

REINVENTING PLANNING EDUCATION

Carolyn Whitzman, University of Melbourne

In this paper, I will be providing several reflections on planning education, within Australia and internationally. I will be using as a starting point the recent development of a postgraduate-only professional education model at the University of Melbourne, known colloquially as the 'Melbourne Model'. I will provide my own personal views on whether spatial planning¹ should be an undergraduate or postgraduate course, or a mixture of the two. I will then discuss the current international discourse on "reinventing planning" and how this new global discourse might affect planning education in Australia. I will conclude by providing my opinion on how best to manage the tensions between "staffing the profession" and "changing the profession" of planning in Australia.

Pressure: Planning as a Changing Profession

Internationally, the past forty years have seen a move from 'modernity' to 'post-modernity,' from a supposed era of certainty and rationality to a current era of multiple perspectives and uncertainty about the future, within the profession of planning and throughout society (Beauregard 1989, Sandercock, 1998). This transformation has been fraught with conflict over the role of spatial planners. Are planners supposed to be impartial and 'rational' experts, responsible for providing guidance to governmental or private sector decision-makers, flexible public (or private) sector servants rather than agents or advocates (Wildavsky 1973; Sorenson and Auster 1999)? Or does planning have a central principle – "that healthy places nurture healthy people, and that public policies should aim at sustaining both healthy people and healthy places" (Lucy 1994, p.305) – and should spatial planners aim at transforming society according to this central principle (Davidoff 1964; Lucy, 1994; Sandercock 1998)?

These debates are hardly unique to spatial planning, but take place within the larger challenges facing all scales of governance: neighbourhoods, suburbs, cities, regions, countries and the world. Environmental sustainability and remediation have become imperatives, due to the almost universally acknowledged reality of human-induced global climate change. Similarly, it is impossible to ignore the fact that over half of the world's population now lives in cities, that about one in six urban households live

¹ Spatial planning is now the preferred term, in Europe and increasingly throughout the world, over 'town' or 'urban' planning, as it encompasses both urban, rural, and regional planning, while maintaining a distinction from some other common uses of the term 'planning' such as 'business' or 'event' planning. In this article, I will be using 'spatial planning' and 'planning' interchangeably, and considering it inclusive not only of land use planning, but of specializations such as social, cultural, transport, environmental and economic planning.

in unsafe and inadequate slums, the majority are women-headed households, and that socio-spatial disparities are increasing rapidly within Australian cities and around the world.

There are two possible reactions to these indisputable facts. The Global Planners Network (GPN) created a declaration in 2006 that called for “Reinventing Planning” to address Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty and inequalities, creating environmentally-friendly cities, promoting local and global citizenship, and reducing vulnerability to the natural disasters that appear inevitable in the coming century (GPN 2006). Another reaction – common to both left and right in Australia and internationally – is to assume that spatial planners can do very little within the constraints of their profession to improve societal outcomes (Gunder and Fookes 1997). Fifteen years ago, Brian McLoughlin (1994), the former Professor of Urban Planning at the University of Melbourne, argued that teaching and professional accreditation for most planners was a matter best left to vocational colleges, while universities should focus on critical political economy or urban policy studies. Gunder and Fookes (1997p.135) describe several government initiatives in the 1990s that have seen planning as a mechanism “to protect property rights through control of externalities and avoidance of market failures”. According to them, “this materialist emphasis has begun to be reflected in planning education with an increased focus on the teaching of quantitative skills needed to implement market-based legislation”.

More recently, the Development Assessment Forum, an Australian organization made up of representatives of Commonwealth, State, and local governments, the development industry, and professional organizations such as the Planning Institute of Australia, has spent the past dozen years devoted to streamlining development assessment across the country in order to improve business outcomes. In this second vision, planners are rules-focused technocrats whose sole purpose is to make fast micro-level decisions. According to this world-view, the reduction of socio-economic inequalities, mitigating environmental footprints, and promoting active citizenship are outcomes that are better addressed through taxation and more formal political mechanisms (Sorenson and Auster 1999).

It is thus impossible to address the education of planners without addressing the present and future role of planning as a profession. If the “education and training of planning professionals is central to achieving sustainable urban, regional, and national outcomes” (Gurran et al 2008, p.11), then an understanding of the term ‘sustainability’ and how planners can affect sustainability outcomes at various scales would be the key component of planning. If the main purpose of spatial planning is to achieve better decisions faster (a goal not necessarily incompatible with good

sustainability outcomes, so long as there is a strong normative framework underlying those decisions), then an understanding of how to carry out both strategic planning and development approval processes most efficiently as well as effectively would be necessary, as contended by the Development Assessment Forum (Morris Consultants 2001).

One Response: Planning Education as a Postgraduate Course

According to the *National Enquiry into Planning Education and Employment*, almost half of the 5400 practicing planners in Australia counted in the 2001 census held undergraduate qualifications, with a further 25% holding graduate or postgraduate qualifications (Planning Institute of Australia, 2004, p. 8). The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) Planning Education Discussion Paper (Gurran et al, 2008,p.27) provides information on 16 universities providing accredited courses in Australia², nine of which offer both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Only four universities – all in New South Wales – offer masters-only education, although as discussed below, the University of Melbourne has recently joined this number.

In English-language developed countries, there has been a fairly sharp divide in the past between Canada and the US on the one hand, and Australia, the UK, Ireland and New Zealand on the other hand. In Canada, 10 of the 17 accredited universities offer two year postgraduate courses only (CIP 2008). The situation is even more extreme in the United States, where 55 of 68 accredited universities offer two year postgraduate courses only (Planning Accreditation Board 2008). In contrast, in the UK and Ireland (both served by the Royal Town Planning Institute), 18 of 24 accredited universities offer both undergraduate and postgraduate courses (Royal Town Planning Institute [RTPI] 2008), and in New Zealand, three of the five accredited universities offer both (NZPI 2008).

However, the United Kingdom and Ireland are moving towards a postgraduate norm, with the RTPI Education Commission Report recommending “the educational benchmark for qualification for full membership of the RTPI should be a Masters level qualification” (RTPI 2003,p.38). This is in line with the Bologna Accord, signed by the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries in 1999. The Bologna model of education suggested a three year undergraduate course followed by a two year master’s course, with the master’s course being the minimum qualification for a profession. European schools of planning are slowly moving towards transferability of professional accreditation, with the Bologna model as a basis (AESOP, 2008). However, the majority of UK courses require only a year of postgraduate study,

² Five in New South Wales, four in Queensland, three in Victoria, two in Western Australia, one each in South Australia and Tasmania. This number is expected to expand to at least 20 by the end of 2009.

usually preceded by a three year undergraduate course in planning or a related field, and succeeded by two years of structured work experience that requires further professional development and the assignment of a mentor (RTPI, 2003).

At the University of Melbourne, a new model based on the Bologna Accord was introduced by the incoming Vice-Chancellor, Glyn Davis, in 2007-2008. More than 90 undergraduate courses, including professional qualifications in law, medicine, architecture and urban planning, have been eliminated, and six generalist undergraduate courses have been introduced in their stead. The Bachelor of Environments, which involves teaching staff from the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, but also academics from Land and Food Resources, Geography and Environmental Studies, and Civil Engineering, is intended to

“[replicate] the interdisciplinary nature of real-world projects, where built and natural environment professionals work together to bring projects to fruition. Only through innovative and integrated thinking, that will be an integral part of the Bachelor of Environments, will the solutions to current issues like sustainable urban growth and the protection of threatened natural resources become attainable within your generation” (University of Melbourne 2008).

This course articulates into over a dozen professional postgraduate courses, including Geomatics, Environmental Engineering, Landscape Management, Architecture and Urban Planning. The last intake of approximately 45 undergraduate students into the four-year Bachelor of Urban Planning and Development course was in 2007, and the new Bachelor of Environments commenced in 2008. Commonwealth Supported Places have been transferred to the two-year Master of Urban Planning course, which presently has an intake of approximately 35 students per year.

As the Bachelor of Environments is only in its first year, it is too early to provide an evaluation of the quality of the course. Certainly, demand from undergraduates is high. A record number of applications were received for Melbourne’s undergraduate courses in 2008 (Bachelard 2008) and the Bachelor of Environments in particular has had a much higher than expected intake of over 550 students. The first year subject Urban Environments also attracted almost 500 students, despite being an elective rather than a core subject. This suggests that there is a high student interest in a generalist undergraduate education with an urban environmentalist focus, especially if the course is offered from a prestigious university such as Melbourne.

There has been a strong interest in the 'Melbourne Model,' within Australia and internationally. The recent Planning Education Discussion Paper produced for the Planning Institute's National Education Committee notes that other Australian universities are closely watching Melbourne's implementation (Gurran et al 2008, p. 14), and that there are now more postgraduate planning courses than undergraduate, a significant change since the last review in 2002 (ibid, p.28). The University of Western Australia has also recently announced its move towards the Melbourne Model (Dann 2008). The Australian Qualifications Framework has threatened to clamp down on universities offering one year masters programs, or masters degrees after less than five years of combined undergraduate and postgraduate study (Moodie 2008). *The Times Higher Education* supplement has also announced that several British and Irish universities, including Aberdeen and Dublin, are also undertaking educational overhauls based on the Melbourne Model (Fearn 2007).

Why has there been a move towards postgraduate planning education as a norm in Europe, and why has there been such interest in Australia in this model? There are at least two good reasons and two bad reasons, in my opinion. First, and as discussed above, planning is operating in a much more complex and challenging context than it used to. In regards to the debate discussed in the first section, no longer can planners be seen as "technocratic 'state bureaucrats'" with a limited role (RTPI 2003, p.13). Instead, planners are increasingly expected to use critical thinking skills, facilitate deliberative processes, work within and with the private and non-profit sectors as well as government, and develop management skills appropriate to securing specific outcomes (ibid, p.24). These are higher level skills than were previously required, and require a certain level of maturity and life skills more likely to be seen in older students. Second, people these days do not lock into a lifelong career straight out of secondary school. Mid-life career changes are becoming more common. At the University of Melbourne, our Masters of Urban Planning students come from a diversity of backgrounds and previous degrees. Not only does this diversity assist the development of specializations, such as urban design, community economic development in regeneration areas, and transport planning, which are becoming increasingly important within planning (AESOP 2007, p.9; RTPI 2003, p.29), but it also mirrors the diversity of backgrounds and opinions within the broader public. This diversity of knowledge and skills may well strengthen the interdisciplinarity and broad outlook demanded of a new generation of planners.

Now to what, in my opinion, are the bad reasons for a move towards postgraduate qualifications in planning. There is no doubt that Australian universities, like universities around the world, are receiving less government revenue per capita for both teaching and research, and that adding on years for professional qualifications

will assist them in getting more student revenue (Dann 2008). While full-fee places for Australian undergraduate students are being phased out by the current Commonwealth government, they are still allowed for postgraduate and International students. This issue of affordable access, as well as extra time cost, to gaining postgraduate professional qualifications has been raised by both the recent UK review (RTPI 2003, p.15) and by the implementation plan for the Melbourne Model (University of Melbourne, 2006, p.16). Although the blow to students' pocketbooks and debt ratios is somewhat modified by new Commonwealth Supported Spaces in the University of Melbourne's postgraduate course,³ this shift to postgraduate professional qualifications can only be justified, in my opinion, if the enhanced qualification allows the students to access better employment prospects, better 'status' within the profession, and ultimately, an enhanced role and better reputation for the profession.

The fourth and perhaps worst reason to pursue postgraduate qualifications as the baseline for an accredited planning course is 'boundary control', trying to ensure an enhanced reputation for spatial planners by enforcing a higher entry requirement. There is a stark difference between, on the one hand, the role of national and international planning associations trying to lift the reputation of their profession through the enforcement of a standard basic curriculum for planning education, positive publicity to the general public, advocacy within the government and the private sector, and maintenance of continuing professional development standards, and, on the other hand, imposing an additional qualification such as the 'Certified Planning Practitioner' (CPP) courses recently introduced by the Planning Institute of Australia on top of possession of an accredited planning qualification. The CPP articulates into a Masters of Business Administration, and thus undermines accredited postgraduate planning courses, in the supposed pursuit of higher status for Planning Institute members (and, not incidentally, higher revenue for PIA itself). If certification is necessary for planners to have the same enhanced reputation as accountants, then this might better be accomplished by a "quality assurance test" for membership in PIA⁴, or better enforcement of continuing education requirements for existing members. If the skills in the five CPP courses - project management, planning ethics, communication and negotiation, economics, and governance and legislation - are necessary for planners to thrive in the current job market, then it would be better to ensure they are part of all accredited planning courses.

³ That is, government-subsidized fees of approximately \$7,000 per annum for a full time student, as opposed to about \$24,000 for international student fees; the fees are usually carried as interest-free debt during the course of study. Many postgraduate courses in Australia offer Commonwealth Supported Places.

⁴ The Canadian Institute of Planners has both a written and oral examination as part of its membership process.

In short, I am arguing that a postgraduate qualification for planning, similar to those changes recently introduced in the UK, might make sense for a number of reasons. These reasons would include alignment with other professional education courses internationally leading to transferability of planning accreditation, the need for a better educated cohort of planners to deal with a more complex set of issues, and the notion that students straight out of secondary school might not be ready to make an informed career choice. But instituting postgraduate courses as a norm for planning education is certainly no guarantee that planners are getting the education they need to operate – or effect positive change - in a rapidly changing world.

A Second Response: The Internationalization of the Planning Curriculum

The origins of planning were internationalist in nature (Hall 1998), although the argument has been made that the development of Australian cities – and as an extension, the development of the Australian planning profession – has been substantially different from other English-speaking high income countries for much of the 20th century (e.g., Gleeson and Low 2000, pp.21-34). Today, planners, like other people, are migrating to other countries in increasing numbers. Of the approximately 4,500 members of PIA, 250 are members of the Overseas Division, made up of planners living and working overseas, and many others have simply become members of planning organizations in their countries of migration⁵. The Planning Institute of Australia has formal reciprocal accreditation agreements with the New Zealand Planning Institute and the Canadian Institute of Planners, and is in discussion with the Royal Town Planning Institute and the American Institute of Certified Planners about reciprocity (personal email communication with Belinda Campbell, Chief Operating Officer, PIA, 24 November 2008). However, in the past this issue has been discussed primarily as an export of Australian ‘product’, with the common perception that the UK planning system in particular would collapse without a regular influx of expatriate Australian planners (Olcayto 2008). The increasing role of planners from overseas within Australia has received less attention. There is no accurate statistical information on the number of planners working in Australia who obtained their qualifications elsewhere⁶. Approximately 40% of the postgraduate planning course at the University of Melbourne is made up of international students, mostly from East and South Asia, and many choose to practice in Australia upon graduation, rather than return to their countries of origin. This is not unusual for the University of Melbourne (University of Melbourne, 2005: 19), nor for Australia as a whole, where 22% of students are from overseas, and

⁵ This number also includes planners living and working in Hong Kong, who for historic reasons have not been aligned with the Chinese professional planners’ organization (private email correspondence with Belinda Campbell, Chief Operating Officer of the Planning Institute of Australia, 24 November 2008).

⁶ There may be more information next year, when the PIA database is updated (private email correspondence with Belinda Campbell, Chief Operating Officer of the Planning Institute of Australia, 24 November 2008).

Melbourne and Sydney have the fourth and fifth largest international student populations in the world⁷ (O'Connor 2005). However, the proportion of international students undertaking planning courses appears to be lagging behind the national trend. Despite a national shortage of planners, overseas students were not estimated to be a large proportion of planning students in 2004 (PIA 2004, p.19), and the issue of international students – or indeed addressing increasing multiculturalism of Australian students - was not substantively addressed in the 2008 Planning Education Discussion Paper prepared for PIA⁸ (Gurran et al 2008).

Internationally, the return to a global perspective on planning has been notable in recent years. The Commonwealth Association of Planners was created in 1970, but has become much more active in recent years, with its 28 members (including Australia) drawn mostly from former British colonies in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific (CAP 2008). Activists in the Commonwealth Association of Planners from the UK, South Africa, and Australia helped create the Global Planners Network in 2005, in the lead up to the Third World Urban Forum in Vancouver in 2006. A World Planning Congress was convened immediately prior to the Forum, and the Vancouver Declaration described in the first section was developed. Since then, the Declaration has been signed by 25 organizations, including the American Planning Association, that together represent more than 150,000 practicing planners (GPN 2008a). Within planning education, a Global Planning Education Association Network, consisting of planning school associations from Australia and New Zealand, Africa, Latin America, Europe, the US and Canada, Asia, and APERAU (the Francophone countries), was formed in 2001 after a Congress hosted by Tongji University in Shanghai, and there has been another World Planning Schools Congress in Mexico in 2006, with a third planned for 2011 (GPEAN 2008).

The PIA discussion paper (Gurran et al 2008, p.18) does mention “a growing internationalization of planning curricula, with prominent courses including subject areas on international planning, globalization, or an international field work component”. “However”, the paper goes on to say, “there is also an emerging concern about a perceived United States and United Kingdom hegemony of planning educational approaches”. What then, would an internationalized curriculum look like in Australia, and how would it be different?

Two recent classic texts on planning education are by American John Friedmann (1996), which was expanded upon by Australian planning theorist Leonie

⁷ Only New York, London, and Los Angeles have larger international student populations.

⁸ For example, in the section on Access and Equity (Gurran et al 2008: 44), gender balance and “the under-representation of students from Indigenous, disabled, regional and low social economic status backgrounds” is mentioned, but there is no mention of the needs of either international students or of Australian students from a non-European or non-English speaking background.

Sandercock, in her appendix to *Towards Cosmopolis* (1998). According to Friedmann, planning education should include grounding in six macro-social processes, including urbanization (how and why people move to cities), regional and interregional economic growth and change processes, city-building processes (the development and redevelopment of urban landscapes from public housing to docklands), cultural differentiation and change, the transformation of nature, and urban politics and empowerment of citizens. Sandercock, building on that framework, suggests that planning education should focus on the development of five literacies, to which she applies the acronym TAMED. The first, Technical literacy, includes the statistical analysis of demographic and economic information, GIS, report writing, and the ability to review plans in light of planning legislation. The second set of skills, Analytic, means the ability to critically think and engage with the historical, cultural, and institutional forces that create and re-create cities as a way to work out meaningful change. The third literacy she calls Multicultural, the accommodation of different histories, cultures, and needs within a common *polis*. In the fourth skill, Ecological, Sandercock uses the work of Australian social planner Wendy Sarkissian (2008), who argues that traditional planning ethics need to be transformed to include an ethic of care for nature, which would in turn require building skills in teamwork, experiencing nature directly, and an engagement in community struggles for social and environmental struggles for justice. Finally, Sandercock argues that the fifth aspect of planning literacy encompasses Design, and that rather than the American emphasis on planning as a social science, planning needs to explicitly address the quality of the built environment as well as the social and political environment. The three aspects of design literacy are: ability to 'read' what works and does not in a given environment; ability to read designs and imagine their impacts in three dimensional space; the ability to engage in site planning as part of a design team; and a "more general wisdom" about the desires, memories, and spirit within any city (Sandercock, 1998: 225-229). While this is an internationalist or global view of planning education, it is largely based on the work of planners who have practiced and taught in Australia. And while it picks up on McLoughlin's viewpoint that the role of universities is to instill an understanding of the political and economic backdrop to planning decisions, it does not see planning as "a zombie institution", as Ulrich Beck has called bureaucratic creatures "who have been dead for a long time but refuse to die" (quoted in Gleeson 2003, p.769). Rather, the current social, environmental and political challenges become an opportunity for planning to reinvent itself.

The PIA discussion paper includes notes from a National Young Planners' Group workshop on planning education held in November 2006. This workshop concluded that there must be a balance between theory and practice, between academic lectures and feedback from industry practitioners, and furthermore, that a

university-monitored work placement component be compulsory. The mandatory fields of study they discussed included social theory; planning history; planning law; sustainability; project management; strategic planning for social, economic, environmental, and infrastructure outcomes; assessing development proposals; urban design; environmental legislation; community consultation; hazard and risk planning; and research methods (Gurran et al 2008, p.21). Certainly the kind of education these students and recent graduates discuss is not so different from the one suggested by Friedmann, Sandercock and Sarkissian, although the younger planners appear to place a greater emphasis on job-ready skills, and the older planners on critical theory. Both groups call for practice-based skills informed by the ability to understand and analyze political forces behind decisions, and the ability to work towards environmental and social change by engaging with citizens.

A survey carried out by the Global Planners Network in 2008 of 1,250 planners in 103 countries identifies a nascent international evolution in planning organizations towards greater equity and transparency, values that are becoming more accepted in most countries. Planners in this poll said they want to become more holistic and interdisciplinary, but that these ambitions are often frustrated by lack of political will. The four themes that emerged about the role of planners and the aim of planning include enhancing the quality of life in human settlements; balancing adequate infrastructure and sustainable development; living in greater harmony with the earth, through pollution control and disaster resilience planning; and engagement and inclusion with citizens. While the survey did not explicitly address planning education, there is certainly a clear message about improving the ability to seek changes and engage communities within planning and political systems, in order to carry out clear social and environmental outcomes (GPN 2008b).

Finally, recent work by AESOP on a common curriculum for planning education across Europe emphasizes multidisciplinary in teaching; the creation of “spatial quality and sustainable territories” as a mission, and planning as both an art and science, calling for training in both basic skills and creative problem-solving (AESOP 2008, p.4).

I thus argue that there is an emerging Australian consensus, mirroring an international consensus, on the role of planning as well as the role that planning education might play in developing the next generation of planners. I do not want to overestimate the extent of this consensus - there are certainly strong voices within Australia (both in and out of planning) who contend that planning is irrelevant, planning exists to serve orderly development of property, and/or that Australian planning is – or should be - different from planning in the rest of the world. But it does seem to me that the particularist approach that has been a hallmark of some

Australian planning writers such as Brendan Gleeson, Patrick Troy and Hugh Stretton, is well past its 'best by' date, and that the global nature of problems facing human settlements demands a global response from planners.

Conclusion: 'Staffing the Profession or Changing the Profession?'⁹

I realize that this short article may appear as though I am in opposition to certain policies of the Planning Institute of Australia or its National Education Committee, of whom I am a member. The fact is that I agree with the vast majority of the content of the discussion paper produced at the beginning of this year, and think the National Education Committee, and PIA itself, are undertaking an excellent and necessary process of leading discussion on the next steps for planning education in Australia. The discussion paper does not make recommendations as much as set up items for further discussion. I have focused on two of these questions in this article:

- "What are the implications of a shift towards the Bologna model for the delivery of planning education in Australia? Is it important to distinguish between broader undergraduate education and more specialist postgraduate education?"
- Does planning education in Australia, particularly tertiary and continuing professional development programs, need to equip planners for international practice in the context of globalisation? How should this be done?" (Gurran et al 2008, p. 5)

With regard to the first question, as it may be clear from this article, I am a strong believer that Australian planning education should move towards an accredited Masters' course as the minimum qualification, both to keep Australian planners in line with what is becoming the norm in Europe and North America, and to encourage a more diverse and analytic group of future planners. Our Masters of Urban Planning program has accepted, in the past two years alone, graduates of Engineering, History, Geography, Architecture, Music, Science and Horticulture courses. Our international students have come from China and India, but also from Iran, Chile, Croatia, Canada, and half a dozen other countries. All appear to have learned to varying degrees, in their undergraduate courses, basic analytic, communication, and aesthetic appreciation skills that are easily transferable to the study of cities and regions and how to improve them through spatial planning. Not only does the Bologna model make sense to me, I think it brings enormous opportunities in terms of increasing the interdisciplinary and multicultural backgrounds of the next generation of planners.

⁹ I don't know whether the phrase originated with him, but I first heard this phrase from Lawrence Vale, head of the Planning Program at MIT.

There is, however, the reality of a shortage of planners in Australia that was estimated as between 13 and 19 per cent in 2004 (PIA 2004, p.14), and has probably increased since then. In reaction, the number of universities offering accredited and non-accredited planning courses, has almost doubled in the past four years. In Victoria, there is a new 18 month TAFE course offered by Swinburne University (and subsidized by the state Department of Planning and Community Development) that has just graduated its first cohort of planning technicians, and there is also a two year Masters of Planning course offered by Deakin University without an accredited planner on the academic staff. Neither course is eligible for PIA accreditation, but there is no doubt that the graduates will find employment.

What can PIA do in these circumstances? I suppose the first imperative would be to focus on the value of an accredited course, by undertaking research on the career paths of students who have graduated from these courses five or ten years ago, as opposed to a control group who have taken other paths to a planning profession. It is quite possible that those who did not take an accredited course have risen higher in their government, consultancy, or developer jobs, have worked in a wider variety of international settings, and are more satisfied with their work situations. I certainly hope the obverse is true, that undertaking an accredited course has assisted students in gaining valuable skills, perspectives, and professional contacts. It would be useful to have that evidence in hand when promoting accreditation, and promoting PIA.

The second imperative, of course, would be to balance the tremendous hunger of local and state governments, the private sector (consultancies and developers), and a growing number of non-profit organizations, for job-ready applicants, with a mission to transform the profession. It is quite possible that in Australia, the profession of planning in the future will formally split between technicians processing routine applications for zoning amendments or single dwellings, and genuine strategic planners, who both develop strategies and work on their implementation. In some ways, that would be a positive development: a set of clear rules governing simple applications that could be undertaken by development control officers would free up time for planners to both develop strategies and negotiate around more complex planning applications regarding, for instance, redevelopment of areas around rapid transit stations. I have written elsewhere about this issue (Whitzman 2004), but suffice it to say that both developing and implementing plans is the norm for many social, environmental, and economic planners, and it is an idea that might well be considered by what are presently known as 'statutory' and 'strategic' planners in Australia.

With regard to the second question raised by the PIA discussion paper, I would agree that Australian planning education courses need to equip planners for international practice as well as local practice in the context of global issues like climate change, urbanization and international migration. I would argue that there is an emerging global consensus being developed through new global networks of planners and planning educators, who largely agree on three imperatives for human settlements in the 21st century: environmental sustainability, including migration of climate change-influenced hazards; reduction of gross inequalities of health, income, and opportunity; and the development of local and global active citizenship and involvement in decision-making processes. Planning must re-invent itself, not only for the profession to remain relevant, but because spatial planning matters. Planning education must also re-invent itself, to train a new generation of professionals who can influence decisions on which rest nothing less than the fate of the earth.

This article reflects the author's personal views, and is not intended to reflect the views of either the University of Melbourne, or the Planning Institute of Australia.

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