Motorways Limited, The Port of Brisbane, Forest Plantations Queensland, Queensland Rail, and the Abbott Point Coal Terminal, the Queensland Government hope to reduce state debt by \$15 Billion over the next five years. The expectation is that the private sector will shoulder the missing infrastructure links and by doing so help to build a stronger more sustainable Queensland that will continue to grow and create jobs. The argument put forward is that the substantial public money saved in future capital expenditure can then be used to rollout ‘super’ infrastructure such as public transport and hospitals (Queensland Government, 2009). The counter-argument is that the sale of such key public assets is tantamount to ‘selling the family silver’, with few assurances around the quality, equity and longevity of the privatized services and little state or community bargaining power once the publicly-held assets are gone (Australian Services Union, 2009). Moreover, new investments in infrastructure may be delivered through private means that will further the long run decline in state ownership and control of public urban assets.

In many ways this latest chapter in the Queensland infrastructure story is a further extension of the shift towards privatisation that has been occurring across Australia since the mid 1980s. This shift has gathered bipartisan political support but has not been uncontested particularly within the populist political context of Queensland (Mullins, 1986). One area in particular that epitomizes these Queensland tensions is the ‘population powerhouse’ region of South East

Queensland (SEQ). As the fastest growing urban region in Australia complete with a ‘200 km city’ spanning from the Gold Coast to the Sunshine Coast (Spearritt 2009), SEQ offers a contemporary window into the forces that work to shape, re-shape and increasingly splinter urban infrastructure development.

In this paper we draw on the work of Graham and Marvin (2001) around ‘splintering urbanism’, as a framework for exploring the new tendency of infrastructure development, with its contemporary economic and policy authority, to shape the conditions for planning. We essay a striking example of splintered infrastructure development in Brisbane’s TransApex project and assess its implications for planning, and for growth management generally, in the SEQ region. We conclude by highlighting the role of SEQ as ‘a bellwether zone’ – an increasingly important crucible of change that captures and reflects many of the growth management dilemmas and opportunities facing the Australian settlement system, especially its diverse metropolitan growth regions.

Part 1: Splintering urbanism - a conceptual framework for infrastructure development

The provision, location and connectedness of urban infrastructure are intimately connected with ambitions around settlement growth and fundamental to the sustainable development of metropolitan regions. The quest for shelter, energy, water, sewerage and other basic human needs has led to substantial ‘glocal’ investment in extensive networks of physical infrastructure such as roads, rail, tunnels, ports, pipes and wires, as well as the soft infrastructure associated with the formal and informal institutional processes and systems of governance (Herman and Ausubel, 1988). The contemporary configurations of infrastructure development reflect the political, economic, social and historical forces that work to shape

and increasingly splinter the spatial morphology of cities and urban regions within the context of a global political economy.

A conceptual framework for critically analysing the pathways of infrastructure development in globally competitive cities and metropolitan regions has emerged in the work of British geographers Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin. They have coined the term ‘splintering urbanism’ to describe the “diverse processes surrounding the parallel unbundling of infrastructure networks and the fragmentation of urban space” (Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.382). Their focus is on the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary urban growth issues with a strong emphasis on the planning and development of urban infrastructure as a powerful way of examining contemporary cities and regions. This approach recognises that:

- urban landscapes are often contested and the patterns of networked infrastructure reflect particular socio-historical/ economic/political/cultural contexts;
- urban infrastructure networks include both hardware (water, energy, streets etc) and software (formal and informal rules of operation etc.); and
- private/public systems of urban infrastructure provision and implementation can have profound affects on social polarization and marginalisation within urban growth areas.

Their central argument is that there has been a modernist presumption that infrastructure networks are progressive large-scale public goods rolled out by the state as a means by which to bind cities and regions into “functioning geographical or political wholes” (p.8). By contrast they draw attention to the splintering of infrastructure networks and fragmentation of cities and metropolitan regions that have resulted from specialized, privatised, customized practices and competitive processes that are “inevitably imbued with biased struggles for social, economic, ecological and political power” (p.11).

The replacement of public monopolies on major urban infrastructure networks by a neoliberalized market model is a 21st century shift with profound social, economic and ecological distributive consequences. The broad scale ‘opening up’ of public infrastructure (e.g. energy, water, waste, telecommunications) to the private sector has resulted in newly competitive markets that “complement or replace predictable and monolithic monopolies with highly fragmented and differentiated styles of service provision with highly complex and often hidden geometries and geographies” (Graham and Marvin, 2001, p.14). The public reassignment of key infrastructure assets to the private sector is not a singular entity in which the public sector is replaced by the private sector. Instead there is a continuum of different institutional pathways that mediate between the public/private dichotomy. Collectively these pathways work to affect the “functional and territorial unbundling of infrastructure networks to make the private operation of public utilities feasible” (Schiffer, 1997, p.19). A typology of private/public alternatives and the continuum of different service sector responsibilities are outlined below in Figure 1.

- Insert Figure 1 here -

The splintering urbanism framework offered by Graham and Marvin (2001) builds on this typology to focus on the ‘unbundling’ of urban infrastructure networks that occurs as a result of a shift towards competitive institutional pathways and infrastructure development. This shifts the focus of concern away from privatisation *per se* towards “those urban contexts in which infrastructure networks become unbundled” (p.151) and previously held monopolies splintered off into smaller projects or activities. To this end a different model is offered which highlights and maps the multiple, complex and often contested institutional pathways that lead from networked infrastructure to the competitive splintering or unbundling of (neo)-

liberalised infrastructure that increasingly dominates most Western capitalist contexts (see Figure 2 below).

- *Insert Figure 2 here* -

This model highlights seven different institutional pathways to unbundling networks. The first of these pathways is the traditional provision of *integrated infrastructure* by a government department or publicly owned utility which operates as a monopoly. The second pathway is *commercialised infrastructure* which is also a monopoly but run by an independent but publicly owned corporatized parasital organisation with an emphasis on the costs of investment being returned. A third pathway is *privatised infrastructure* characterized by a transfer of infrastructure assets from the public to private sector as a means of yielding greater gains around productivity and efficiency but still operates as a monopoly. The fourth institutional option shifts away from the state monopoly model towards *delegated infrastructure* which retains public ownership but privatises the operation through competitive lease arrangements. The fifth pathway of *liberalised infrastructure* takes the market model further and involves significant institutional restructuring in order to create the conditions of privatized competition and the detaching or ‘unbundling’ of activities and services previously undertaken by monopolies. The final two pathways include *community infrastructure* and the devolution of infrastructure planning and management to the community supported by government policy; and *informal infrastructure* which involves informal, unregulated and often expensive private alternatives for those members of the community unable to access formal systems (Graham and Marvin, 2001).

A key part of the ‘splintering urbanism’ framework offered by Graham and Marvin (2001) is a better understanding of the institutional pathways that lead to unbundled networks. In

particular how this ‘unbundling’ has resulted in the splintering and fragmentation of urban infrastructure through liberalized outsourcing and competitive privatization. Their work emphasizes that alongside the neoliberal rhetoric of improved service quality, variety and choice in relation to market driven infrastructure there is a parallel impact in terms of highly uneven and inequitable spatial and distributive implications. The progressive replacement of the “redistributive social role implied by public monopolies” (Little, 1995, p.9) and the underlying commitment to universal provision with a liberal market model has left the more vulnerable members of Westernized society highly susceptible to any shifts in the provision of basic services such as water, energy, shelter and transport. The danger of this is deepening spatial segregation between rich and poor that further “peripheralizes those left behind” (Cumings, 2000, p.19).

The implications of these shifts for urban planning have been profound for a professional endeavour with long-held democratic aspirations around progressing social, economic and environmental reform (Gleeson and Low, 2000). The splintering of large-scale networked infrastructure has worked to re-orient the focus of planners towards infrastructure projects rather than overarching visions or blue-print plans (Dodson, 2009). In particular the ability of urban planners to conceive of a ‘public interest’ in the midst of institutional fragmentation and urban splintering processes has resulted in hybrid public/private roles that are not well understood (Steele, 2009). The tendency for infrastructure to be considered to be located within the realm of technical engineering and ‘public works’ has meant that often these shifts towards increasingly unbundled and fragmented infrastructure development does not typically attract the political, community and scholarly scrutiny they deserve. Indeed, it is only when existing infrastructure reaches a crisis or new infrastructure is urgently needed that the changing dimensions of networked infrastructure start to become more visible. For cities and

metropolitans regions facing high levels of growth with outdated infrastructure and diminishing resources the potential for accelerated levels of urban splintering and fragmentation is particularly acute.

In the following section we essay an example of splintered infrastructure development Brisbane City Council's TransApex urban road/ tunnel/bridge scheme and consider the implications for planning in the growth engine region of South East Queensland (SEQ). As Australia's fastest growing urban region with population levels expected to almost double over the next 20 years there will be further intense demand for infrastructure maintenance and development and the search for appropriate funding models to support these activities (Queensland Government., 2009). We highlight this as an example of the neo-liberalised institutional pathways that reflect the unbundling of infrastructure networks in the south-east corner of the 'smart state'.

Part 2: TransApex: a tale of infrastructure splintering in South-East Queensland (SEQ)

The starkest contemporary example of infrastructure splintering is the Brisbane City Council's TransApex scheme, comprising five road, tunnel and bridge projects. The combination of these three projects is the largest road infrastructure project in Australia (Webbe and Weller, 2008). This ambitious scheme was devised by current Lord Mayor Campbell Newman and advisers prior to his election to office in 2004 as a 'plan' to improve urban congestion and cross-city travel in Brisbane through the creation of a motorway standard ring road around the CBD that would connect existing motorways and major arterials. The scheme was put forward as a means by which to "ensure our economy remains strong and to cater for the growing population, we need to connect major activity centres in

the western and northern suburbs with an efficient, high quality route” (Brisbane City Council, 2007, p.2).

Importantly, TransApex is to be largely, though not wholly, delivered through private financing mechanisms and major elements operated by private sector entities under separate specific concessions. It reflects the broader shift to private road financing of major roads in metropolitan Australia that has been well embedded since the 1990s. The ambition, however, is unique, eclipsing even Melbourne’s Citylink scheme which Graham and Marvin noted at the time of their writing (2001) as one of the world’s largest urban road projects. Three projects are presently under construction: the NSBT (or ‘Clem7’); the Airport Link, and the Hale Street Bridge over the Brisbane River. The first two will be privately financed and managed whilst the latter is a Council project. The fourth and fifth elements of the TransApex suite, the Northern Link and the East-West Link have not yet been commenced but projected timeframes of 2016 have been mooted in Council documents

The overall cost of the evolving TransApex scheme (there have been changes to some constituent projects) was originally set at \$4billion but has now ballooned out considerably. It is now likely that the first TransApex project, the North South Bypass Tunnel (NSBT) will cost more than \$3billion alone. There have been allegations of opacity and non-disclosure around projects, echoing concerns generally about secrecy and compromised accountability in privately financed public infrastructure schemes (Altshuler & Luberoff, 2003, Flyvbjerg et. al., 2003). For example, as Wikipedia notes, “Full details of both bids have not been publicly released. Newman has refused to release the details of the losing bidder, despite giving assurances to the public that he would in April 2006.”¹ The formal planning and governance

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TransApex>, Accessed May, 2009.

of the projects varies: for example, there is the prospect of federal funding for parts of the TransApex scheme whilst the State of Queensland is managing project procurement for the second project, the Airport Link.

Airport Link project is Australia's largest Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project which is managed by the State of Queensland through a *Special Purpose Vehicle* (SPV). The SPV is City North Infrastructure (CNI) Pty Ltd, a wholly State Government owned company that undertakes contractual activities and compliance management. Under the CNI constitution this includes: managing the procurement process; recommending the bidder shortlist; evaluating bids and awarding the contract; negotiating with directly affected land owners; managing land acquisition, resumption and compensation processes. According to the company website CNI was established in 2006 to represent the State and communities of Queensland on major infrastructure projects.

We don't create the project. We don't build the project. We do make it happen, by linking government vision with the infrastructure and construction industry specialists who will bring the vision of world-class infrastructure in Queensland to life. Our involvement is complete, from business case and environment assessment, through to procurement, contract management, handover, and community engagement. (CNI, 2009)

Airport Link is one of the first projects for CNI who in turn selected the BrisConnections consortium which includes the Macquarie Capital Group, Thiess and John Holland through a competitive tender process. As the preferred bidder Brisconnections were asked to finance, design, construct, commission, operate and maintain Airport Link – “the most complex road and tunnel engineering feat in Queensland's history”. The 6.7 km (largely underground) toll road that will connect the ‘Clem 7’ Tunnel, Inner City Bypass and local road network to the arterial roads leading to the Brisbane Airport was estimated to cost over \$3.4 billion to build. However through a landmark finance deal tax payers would pay just \$47 million and would

contribute “less than \$50 million for Airport Link instead of the budgeted \$850 million which will free up some money for other vital infrastructure” (Bligh, 2009, p.1)

The Airport Link project is now expected to cost more than double the original estimate. BrisConnections, was awarded a 45 year Concession for the Airport Link toll road and on the 31st July 2008 was listed and commenced trading on the Australian Securities Exchange (Brisconnections, 2008). The share value of Airport Link plummeted to ludicrous levels in early 2009 and many small stock holders were faced with large ‘unforeseen’ installment payouts. The subsequent requisition of a special unit holder meeting by Nicholas Bolton the largest unit holder in BrisConnections resulted in the very real concern that “in the event of winding-up proceedings BrisConnections would have no alternative but to cease trading” (Brisconnections, 2009b, p.1).

These events were addressed in the findings of an Independent Review of Queensland Government Boards, Committees and Statutory Authorities’ entitled *Brokering Balance: A Public Interest Map for Queensland Government Bodies* (Webbe & Weller, 2008). The main concerns expressed in the report related to the high levels of public interest risk and the sensitivity of activities such as procuring and awarding contracts, land resumptions from citizens, and compliance management. (see Figure 3 below).

- Insert Figure 3 here -

The report noted that organisational forms and governance are an evolving and inexact science and to this end made a number of key recommendations. Firstly that the delegation or devolution of public power should be unambiguous, transparent, granted and exercised in the

public interest, accountable, and subject to review. Secondly, the expenditure of public funds should be clearly and transparently, authorised, accountable, and subject to scrutiny and probity. Finally that the report noted that private sector models of corporate governance are not *necessarily* superior to public sector governance models (Webbe & Weller, 2008, p20).

In the case of CNI and BrisConnections in particular the reviewers were “not persuaded of a public interest case that justifies the creation of a company to undertake these Queensland Government activities”. More specifically the report recommended in Recommendation 103 that CNI be “transferred to a suitable departmental form, subject to an overriding cost-benefit analysis that it would be contrary to the public interest to do so mid project” and that the “entity delivering the CNI functions should be wound up on completion of the specified projects” (p.121). The Government’s response to the Webbe/Weller (2009) report was to support and accept most of the recommendations. In relation to the CNI Company however the report recommendation was ‘not supported’. The explanatory statement by in the Government response was simply that “this body is necessary for the delivery and management of the Airport Link project” (Queensland Government, 2009b).

Yet in an earlier audit report on Queensland infrastructure, the Auditor-General also raised concerns about the increase in the use of company structures and the need for closer, more rigorous attention particularly in relation to infrastructure funding, procurement and decision-making processes. Specifically the issues related to; 1) transparency and accountability of the infrastructure costs (and related strategies) through all phases of the infrastructure life-cycle; 2) probity and propriety of the procurement process supporting infrastructure projects; 3) consistency with State procurement and infrastructure policies and guidelines; 4) risk

management; and 5) reporting and communication requirements (Auditor-General Queensland, 2007) .

...when companies are established or acquired by public sector entities, there is sometimes a perception by parent entities and at times by the company itself that they are separate from the public sector and are not strictly public sector entities. Also there seems to be an assumption that by establishing a company as opposed to another type of public sector entity, that a different, more private sector attitude to probity and accountability can be adopted. In some cases companies have not been subject to the same high level of governance and accountability mechanisms expected of other types of government entities (Auditor General Queensland., 2007, p.37).

This new tendency of company-led infrastructure development, with its contemporary economic and policy authority to shape and eclipse the conditions for planning is explored further in the following section, with particular emphasis on South-East Queensland as an Australian bellwether zone for mega- projects and urban growth.

Part 3: In the public interest? Urban planning ‘unbundled’ and eclipsed

The broader context of Australian public sector management and reform has ushered in a new *modus operandi* for the planning, procurement and delivery of major infrastructure projects. The privatized shift towards PPS has evolved away from infrastructure projects managed by government departments and constructed by the private sector, towards a greater use of companies such as CNI under the mantle of Special Public Vehicles (SPVs) or Government owned Corporations (GOVs) (Auditor General Queensland, 2007). The ‘splintering urbanism’ framework offered by Graham and Marvin (2001) outlines the institutional pathways that lead to the splintering and fragmentation of urban infrastructure through liberalized outsourcing and competitive privatization. The driving focus is that beneath the neoliberal rhetoric of competitive variety and choice in relation to market driven infrastructure the resulting spatial and distributive implications are inequitable and uneven.

In the past issues around the ‘public interest’ has been the core domain of planning which has a long history of social democratic aspirations and ambitions (Gleeson and Low, 2000). The provision and improvement of infrastructure networks are often central to the normative aspirations of planners and urban reformers (Graham and Marvin, 2001). However the newly constituted ‘glocal’ urban networks pose profound challenges to traditional understandings of the planning purpose and endeavour. The ‘infrastructure turn’ has been recently coined to describe the increasingly dominant focus on urban infrastructure as the key mechanism to shape urban outcomes that is eclipsing spatial strategy-making and land-use planning (Dodson, 2009). Thus despite the outpouring of recent metropolitan plans in Australia the “surge of new urban investment schemes that emphasize large, complex and fiscally demanding infrastructure projects” has led to a “weakening of the influence of planning agencies in shaping metropolitan policy, in favour of infrastructure departments and ad hoc engineering project investigations” (p110). Dodson (2009) argues that in light of these shifts there is an onus on the planning profession to ‘re-examine’ and ‘re-imagine’ its relationship to urban infrastructure and the contexts in which infrastructure planning decisions are made.

One powerful illustration of the ‘infrastructure unbundling’ that has occurred as part of this recent turn is in the growth engine region and population powerhouse of South East Queensland (SEQ). The region is Australia’s fastest growing urban area with population levels anticipated to double over the next 20 years (Queensland Government, 2009). Underpinning the regions continued growth are key infrastructure networks around transport, electricity, gas, water, hospitals and schools. Identified pressures impacting on the delivery of this infrastructure include:

- the continued growth of the South-East Queensland economy and population;
- competition between projects and jurisdictions for scarce resources;

- changes in the living arrangements of the population causing stress on infrastructure resulting in unreliability of supply;
 - deterioration in environmental factors such as the level of rainfall; and
 - traditional long lead times required to identify and commission new infrastructure.
- (Auditor-General Queensland, 2007, p.17).

The planning framework for managing growth, land use and development in the region is the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005–26 (SEQRP). Following amendment of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* the SEQRP provides for a statutory, or legal, basis for regional planning as a means of managing the impacts of the region's rapid population growth. The Queensland Government is currently undertaking a review of the SEQ Regional Plan 2005 to include emergent factors such as higher than expected population growth, housing affordability pressures, transport congestion and the urgent need to respond to climate change (DSEQRP 2009-2031). The regional planning process sets out a future pattern of development to support and promote a sustainable urban future for the region. The three key strategic directions include: 1) a more compact urban form with increased density around transport nodes and activity centres; 2) the pursuit of development in the western corridor; and 3) an emphasis on sub regional self containment that seeks to reduce urban congestion by encouraging local community access to goods and services (SEQRP, 2005).

Supporting this agenda is the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2006-2026 (SEQIPP) which establishes the priorities for regionally significant infrastructure. The SEQIPP (2006) acknowledges that strategic investments in infrastructure will influence the pattern and rate of development across the region and actively encourages industry to invest in capacity in order to “enable the development of innovative approaches to the planning,

designing and delivering of infrastructure projects” (p.18). The plan emphasizes the need for ‘extensive planning’ in order to “give direction and momentum to Queensland Government infrastructure and services investment” (p.9). However a recent performance management report presented to Parliament on *Transport Network Management and Urban Congestion in South East Queensland* (Auditor-General of Queensland, 2009) highlighted that although SEQ has reached “a critical stage with its current transport policies and services” (p.8) there exists “a systemic weakness in integrated planning across entities” (p.9) and “a current governance structure that does not support effective decision-making” (p.10).

Within the SEQ context it is fair to say that the TransApex project is an infrastructure initiative and not a mainstream planning ambition, as the development was not foreshadowed or marked out in strategic or statutory planning instruments at the State or local level prior to Councillor Newman’s election. It was pitched politically as a congestion initiative that would repair a decade or more of infrastructure ‘neglect’ by previous administrations. The strongly rhetorical themes of ‘crash through’ urban development recall the urban governance style of the Kennett Victorian administration (1992-9) which pushed major urban developments through established planning and consultation processes (e.g. CityLink tollway scheme, Grand Prix racing event). Through his terms in office Councillor Newman has proudly adopted the moniker of ‘Can Do’ Campbell to emphasise his commitment to ‘deliver’ urban promises. Yet the ‘crash through’ infrastructure development style of the TransApex project with its focus on facilitating trans-metropolitan travel and improving congestion and delays for motorists, is contradicting the State and council’s own commitment to sustainability and reducing car dependency. These are core strategic planning values outlined in key planning instruments at all levels of government. The crash through approach

which increasingly resonates in infrastructure politics is starkly at odds with planning's claim to value deliberation and sustainability.

Increasingly planning and, more generally, ordinary administrative process, are cast both as inhibitors of needed development, including infrastructure, and unable to anticipate and respond to fundamental community need, especially the assumed imperative of free circulation. Fears around the impacts of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) have already been mobilised as 'reason' for further paring away of process and accountability. As well as public control of urban assets through company structures such as SPVs and GOVs, there are also new rounds of privatisation mooted (as mentioned in the Introduction to this paper). As Graham and Marvin (2001) point out the public reassignment of key infrastructure assets is not a simple replacement of the public sector by the private sector. Instead there is a continuum of different institutional pathways that mediate between the various dimensions of public and private governance. This convergence of a streamlined, circumscribed planning system with a splintered infrastructure development process appears to be characterized by a number of key features:

- Employment prioritised over sustainability
- Mobility over accessibility – car based project easier to privately finance
- Velocity over quality
- Project not process led planning
- Circumscribed community involvement (as shareholders/stakeholders not citizens)
- Sections of planning moving into shady wings beyond scrutiny (commercial in confidence provisions of PPPs)
- Dubious and possibly self serving planning processes and techniques – most especially the traffic modelling and forecasts that go to the core of private financing

and which have proven grossly inadequate in other contexts (e.g., Sydney Cross City Tunnel)

We choose the term ‘infrastructure development’ rather than ‘infrastructure planning’ to describe this new convergence because the genesis, financing and construction of contemporary infrastructure reflects both 1) the splintered qualities outlined by Graham and Marvin (2001), and 2) deep, occasionally catastrophic, anomalies sourced in contemporary financing models. This cannot be described as ‘planning’. In this sense, the contemporary ‘unbundling’ of infrastructure development is simply a new form of urban development that is increasingly eclipsing Australian urban planning.

Conclusion: SEQ - The bellwether zone

This paper has outlined the ‘splintering urbanism’ framework (Graham and Marvin, 2001) as a means of exploring the different institutional pathways used in the financing and construction of contemporary infrastructure. As part of this agenda the new tendency of infrastructure development, with its contemporary economic and policy authority to shape and even eclipse the conditions for planning has been highlighted. In particular we have drawn attention to the South-East Queensland region as ‘a bellwether zone’ – an increasingly important crucible of change that captures and reflects many of the growth management dilemmas and opportunities facing the Australian settlement system, especially its diverse metropolitan growth regions.

The challenges of responding to these high levels of growth resonate with wider national debates around the sustainability, liveability and indeed desirability of many of the growth-led changes to the built and natural environment; and the role of infrastructure planning and

development within this agenda. In 2008 the Australian Government announced a national approach to planning, funding and implementing the nation's future infrastructure needs through the *Infrastructure Australia Act 2008*. The act identifies nationally significant infrastructure to include: transport infrastructure; energy infrastructure; communications infrastructure; and water infrastructure. The role of Infrastructure Australia is to offer advice concerning: nationally significant infrastructure priorities; policy and regulatory reforms desirable to improve the efficient utilisation of national infrastructure networks; options to address impediments to the development and provision of efficient national infrastructure; the needs of users; possible financing mechanisms; as well as review the extent to which the governments can facilitate infrastructure investment such as public-private-partnerships (Australian Government, 2009). Significantly, the much smaller *Major Cities Unit* located within Infrastructure Australia has been set up to provide a more coordinated and integrated approach to the planning and infrastructure needs of Australia's major cities. Unfortunately, the details of this nationally significant metropolitan 'urban planning' agenda are yet to be released (see <http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au>).

This paper has raised a number of key themes that point to the need for urban research focused specifically on the contemporary urban agenda of 'splintered' infrastructure development and the implications of this for planning ecologically sustainable development. To this end we offer the following five key questions as a means of building and developing such an agenda:

1. *How can we understand the existing/emerging infrastructure networks shaping Australian urban landscapes such as SEQ?*

This points to a need for multi-disciplinary urban research that can examine the entirety of infrastructure advocacy, planning and delivery, with special attention to new and unfolding forms of financing that may not be well understood within mainstream urban planning.

2. *What impact has the shift to private/public partnerships had on the outcomes and impacts of infrastructure planning and development?*

Here the research agenda must focus on financing and project assessment models and their often unseen impacts on planning processes.

3. *What do these trends mean for urban planning, policy, and governance within a democratic context?*

Urban research must recover its earlier capacity to undertake political economic assessment of planning, including infrastructure, in Australian cities. Much of our recent infrastructure politics and advocacy warrant examination through this prism which highlights the play of power and the distributional consequences of urban resource allocation.

4. *What environmental values and social constituencies have lost out in the play of planning power during the recent boom, and now decline? and*

Again, the prism of political economy is implicated in a new research agenda, broadened to accommodate how environmental values are accommodated and deployed, not simply opposed, by pro-development interests, including in infrastructure circuits.

5. *How can the lessons learnt in recent years in planning for growth and change be*

articulated for other areas that may undergo similar growth challenges?

Planning is indeed the bellwether of urban enterprise and – in a nation of cities like Australia – of civic endeavour generally. The discursive and material power plays that have reshaped the provision of urban infrastructure, including social facilities and services. This implicates social, educational, and health sectors in a progressive splintering of public ambition and commitment.

Ultimately, what remakes planning remakes governance. The research challenge is to expose this heretofore murky process to reasoned and democratic scrutiny.

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Figure 1: Infrastructure: degree of public/private responsibility (Source: Kessides, 1983)

Role of market incentives	Range of responsibility	Institutional options	Description
LOW	PUBLIC +++++++ +++++++ ++++++ +++++ ++++ +++ ++	Government Dept. Parasital Service contract Management contract Leasing Concessions Communal arrangements	- Service provided by civil servants and accounts in government budget - An organisation owned and controlled by the state - Contracting out services to the private sector for fixed period and fee - Private sector manages publicly owned infrastructure for fee or performance-related fee. - Private sector operates a public facility for affixed period but does not provide fixed assets - Private sector leases an asset for an extended period – investment reverts to public sector - Users cooperatively plan, build, maintain and manage infrastructure
HIGH	+ PRIVATE	Private entrepreneurship	- Ownership by private sector either through transfer of assets from public sector or new entry

Figure 2: Pathways to unbundled networks (Source: Graham and Marvin 2001, p.56)

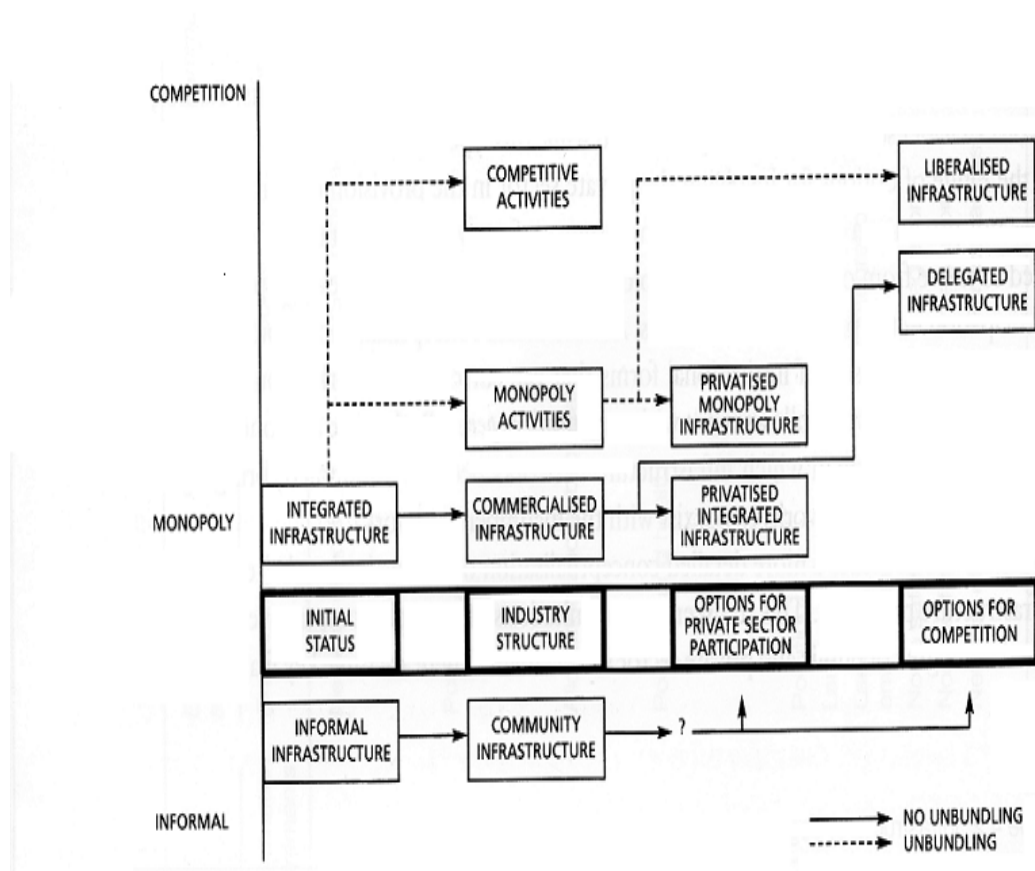
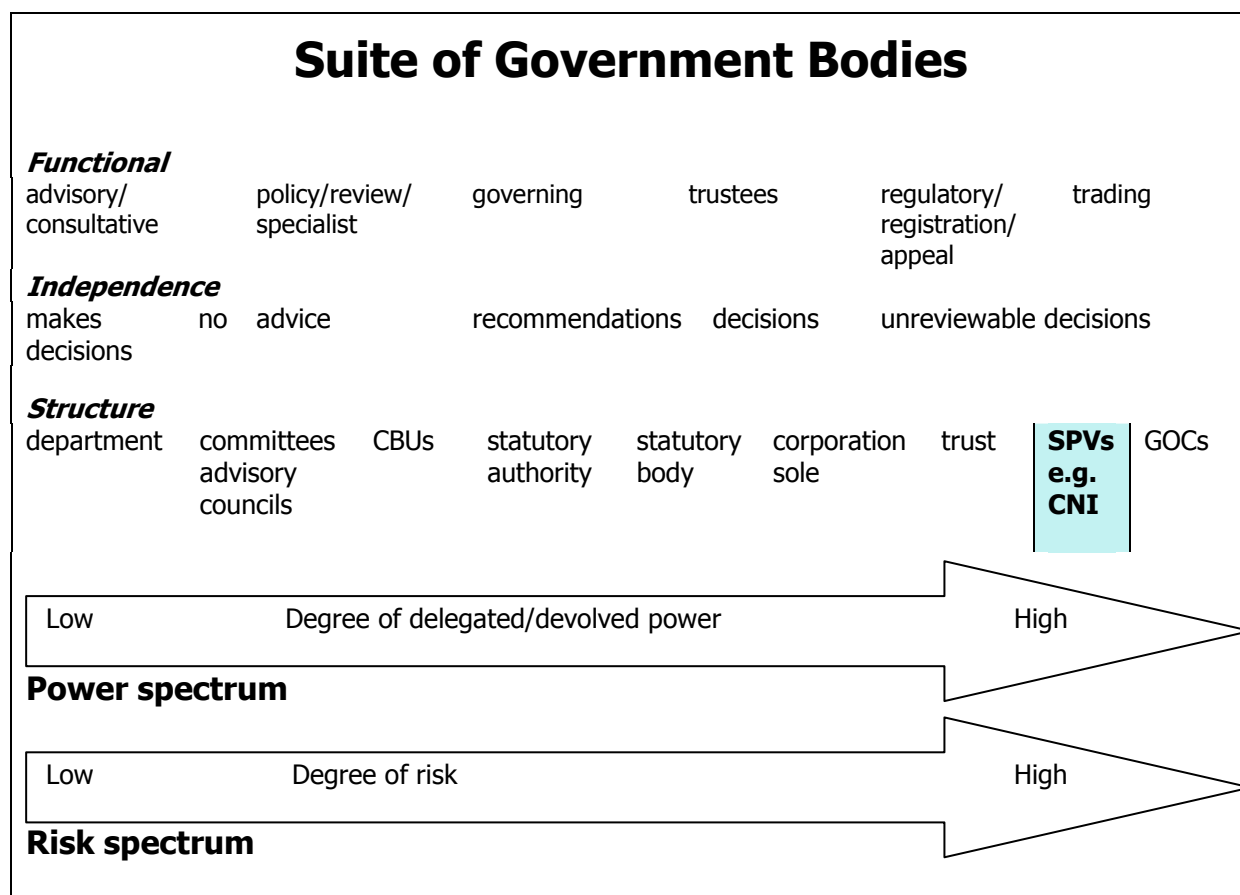


Figure 3 – A Spectrum of Risk for Government Bodies (Source: adapted from Webbe and Weller, 2009, p. 32)



Acronyms: CBU - Commercialized business Unit; SPV – Special Purpose Vehicle; GOV – Government Owned Corporation.