

**The tensions between state control and local
autonomy: can collaborative planning practice align
local with regional strategic planning outcomes?**

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under the supervision of Professor Heather MacDonald and
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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, **Neil Frederick Selmon** declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (C02001), in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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Abstract

This research explores the factors that facilitate or impede local strategic planning outcomes making their way up to, and having influence on, regional strategic plans. In particular the research investigates how collaborative planning practice can contribute to reaching agreements about alignment of local and regional strategic planning outcomes.

Case studies of practice in preparing and aligning local and regional plans in two comparable city-regions, Vancouver BC Canada and Sydney NSW Australia, provide empirical evidence to fill an identified gap in theoretical and practical understanding of the shifting variables that have made different configurations of collaboration and governance work well or not, in different places at different times.

A set of anticipated explanatory factors is developed, the manifestation of which, in different configurations in the two case study cities, may explain how local strategic planning outcomes have made their way up to, and had influence on, regional strategic planning outcomes, or not. A thematic, interpretive analysis of documentary and interview data is undertaken against these factors, and the findings from the case study cities compared. This approach provides situated and contextualised explanations of practice to answer three key questions:

1. Why is it important to ensure local strategic concerns are reflected in regional strategies?
2. What factors facilitate or impede local strategic concerns being aligned with regional strategies?
3. Under what circumstances can collaborative planning practice align local strategic planning outcomes with regional strategic planning outcomes?

This is exploratory, comparative case study research about planning practice in the case study cities. It does not seek to adjust the theoretical framework, rather analyses the case study data to identify areas where practice indicates theory may need more grounding, where claims made for collaborative planning are less well grounded, and where claims are more solidly reflected in practice.

In the context of ongoing neoliberal planning system reform, the research provides useful comparison of two jurisdictions facing similar planning problems, and addressing them through similar planning legislation, producing similar planning documents. They occupy similar political-economic positions and have experienced similar growth (and growth tensions) as they have each consolidated their position as second-ranked global centres on the Pacific Rim. Nevertheless, significant differences emerge in their approaches to planning for similar challenges, and these are reflected in the different roles for and manifestation of collaborative planning processes.

This comparison identifies approaches that might strengthen the consonance between local and regional strategic planning, providing opportunities for governments and institutions to combine some measure of local democracy and autonomy with coherent and deliverable metropolitan and regional planning frameworks. Areas of further research to enrich our understanding of the circumstances under which collaborative planning practice can be effective in aligning local with regional strategic planning outcomes are suggested.