

# SUPER-SIZE MY GOVERNANCE

## A review of super-city reforms to spatial planning governance in Auckland compared with Brisbane/South East Queensland.

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### ABSTRACT

*In 2010, Auckland's 'super-city' governance reforms created Australasia's largest (in area) unitary metropolitan authority by merging eight territorial councils into a single Auckland Council. This paper investigates the background to, debate over, and significance of the new Auckland Council, in the context of contemporary governance of major Australasian cities. We argue that the Auckland reforms demand critical scholarly attention because of their emerging effects on spatial planning across the Auckland region, and on the wider New Zealand polity. Moreover, the Auckland super-city offers a distinctive and rich contrast with comparable Australian metropolitan governance frameworks.*

*The Auckland governance changes demand pressing scholarly attention for several critical reasons: they (1) sharply re-scale the relationship between central and local governments in context of weak national urban policy guidance; (2) re-assert local government roles in local and regional development; (3) attempt to strengthen spatial planning in response to a dominant long-run pattern of automobile-based transport planning driven urban development; (4) stress an urban design paradigm that pushes against expansive land-use planning in Auckland; and (5) raise questions over democratic gaps in the collaborative governance of the region while offering opportunities for new modes of regional political action.*

*Given the reciprocal planning exchanges and current trajectories between Australasian cities, comparing Auckland reforms with recent regional planning developments in Brisbane/South East Queensland, as this paper does, offers considerable insights for urbanists; particularly, the strategic management of rapidly-growing second-order Australasian cities within the context of a shifting locus of global urbanisation to the wider Asia-Pacific region.*

### INTRODUCTION

At the time this conference paper is presented, the Auckland Council will be celebrating their first birthday as the new super-sized city government. In this paper, we witness the unique creation of the Auckland super-city within a wider context of planning that advances the theory and practice of spatial planning and metropolitan reform for governing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century city-region. In 2010, Auckland's 'super-city' governance reforms created Australasia's largest (in area) unitary metropolitan authority by merging eight territorial councils into a single Auckland Council. As the anniversary of this important juncture in New Zealand planning history approaches, and 30 years since the last radical reforms amalgamating local government, it is timely to review the political actions and intentions of the shifting governance framework of spatial planning.

The transformative agenda of super-sizing Auckland's urban governance is a rich opening to examine the opportunities and challenges arising from the shifting trajectory of spatial planning. For the purposes of this paper, we accept that "spatial planning" has acquired a various meanings [in practice and theory] referring to the strategic coordination of sectoral activities with territorial implications' (Owens and Cowell 2011: 175; see Haughton *et al.* 2010; Healey 2007; Newman 2008). Characteristically, spatial planning features longer-term strategic thinking and includes political amalgamation of form and capacity for coherent city-regional planning (via a complex institutional and professional reform of local government) (Haughton *et al.* 2010: 1). In our wider agenda we explore normative and applied spatial planning as '...a mechanism for collaborative visioning, for overseeing implementation of development by a diverse range of actors, and ensuring that all of this is delivered in ways that meet the diverse and sometimes contradictory expectations of society' (Haughton *et al.*

2010: 1) under challenging conditions such as climate change (Biesbroek, Swart and van der Knaap 2009; Gleeson and Steele 2010).

Herein, and with an emphasis on institutional learning and transport, we aim to interrogate the reshuffling of urban governance brought about by the super-city amalgamation using five select pivotal features in the shifting spatial planning landscape: central-local government relations; local government political reform; challenges to conventional urban development patterns, changing planning paradigms, and civic democracy. Moreover, given the reciprocal planning exchanges and current trajectories between Australasian cities, comparing Auckland reforms with recent regional planning developments in Brisbane/South East Queensland (B/SEQ), as this paper does, offers considerable insights for urbanists in an international context (Hambleton 2009; Reid 2009; Sansom 2010). Of particular interest is the strategic management responses seen in rapidly-growing second-order Australasian cities within the context of a shifting locus of global urbanisation in the wider Asia-Pacific region. Even within this narrower remit, it is impossible to do justice to all of these features. The exploratory nature and focussed example are intended to show a gap in current debate. Further by reframing the scope of necessary debate and possible (re)action, spatial planning can leverage local and international knowledge to address the wicked procedural and substantive problems of community engagement, climate justice, inclusive and healthy cities, and regressive Neoliberalism.

The un(der)examined question we ask here concerns how 'super-sizing' can be framed as both a theoretical and a practical remaking of governance; at once unique to Auckland and familiar to other cities, specifically Brisbane/South East Queensland. The first frame we take is the theoretical making and remaking of the political and institutional networks that govern the Auckland city-region, and how this activity impacts various aspects of city life, for example: local democratic expectations, or spatial planning (holding implications for subsets of spatial planning such as urban form), while the second frame is how transport, a critical part of the urban region, is structured within the various permutations of regional governance. Within this (re)framing of governance we can then usefully investigate and compare the circumstances and lessons of super-sizing governance for spatial planning.

Whilst evaluation criteria have been developed for Australasian metropolitan strategies (Lawson, Gleeson and Darbas 2004: 349), none have been developed for super-sizing urban governance. Overall, arguably as Lawson, Gleeson and Darbas (2004: 245) argue: the '...strategic reorientation of growth management around broad sustainability and democratic concerns has the potential to reanimate planning and re-secure its socio-political footings'. We call for that potential to be developed paying especial political and holistic approach attention to the trajectories and periods of governance rescaling and reshuffling (following Brenner 2009; Pemberton and Goodwin 2011). The paper reviews emerging literature toward advancing territorial and political city-regional spatial planning. The value of spatial planning and its re-emergence includes use as a "conceptual apparatus", a "...broad discourse in a particular moment in the history of planning though and practice" (in the nature of a paradigm shift), and as '...an evolving set of understanding what constitutes "good planning" which is being codified and legitimated through academic usage and professional and government bodies" (Haughton *et al.* 2010: 1). The spatial planning turn re-orientates the tension of planners normative and daily agendas as framed by regulatory constraints, institutional obligations, political strategic imaginations, priorities of collective action, and distinctive cultural character (Healey 2006; Healey 2003; Hajer and Zonneveld 2000; Newman 2008; McKinley 2011b). Consequently, interrogating and comparing super-sized governance fruitfully uses the institutional and state restructuring seen in successive and comparative metropolitan planning.

## **RESCALING URBAN GOVERNANCE AS METROPOLITAN SPATIAL PLANNING**

The paper argues that amalgamation of urban governance is driven by coordinating an infrastructure turn and design project agenda reworking spatial planning at the expense of local democracy. Public domain debates over the shifting scale and scope of infrastructure and urban design playing out in uneasy coexistence within metropolitan spatial planning. With a view to deeper and ongoing analysis, this paper successively investigates the background to, debate over, and significance of the new Auckland Council as a political action of collaborative representative democracy; it does so in the context of contemporary governance of major Australasian cities<sup>1</sup>. A key premise in our urban

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<sup>1</sup> The influence of London as a supersized governance is recognised as a model but not developed further here.

governance inquiry is the increasingly hybrid role of planners in negotiating the community governance agenda within metropolitan spatial planning with imperatives for reconciling technical and political efficiencies, and increasingly under conditions of economic and environmental crises (Steele 2009). As the rescaling of urban governance shapes and is shaped by spatial planning, we must not overlook the shifting political economy of space and spatial relations (Pemberton and Goodwin 2011). We must address the politically-conditioned processes of rescaling and reshuffling urban governance as a continuously planning society (Dewey 1988), even if the continuity is uneven or appears ad hoc.

Over the three decades since the last local government reforms, there have been significant shifts in New Zealand's metropolitan spatial planning (Memon, Davies and Fookes 2007) marked by infrastructure turn, urban design agenda, and law reform. From general law reform for sustainable planning schemes (*Resource Management Act, 1991* and 2005) and improving local government process and function (*Local Government Act, 2002*) to Auckland-specific law reform relating to development of metropolitan strategic forums and plans. The *Local Government (Auckland) Amendment Act (LGAAA), 2004* was 'passed aiming to improve the integration of the Auckland regional land transport system and the management of land transport funding and assets for the Auckland Region' (Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) 2008: 47). The LGAAA required all Auckland councils to integrate land transport and land use planning and to ensure that these are consistent with strategic management plans for land transport, growth (Auckland Regional Growth Forum 1999) and economic development (Rowe 2005). The LGAAA in turn sparked a transformational shift in institutional governance of transport in the region, creating the Auckland Regional Transport Agency (ARTA). The rather ad hoc and political legacy of such institutionalising infrastructural agencies and agendas dominates planning history.

In particular, the ongoing wrestling of Auckland's assets, infrastructure (re)development has established unique urban form and been the cause of much intergovernmental antagonisms (perpetuating dysfunctional and often competitive relations between Auckland's local governments, and between local and central government). Hence a key impetus for reform and shifting paradigms of strategic spatial planning is efficient, co-ordinated, and integrated planning.

Accordingly, integrated planning for local government has preceded, forced, and framed the issue of the super-sizing of the Auckland Council<sup>2</sup>. Equally, the succession of metropolitan strategic planning showcased well-rehearsed international discourses of Smart Growth, New Urbanism, and Infrastructure priorities that are familiar to many Australasian cities and further afield (witness Bunker and Searle 2009; Gleeson and Darbas 2004; Grant 2005; McGuirk 2005; Mees and Dodson 2007; Sipe and Gleeson 2004). Comparative studies of Auckland's super-city amalgamation commonly involve London, Vancouver, and Brisbane (McKinley 2011b: 10-16; Sansom 2010). By virtue of the number of larger state capitals within the Federal system, Australian surveys of strategic spatial planning extend internally and internationally with greater breadth (Bunker and Searle 2009; Council of Australian Governments Reform Council 2011; Gleeson, Dodson and Spiller 2010a; Gleeson and Darbas 2004; Lawson *et al.* 2004; McGuirk and O'Neill 2002; Sipe and Gleeson 2004; Wetzstein 2010). Wrestling with the bird's nest of Auckland's unique conditions as urban governance reframes spatial planning must constantly resist two inherent weaknesses: parochialism, and unthinking adoption of models and approaches successful overseas. In the first instance, and given reasonably recognisable similarities (as will be outlined), a trans-Tasman comparative analysis coalesces the two framing agendas of this paper as follows.

### **Trans-Tasman reciprocal planning exchanges: the case of Brisbane/South East Queensland**

How does Auckland compare to other Australasian cities? The most directly comparable city to Auckland is the Brisbane/South East Queensland region. This is in part because Brisbane has historically been approximately a similar population and urban structure to Auckland but also because the questions of metro-regional planning processes and governance that have been at the fore in Auckland have resonated strongly in Brisbane/South East Queensland.

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<sup>2</sup> Notably, in New Zealand's two-tier governance arrangements, the Auckland Council has a degree of independent and sweeping authority unseen since the Auckland Regional Authority of earlier decades. The political (hi)story and the reform rationale of the ARA in underwriting strategic planning development and future reforms makes the super-city agenda one of long and noteworthy reckoning.

Brisbane, established as the Brisbane City Council in 1925, forms somewhat of a model for the current Auckland context. Metropolitan planning took some time to establish in Brisbane though, with Hamnett (1984) describing such endeavour as still in its infancy. The Brisbane model was at its time an example of 'super-sized' governance and reflected prevailing debates as to whether a unitary metropolitan authority was most appropriate for the task of metropolitan government or whether, as in the case of Melbourne's Metropolitan Board of Works a tier of government above the local scale was needed to ensure coherent urban planning and management. The Brisbane model was implemented shortly before the Great Depression and WWII and thus had little growth to manage. Following WWII however Brisbane began to grow at a more rapid pace as did the wider SEQ region. An increasing proportion of this growth occurred outside the existing metropolitan limit expanding into adjacent shires, such as the Gold Coast. With the acceleration of tourist and Sunbelt migration-led growth in the 1980s and 1990s the Brisbane model of metropolitan planning had begun to weaken. Planners in South East Queensland now faced a region that was exhibiting many characteristics found in North America – dispersed, loosely coordinated urban expansion increasingly managed by non metropolitan local authorities and with little state oversight.

From the early-1990s however the Queensland State government initiated a voluntary regional growth management program, similar to the Regional Growth Forum operating in Auckland at the time. That SEQ 2021 program operated until the early-2000s but while it generated a series of strategic statements and commitments to improved growth management remained a weak instrument for managing growth as it lacked statutory force and depended on local government's voluntarily adhering to planning objectives. Whereas in Auckland structural governance reform was chosen as the strategic response to weaknesses in regional growth management in the late-2000s an alternative approach was taken in Brisbane/SEQ. There the State government intervened by instigating a statutory Regional Plan to which the region's local governments would be bound to follow. This plan included new planning measures including growth accommodation targets allocated to local government areas as well as a new 'urban footprint' intended to limit urban expansion and support consolidation within existing urban areas. The Regional Plan was accompanied by an Infrastructure Plan and Program which set out long-term infrastructure project timelines and budgets. The SEQRP was reviewed and updated in 2009 and largely involved adjustments to the original 2005 scheme including addressing newly appreciated challenges such as climate change and energy security.

The South East Queensland example provides a contrast with the Auckland case. In SEQ the Regional Planning process has involved the state adopting responsibility for regional growth management and instituting a state led regional process above the existing local government tier. This change in part recognised the relative rigidity of the Brisbane unitary authority mode in the face of increasingly regionally distributed patterns of growth. In one sense therefore the State acknowledged a governance failure over some decades. Growth management is now actively pursued by the State and increasingly via infrastructure development (Dodson 2009) and transport planning (DTMR 2010).

The Auckland case can be viewed as a more radical version of the SEQ example. Instead of instituting a central state mandate over the regional and local agencies via a regional planning process, the central state simply abolished those agencies and combined them into a single authority. The Auckland case thus reflects, in super-size mode, the approach taken in Brisbane in 1925. The new Auckland Council will need to pay close attention to the development of its required Spatial Plan in order to ensure that future growth remains within the council's bounds, less a superordinate SEQ model be required in future.

A peculiarity of the SEQ example that is not present in Auckland arises from the structure of the local government tier and its relationship to the regional planning process. There is considerable differentiation within the 10 SEQ local governments. Brisbane, for example, hosts a population of some 1.07 million residents, is Australia's largest municipal authority with an annual budget of AU\$1.97 billion and is also the State capital city. Such scale gives it considerable planning and infrastructure development capacity and the city has actively exercised this strength in recent years, principally in the construction of tolled motorway tunnels beneath the central city via public-private partnerships. This local strength relative to other regional municipalities and relative to the State government creates a tension in regional planning as to the dominant authority (Gleeson, Dodson and Spiller 2010b). The road tunnels for example are of a scale normally only handled by state

government but were undertaken locally. There is some evidence that they distorted state planning as the state did not necessarily wish to see the roads to be built but was quite content for the Council to fund and build them. In Auckland this tension does not exist as central government has little direct planning influence on the region's development and a key intent of the new Auckland Council was to maintain that distance.

Yet as noted above the Auckland Council remains relatively weak in terms of its financial powers and faces disagreement in infrastructure prioritisation with the central state upon whose finance said infrastructure will rely. Thus the Auckland case presents a lightly interventionist central state whose main influence is financial whereas the SEQ case presents an assertive state presence, both in planning and infrastructure development but which is occasionally at risk of capture or direction by particular local governments, principally Brisbane. Auckland's governance may be super-sized yet weak, while in SEQ the strong state faces the continuing potential for tension with the primate local authority accompanied by some risk of unruliness among the region's other local authorities. A more valuable appraisal of the relative merits of the Auckland and SEQ models would lie in assessing the substantive planning results achieved, something that in the case of Auckland will only be apparent in the next few years.

Understanding the genealogy leading up to the Auckland super-city and its radical sophistication is essential to effectively assessing the Auckland super-city outcomes. The project of a super-Auckland governance has been a political football whose time has arrived (Orsman and Shephard 2001; Thompson 2000). The swift political amalgamation of form and capacity for coherent city-regional planning appears to have been influenced by upcoming '...elections in 2010 and the Rugby World Cup in 2011' (Reid 2009: 42) as well as the pressing need to resolve the sheer complexity of a fragmented and often-uncoordinated features and responsibilities of urban services and good governance (McKinley 2011b).

'The key reason for central government's radical overhaul of Auckland's governments was the fact that decision-making was too fragmentary and weak resulting in sub-optimal resource allocation and missed local and global investment opportunities (New Zealand Government, 2009 (Wetzstein 2010: 5).

The urgency of radical reform for Auckland in a *de novo* form, dislocated from national and local government, gives rise to concern and a flurry of debate from institutional power imbalances between and within local and national government<sup>3</sup> (Chen 2009; McGuirk 2007b; Memon *et al.* 2007), a raft of submissions to the *Royal Commission on Auckland Governance* (2008a hereafter "Royal Commission") on the nature and concerns with possible reform, and contributing to a *Second International Roundtable On Metropolitan Governance* for strategic metropolitan spatial planning reform comparing Auckland reforms with those in well-known global cities (refer McKinlay s5.1 and Annexure B in Sansom 2010: 16). The roundtable summary overviews 'key issues in metropolitan planning and governance in [ten] federal countries' (namely Canada, India, South Africa, Switzerland, and USA) with a grounding emphasis on B/SEQ as hosting city-region (Sansom 2010: 1).

Reflections on Auckland's governance dominate New Zealand local government literature from practitioner and academic perspectives. The relative trickle of recent critical academic review of city-regional governance including Memon, Davies and Fookes (2007: 43; Tremaine 2000) who review the highly politically-contested 'task of designing appropriate institutional arrangements for metropolitan government and planning' and others (including Auckland Regional Council 2007; Auckland Regional Growth Forum 2007; Mouat 2010; Wetzstein 2007) has turned to a flood of debate in rhetoric, articles, and submissions<sup>4</sup> in the Royal Commission (2008b) and implementation of the Auckland Council (Reid 2009). Urban centres of research are increasingly active in investigating the dimensions of reform, partnership, and governance: across established—such as the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Local Government Centre—to newly-established—namely the multi-Faculty and stakeholder partnership centred at the University of Auckland (TRI) (Thematic Research Institute:

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<sup>3</sup> Chen (2009: 2) asserts "[o]ne of the key issues facing the Government in local government reform this Parliamentary term is without creating inconsistency in the functions and powers between the Auckland "Super City" and local authorities outside Auckland, and an imbalance in power with other regions and with central Government."

<sup>4</sup> The Royal Commission (2008b) received over 3500 written and 550 oral submissions.

*Transforming Auckland: Institutional, technological, and cultural innovations for sustainable cities*). Unsurprisingly trans-Tasman policy and academic research are mutually challenging and enriching.

Much attention is paid to the Australian literature on metropolitan governance issues like community (Cheshire and Lawrence 2005), comparative international strategies (Gleeson and Darbas 2004; Sipe and Gleeson 2004), relating to Sydney and Auckland, for example (McGuirk and O'Neill 2002; McGuirk 2007a). Recently, Bunker and Searle (2009: 101) have argued that the mainland Australasian cities are constituting an Australian paradigm that combines local particularities and strongly affirms '...a more relational and transactive manner of planning adding further process to product'. Though, some (Bunker and Searle 2009; Gleeson 1998) assert resonance with European planning theory (see Wetzstein 2011: 2; Hillier 2007), this paper calls for a "more thorough investigation of the contradictory effects of such interventions on people, places and investment as well as for sustained efforts to break-out of narrow Anglo-phone spatial referencing in academic and policy knowledge production on globalising territorial economic management' and overemphasis on infrastructure in spatial planning. A distinctive Australasian paradigm of planning in a longer succession of paradigms (Lawson *et al.* 2004: 351-4) has merit as we pursue another urban revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bunker and Searle 2009; Dodson 2007; Berke 2002).

The opportunity to reframe the political project and delivery of spatial planning in Auckland within a wider theoretical and international practice by planners and non-planners alike is the challenge taken up by this paper. Generally, we subscribe to an agenda that promotes planning as 'more strategic, more spatial and better integrated with other policy sectors' (Haughton *et al.* 2010: i). Specifically, the paper contributes to the capacity to "theorize the relationship between 'necessity' and 'contingency' at lower levels of scalar abstraction" (McGuirk 2007b: 179). This theoretical and practical capacity is, as McGuirk (2007b: 179) argues, "compromised" by presumptions about the city-region that are under-theorised and over-reliant on global capitalist logic. Common explanations of how this global capital logic translates into community governance logic embedded in New Zealand local government law and regulations are outlined in local literature (Borrie *et al.* 2004; McKinley 2011a; b). Following McGuirk (2007b: 179) and others (Gunder 2010; Harvey 2007; Brenner and Theodore 2005; Le Heron 2009; Lewis 2009; Wetzstein 2011), we challenge how the evacuation of political spaces by 'capitalist territoriality' as it '...dissolve[s] national scalar hierarchies of state power'. Hence city-region theory derived from global economic theory tends to presume a coherence and privileging of city-regions and their political drivers '...leaving the city-region as the privileged territorial scale for the reassembly of governance capacity' (McGuirk 2007b: 179; Sandercock and Friedmann 2000).

Further, following other progressive planning thinkers (Steele 2009), we challenge the securitisation and performance basis evident in the ongoing Neoliberal spaces devolution that effectively depoliticises and misconstrues pressing political projects of peak oil, climate change, implementing the already-elusive concept of the "new spatial planning" (Haughton *et al.* 2010) as place making and sustainable urban planning contributing to the assemblages of governance being contested at the local level. These assemblages operate within Neoliberal agendas of political space and projects and have been analysed from variable perspectives ranging from planning (Gunder 2010; Lawson *et al.* 2004; Steele 2009; Steele and Sipe 2007), geographical (Lewis 2009; Le Heron 2009), sociological (Larner and Walters 2002) eco-spatial outcomes (Biesbroek *et al.* 2009; Coombes 2003), or political economy (Wetzstein 2007; 2011), for example.

The rubric of efficiency within metropolitan spatial planning is firstly recasting the relations of central and local government (and respectively with community) and secondly, the driver of transport. In super-sizing only Auckland, central government is recasting the trajectory for local government in the rest of New Zealand without adequately reviewing the political periodization and context. The new structure is a tripartite structure, set up by the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 consisting of the Auckland Council, Local Boards, and Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs), notably Auckland Transport and Water-Care. These two CCOs, respectively, have specified responsibility for all transport related matters found in the public space between the building lines of two properties opposite each other, and for the supply of potable water, processing of sewage and stormwater drainage. Notably for our discussion, Auckland Transport has responsibility for operational transport-planning function while Auckland Council has responsibility for spatial and District planning.

Transport remains a central driving force for metropolitan planning and urban governance due to efficiency and certainty of this mobilising public system in various forms and eras. The fact that

Auckland Transport has sole responsibility for transport planning is the genesis of a popular myth that gave birth to the Auckland Council, where it was argued that there was dysfunctionality in transportation planning split amongst eight different councils; effectively ignoring the relative transformation of transport governance into a regional body, ARTA. The neo-liberalist framework adopted by the ruling National Party government views transport as a means of efficiently moving goods and services to serve the profit motive, rather than as an integral part of daily life. The enduring relationship between transport and spatial planning dominates debate, policy, and elections.

## **GOVERNING AUCKLAND'S TRANSPORT**

The governance of city regions and the institutional structures accompanying urban and regional or spatial planning have received an extensive airing in the literature. Yet questions about the institutional arrangements concerning transport systems have not. This seems unfortunate given the significance of transport systems to the achievement of various urban planning and sustainability goals, whether economic, social or environmental. Dependence on the automobile is widely viewed as a major sustainability deficit faced by North American and Australasian cities (Newman and Kenworthy 1999). An extensive literature exists which considers the impacts of automobile dominated transport systems and describes alternative models for managing metropolitan transport systems (Cervero 1998; Newman and Kenworthy 1999). Likewise the extensive debates over, suggests the need for greater attentiveness to the governance dimensions of achieving such sustainability.

There has however been relatively little work investigating the governance of urban transport systems whether within the context of economic or organisational efficiency or in the achievement of wider goals such as environmental impact. Mees (2000; 2010) has offered some insights into transport governance, particularly public transport. Mees and Dodson (2007) have investigated the rationality of the administration of long-run transport planning processes in Auckland arguing that bureaucratic influences were particularly significant. Low and Astle (2009) have investigated the problem of 'path dependence' in the governance of Melbourne's transport system, finding that long-run fragmentation of institutional structures led to inertia against increasing the achievement of transport sustainability.

Dodson et al (2011) have argued that governance is a critical factor in the success of metro-regional public transport systems while a number of authors (Colin Buchanan and Partners 2003; Wickham 1999; Atkins 2001) have all suggested that a regional transport planning agency is a key factor in successful public transport provision and use in cities. Pucher and Kurth (1995) noted a particularly successful European model of public transport governance termed the 'Verkehrverbund' (VVB) in which a single dedicated regional agency takes responsibility for the planning and delivery of all public transport modes and services to produce a single unified mobility network. This approach of unified and uniform system planning has also been affirmed by Mees (2010) who particularly favours the VVB model as operating in Zurich Switzerland. The Zurich Verkehrverbund plans and manages all aspects of that city's public transport network as a single integrated multi-modal network (Mees 2010). It contrasts with alternative models of urban transport governance in which separate institutions manage different parts of the network. Such an example is that of Melbourne where multiple agencies have a role in delivery of public transport but the system lacks a single overarching planning agency and thus suffers from fragmentation and dysfunction (Mees 2010): witness Parliamentary Inquiry, not to mention considerable efficiency deficits. In a survey of 22 European cities Van Egmond et al (2003, p. 246) found the evidence strongly weighted in favour of "an empowered and integrating public transport authority covering the complete public transport context of the conurbation".

Auckland is one of the most car dependent major cities in the Anglophone world, with a mode share for work travel of 6 per cent almost as low as Los Angeles' 5 per cent (Mees 2010). Auckland's public transport achieves an overall public transport mode share of just 3.4 per cent of travellers in 2007 (ARTA 2009), less than half the 7 percent found in Brisbane (DTMR 2010). On an annual basis Aucklanders make just 41 public transport trips whereas those in Perth take 63 trips and Brisbane residents eighty nine (ARTA 2009, p. 11). Despite a public transport share of motorised travel of 290 trips annually per capita in the 1950s Auckland turned away from this mode and adopted one of the most radical pro-automobile approaches to metropolitan transport planning found anywhere outside North America (Mees and Dodson 2002). This radical shift continues to influence the development of the city and risks being perpetuated unless new governance arrangements can reset the city's path (Mees and Dodson 2002; Harris 2005). Transport planning in Auckland has remained automobile-dominated in part because the policies that the region's planners have pursued have remained

similarly dominated by support for the automobile relative to public transport. The region now possesses a dysfunctional transport system in which a hypertrophic motorway network struggles to cope with daily traffic volumes while a stunted regional rail network conveys low (but increasing) passenger volumes on underdeveloped infrastructure. One of the greatest difficulties faced by the new Auckland Council is improving the functional efficiency of the regional transport system. Another is the difficulty of maintaining (even increasing) demand in the face of capacity and equipment constraints (witness the opening games of the 2011 Rugby World Cup matches in Auckland). Improvements to transport are thus a partial test of the new governance arrangements.

The historical development and institutional weaknesses of Auckland's transport planning have been studied in some detail over the past decade. Governance has been a frequent theme within this narrative of the historical production of Auckland's poor transport situation is in part due to problems of governance. Some of the institutional problems have been internal to the region and its territorial authorities but the relationship between Auckland's regional governance structure and the national government's transport framework has been as equally significant, if not more so. Three governance factors have been critical and are central to overcoming automobile dependence in Auckland. The first was the policy decision in the 1950s to favour motorway construction over railway development as the means of supporting suburban growth (Harris 2005), in contrast to the capital Wellington, where rail had earlier found favour. This policy of favouring urban motorways over rail was one of the earliest found in a non-US city anywhere in the world at the time and was the result of a biasing of the institutional processes which produced it (Mees 2010). By effecting a massive and early shift to automobiles for travel in Auckland this policy switch ensured that public transport would remain under-resourced for the subsequent five decades.

The second factor was the institutional frameworks for managing transport in Auckland which from the early-1950s were divided between three institutions. Auckland City Council operated the trams and after 1956 buses. The New Zealand Railways operated suburban rail (with diesel rolling stock) while the National Roads Board operated the state highways and from the late 1950s Auckland's motorways. This fragmentation has largely persisted until the present albeit with the creation in the mid-2000s of an Auckland Regional Transport Agency (ARTA) which had overall responsibility for the public transport network, albeit weaker powers than a European VBB. As a result achieving coordination of timetables and ticketing among the various private bus and ferry operators and the rail agency has been difficult. The final factor is the problem of financing of the Auckland transport system, especially the planning and development of infrastructure including overcoming past infrastructure deficits. Historically Auckland's regional agencies have lacked the funding base necessary to support large-scale long-term infrastructure development and have had to rely on central government for finance. Central government has broad and very strong revenue powers which in transport are exercised via a national fuel excise and hypothecated into a dedicated transport fund. This arrangement derives from the establishment of the National Roads Board in 1953 to fund New Zealand's highway development, modelled on the US National Highways Trust Roads Board funds were made available for motorway development and funded much of the Auckland motorway network. This model has been through a number of iterations following central government institutional reforms since the late-1980s but still persists in the form of the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA). While the post-1980s successors of the roads board have been allowed to fund public transport the lack of a central government public transport operator after the privatisation of the national railways in 1993 meant there was little internal central government pressure for public transport investment. As a result most of the NZTA funds have been and continue to be spent on roads, including ongoing expansion of the Auckland motorway network. While new plans for public transport have been advanced by the previous and current regional bodies they are almost entirely dependent on central government funding. Thus while Auckland governments (ARTA 2010) and – on available evidence (Mees and Dodson 2007) – the public, have tended to prefer public transport investment the response from central government has been to persist with motorway construction.

The changes to Auckland's governance included a strong transport component. Most of the transport planning and management responsibilities of the previous ARTA and the ARC's Regional Transport Committee have been included in a new 'Council Controlled Organisation' (CCO) Auckland Transport. The agency's functions (Auckland Transport 2011) include:

- Designing, building and maintaining Auckland's roads, ferry wharves, cycle- and walk-ways.
- Co-ordinating road safety and community transport initiatives such as school travel
- Planning and funding bus, train and ferry services across Auckland.

The agency is not however responsible for Auckland's state highways and motorways with that role remaining with the NZTA. And under the Auckland Transport the arrangement of service delivery by non-Council operators for the buses, ferries and rail services have been maintained. Although it was initiated prior to the governance changes one improvement to the capacity of the regional public transport planning agency to plan and manage its network has been provided via the Public Transport Management Act (2008). This Act replaced the previous Transport Services Licensing Act which had limited the degree to which a planning agency could specify service design and quality. The new Act allows the transport planning agency to require public transport services including routes, timetabling and capacity characteristics thus improving the potential for integrated public transport network planning on the VVB model. The model now operating in Auckland resembles that found in Brisbane or Perth with the respective *Translink* and *TransPerth* agencies, than a European style VVB agency.

Even with this strengthened capacity Auckland Transport nonetheless faces ongoing structural problems with the planning and financing of the region's transport network. The continuing central institutional retention of state highway and motorways planning and financing power perpetuates the potential for continuing bias of infrastructure investment in roads. This problem is now manifest at the political level as the Auckland Council which was elected on a firm pro-public transport platform advocates for priority public transport infrastructure -- including a central city rail loop and an airport spur line -- while the national Minister for Transport proposes a new round of motorway extensions. This structural mismatch between local democratic expectation and national government prerogative has beset Auckland's transport planning since the 1950s. It is unlikely that the challenges of planning for Auckland can be achieved without resolving this structural tension.

## CONCLUSION

There is a marked rush to statutory and institutional reform to expedite public infrastructure through super-sizing governance. At one year in, the potential for this new local government arrangement is still being played out. The paper explores how Auckland's governance rescaling has occurred with much fanfare and radical reform; yet it proceeds without sufficient transformation regarding political and democratic change or ongoing analysis about successive periods in the momentum of spatial planning. In asking whether we are driving ourselves to better planning through continuing to let transport dominate partnership and planning, we must boldly address the conundrums of climate changing city design and development on several fronts. This sets up a call for further work, for example, into evaluating super-city governance, structural tensions of democracy and economic development, and institutional learning about intergovernmental relations and the community interface. A rich agenda to negotiate the fragmented and partial accounting of spatial planning in theory and practice should be central to our task consciousness regarding our right to the city and to intervene successfully (Harvey 2008). The challenge we undertook here was to take a broad spectrum view of critical features comprising the reshuffle of urban governance and evolving mechanisms, paradigms, and theory of spatial planning. We addressed key harbingers of that momentum in terms of adding practical and theoretical insights for Auckland, Australasian, and Asian-Pacific cities and urban governance.

At least five key conclusions are put forward. Firstly, the question of institutional learning (and loss) arising from the reshuffling and rescaling of local government in Auckland Council needs political attention now. Secondly, transport is both the weakness and salvation in reconsidering this political project in light of pressing climate and economic crises. Thirdly, Auckland provides a sophisticated case for developing and testing evaluative criteria for super-city spatial planning with comparative value for similar cities like Brisbane and for dissimilar cities, such as the other cities in New Zealand and overseas. Fourthly, in terms of political and democratic accountability, the political space for improving relations and the working interface between central and local governments and intra-government within the new Auckland Council is overdue. Moreover, this political space for encounter and knowledge interface lays a basis for recasting relations with private and civic sector. As a cumulative consequence of the prior conclusions, metropolitan spatial planning must challenge the culture of engagement and trust regarding the too-familiar culture of top-down management of population growth, economics and transport to achieve competitive cities and community wellbeing thus far. Finally, then, the paper concludes the political and place-making priorities must usefully interject urban design with infrastructure through community infrastructure provision and wellbeing. Thus, as judicious urban governors we must jointly reconfigure spatial planning by persistently

interrogating the technical and political approaches to the meaning and service of (super)cities and community now and ahead.

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