

## Conceptualising 'integration' in policy and practice: A case study of integrated planning in Melbourne

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**Abstract:** Integrated planning is an elusive ideal: it is difficult to define and even harder to implement. Nevertheless, it is used to frame planning endeavours across Australia and internationally. Broadly, integrated planning aims to define coherent planning goals and deliver joint strategies between different sectors and actors in specific spatial contexts. To achieve this, inter-sectoral governance processes are used to support partnerships and collaboration.

This paper contributes to strengthening the understanding of integrated planning by drawing on research conducted in Melbourne, Australia. Specifically, it uncovers contemporary drivers, meanings and mechanisms of 'integrated planning' in Melbourne, Australia. Empirical evidence was gathered through content analysis of federal, state and local government policy documents between the mid-1990s and 2015. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were also conducted with policymakers and planners from Victorian Government agencies, local government and non-government organisations.

The paper offers a framework for conceptualising and evaluating integrated planning approaches based on four key categories: spatial; vertical organisational; horizontal organisational and holistic. Overall, the research findings indicate strong awareness and intent to apply spatial, organisational and holistic integration in strategic planning in Melbourne. Operationalisation occurs to varying degrees, though often not to the extent intended. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of institutional learning through building on past experiences to improve contemporary integrated planning practices. Preliminary research findings point to some challenges for integrated planning in Melbourne and the need for further research into some still unclear mechanisms of this phenomenon.

### Introduction

From Perth to San Francisco, 'integrated planning' is used to describe spatial planning efforts that emphasise collaboration to achieve policy ends. Integrated planning is a concept that has long been promoted by urban planners and scholars. In 1969, Ozbekhan (1969, p.153) suggested that a plan itself was "an integrative hierarchically organized action in which various kinds of decisions are functionally ordered", while in 1994 Mintzberg (1994, p.11) advocated for a view of planning as a bounded process of "integrated decision making." Broadly, 'integrated planning' can be understood as an approach to strategic planning that 'integrates' diverse actors and organisations to address complex urban challenges. It involves the "management of cross-cutting issues that transcend the boundaries of established policy fields" (Holden, 2012, p.306) and has been pursued to tackle a wide range of challenges, including health inequalities, environmental sustainability and integrated transport and spatial planning (Holden, 2012; Kidd, 2007; Olowoporoku, 2011; Canoquena, 2013; Nilsson, 2003).

In Melbourne, Australia, there has been a growing interest in integrated planning approaches over recent decades. Metropolitan planning in Melbourne involves a wide range of state government departments and agencies, local governments, civil society groups and the private sector. It is a complex and "fragmented" governance environment (Gleeson, Dodson & Spiller, 2010) with challenges for implementing integrated planning. As a starting point, there is a wide array of interpretations regarding the aims and specific processes of integrated planning between the multiple actors involved in metropolitan planning. This paper seeks to make the concept of integrated planning less opaque by exploring contemporary meanings and mechanisms of integrated planning in Melbourne. This localised understanding of integrated planning may have broader applicability to similar contexts in Australia and other countries with federated political systems. It begins by outlining the methods employed and then presents the main characterisations of integrated planning as employed in Melbourne. The paper concludes by highlighting some challenges to advancing integrated planning.

### Methods

Utilising Melbourne as a case study, this paper combines findings from three complementary methods: a review of literature on integrated planning; analysis of federal, state and local government policy documents; and in-depth interviews with policymakers and planners.

### Literature review

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Initially, a review was undertaken of academic literature on integrated planning that explored theorisations, frameworks and approaches in various contexts. It uncovered how integrated planning is described and debated, and traced the historical development of this concept. This review was used to inform the document analysis and interview methods described below.

### **Document analysis**

Analysis was then undertaken of a sample of federal, state and local government planning policies and strategies that currently or previously influenced integrated governance and land use planning decision-making in Melbourne. The documents were drawn from the mid-1990s to 2015, and included state government legislation and strategies related to land use planning, such as the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic), the *Transport Integration Act 2010* (Vic) and *Plan Melbourne* (Government of Victoria, 2014). Historical metropolitan strategies were also analysed, including for example *Living Suburbs* (Government of Victoria, 1995) and *Melbourne 2030* (Government of Victoria, 2002). A range of historical and current federal government reports and guidelines were also analysed. These documents focused on governance reform and 'joined-up', 'cross-program' or 'whole-of-government' approaches as well as 'integration' for better practice or coordination for tackling 'wicked problems'. Local government documents analysed ranged from community and council plans and policies, to land use plans (i.e. structure plans) and program evaluations (i.e. neighbourhood renewal). The document analysis explored the changing nature of understandings of integrated governance and planning between the mid-1990s and 2015. It served to uncover definitions and explicit mechanisms of integration in policies, strategies and legislation.

### **Key informant interviews**

In-depth semi-structured interviews were also conducted. The first round of interviews by the second author was with current and former senior Victorian state government policymakers between January and June 2014. The participants included two members of parliament and 18 public servants with experience in a variety of senior roles in a broad range of state government departments and agencies. A second round of eight interviews was conducted by the first author in 2015 with public servants from both local and state government, and senior representatives of non-government organisations involved in integrated planning processes. Both rounds of interviews explored participants' familiarity with and understanding of integrated planning and their interpretation of what this concept involves in practice.

### **Results: Characterising Integrated Planning**

Strategic planning's genealogy in Melbourne highlights an interest in two main forms of integration, relating to the *spatial aspirations* of land use planning and *organisational interplay*. This section delineates these dimensions of integration and then describes how these have been combined in holistic approaches to integrated planning in some cases.

#### **Spatial Integration**

Within the spatial conceptualisation, integrated planning is defined by its specific spatial character. According to Albrechts (2006a, p.1491), the term spatial "brings into focus the 'where of things', whether static or dynamic; the creation and management of special places and sites; as well as the interrelations between different activities in an area". There are two main understandings of spatial integration in Melbourne. One contemporary principle of sound planning is to integrate symbiotic land uses, like transport hubs and higher density housing or community facilities and retail premises. Place-based planning has also emerged as an approach to addressing disadvantage in specific places (Byron, 2010).

#### **Integrated land use planning**

Approaches and concepts of integrated land use planning are varied in Melbourne. Several key planning documents encourage or require land use integration. Integrated land use and transport planning frequently features in Victorian planning policy. For example, the *Transport Act 1983* (Vic) sets out a framework to achieve "optimum overall transport outcomes by undertaking integrated transport planning and integrated transport system and service development linked to the overall planning strategies and other policies of the Government" (s.4.1c, p.18).

This objective has been echoed throughout planning policy documents since at least 1995. In this regard, a core objective of the 1995 *Living Suburbs* metropolitan strategy was to "create a more functional city by better...integrating land development with transport systems" (Government of Victoria, 1995, p.53). Its replacement, *Growing Victoria Together* set ambitious and measurable targets for public transport to promote an efficient urban layout (Government of Victoria, 2001), and *Melbourne 2030* in turn encouraged transport and land use planning "to proceed hand-in-hand" (Government of Victoria,

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2002, p.173). These metropolitan planning strategies all promoted the development of integrated transport strategies to coordinate road and public transport planning with land-use planning, in conjunction with the then Department of Infrastructure. A major advancement was the introduction of the *Transport Integration Act 2010* (Vic), which has integrated transport and land use planning as one of its main objectives. More recently, the current metropolitan planning strategy, *Plan Melbourne* (Government of Victoria, 2014), is positioned as “an integrated land-use and transport plan” (p.7) seeking “to integrate long-term land-use, infrastructure and transport planning to meet the population, housing and employment needs of the future” (p.2). Particular examples in this document include upgrading and building new railway stations that are “integrated with land development” (p.49), as well as providing “plentiful housing opportunities near jobs, services and transport infrastructure” (p.63).

Interview participants understood integrated planning in various ways and some specifically focused on the importance of creating well-integrated communities with essential infrastructure and services. For example, in discussing the nature of integrated planning one respondent said: “I think it comes down to how you develop a place...you'd need to coordinate the land use functions and transport and the utilities and then the social infrastructure as well” (state government public servant). Another focused on the idea of a city as an “organism” with integrated planning “acknowledging and addressing” different functional aspects of cities in a harmonious and connected way (local government planner).

### **Place-based integrated planning**

Spatial aspects of integrated planning are also framed in terms of place-based approaches, which aim to address complex issues in particular locations. Place-based approaches are planning strategies used at different scales to tackle multifaceted issues that cross sectoral and program boundaries (Lawson, 2007). Since the 1980s, place-based approaches “have gradually replaced certain functional administration frameworks with new spatially based approaches that emphasise whole of government service delivery to meet the needs of a geographically defined local community” (Lawson, 2007, p.1). This focus can be tied to broader shifts away from comprehensive planning, toward more strategic and targeted initiatives (Albrechts, 2006a). Some interview participants clearly articulated this type of spatial conceptualisation. For example, one state government planner described integrated planning as “a place-based process to try and reconcile social, environmental and economic considerations in making a decision.”

There has been an array of place-based integrated planning mechanisms in Australia and Melbourne. One significant initiative that drove place-based approaches was Integrated Local Area Planning (ILAP) in the early 1990s. ILAP, an approach advocated for by the Australian Local Government Association, sought to respond to diversity and improve well-being by adopting a “holistic view of local areas, linking related physical, environmental, social and cultural issues, rather than treating them separately” (Australian Local Government Association, 1993, p.1). Following ILAP, there was a peak in the use of place-based approaches under the Bracks Government in Victoria. The establishment of the State Services Authority in 2004 was a key facilitator of integrating service delivery. In 2007, the State Services Authority (2007, p.10) reported “the introduction of place based joined up approaches” (as) a major reform of the Victorian Government.”

Other examples of place-based integrated planning included the Transit Cities program, which sought to realise the objectives of *Melbourne 2030* (Government of Victoria, 2002), and the Neighbourhood Renewal initiative introduced in 2001-2002. Neighbourhood Renewal was introduced to “tackle disadvantage in communities with high concentrations of public housing” (State Services Authority, 2007, p.11). Under the initiative, “holistic and integrated responses” were (and in some cases still are) pursued to reducing poverty and social exclusion (Department of Human Services, 2005, p.2). It enables government initiatives to be targeted to specific places and to prioritise existing resources to address cross-cutting issues. Some evaluations correlated positive outcomes with Neighbourhood Renewal, including changes in health status among residents and increased participation in local activities (Department of Human Services, 2005). The perceived successes of this program led to a Mainstreaming Strategy “to embed the key features of neighbourhood renewal – joined up government, place management and community governance – into the workings of state and local governments” (States Services Authority, 2007, p.11). While not all interviewees concluded that Neighbourhood Renewal had been comprehensively successful, some state and local government planners commented that it had laid the foundation for ongoing collaborative work between stakeholders, which was beneficial for advancing subsequent integrated planning efforts.

### **Organisational Integration**

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Organisational processes are principal elements of integrated planning and are intimately linked to broader shifts in governance arrangements. This section briefly outlines the historical shift in governance arrangements in relation to the Victorian and Australian planning context. It then describes the two components of organisational integration: vertical and horizontal.

### **Context: from government to governance**

From the 1980s onwards, “profound structural change” (OECD, 1995, p.15) occurred in the way government operated in Western contexts. Market deregulation and privatisation formed central tenets of this structural reform. With increasing use of competition-led models (Langford & Edwards, 2002), non-government organisations and private sector actors have taken on a greater role in traditional public sector activities, like plan-making and delivering infrastructure and services in cities, such as public transport, electricity or social housing. Additionally, this shift in Australia was driven by a perception of government “as fragmented both internally and in its dealing with other sectors; a focus on outcomes rather than outputs to measure success; and the recognition that issues such as community renewal...require many different players” (IPAA, 2002, p.5). A key theme has since become “the spanning of traditional boundaries among government departments, between public sector agencies and private and third sector organisations, and between citizens and communities” (Langford & Edwards, 2002, p.7).

With this shift, new approaches to coordination have emerged within government to support cross-sectoral collaboration (e.g. task forces and new cabinet systems), as well as between government and other stakeholders (e.g. advisory committees) (Stewart, 2002). Collaborative agreements such as ‘multi-organisational partnerships’ have emerged to share policy definition and delivery responsibilities and promote greater flexibility between organisational and sectoral boundaries (Australian Government, 2003). The role of government has become one of ‘steering’ rather than ‘rowing’ (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). The task of coordination has become both “more hazardous” (OECD, 1995, p.73) and increasingly necessary (Davis, 1995).

In this context, conceptual frameworks such as policy network theory have been popularised, and the public policy sphere has embraced terms such as ‘whole-of-government’, ‘joined-up government’, ‘cross-agency programs’, ‘boundary-spanning policy’, ‘intersectoral action’ and ‘policy integration’ for governance approaches that emphasise the coordination and mobilisation of policy networks to address complex problems (Maddison & Denniss, 2009; Exworthy, 2011; 2004). Governance structures have become “‘multi-organizational’ networks or ‘loosely coupled’ organizational systems rather than hierarchies of command and control” (Painter, 1987, p.9).

Calls for integrated planning in Melbourne over the last three decades clearly reflect changing governance practices. The traditional model of planning as a government-led activity held “decreasing validity at the beginning of the twenty-first century as analysts and practitioners realise[d] the importance of complex networks and associational systems” (Hillier, 2002, p.92). The ‘collaborative’ and ‘networked’ governance context frames the material possibilities of planning by moving the focus away from primarily state-led action towards collaboration between government and non-government actors. A range of disciplinary reforms have occurred that are “centred on integration or breaking down silos and stronger partnerships, greater information sharing and skills exchange” (Lawson, 2007, p.6). While governments retain an important role in planning, their actions are mediated and adjusted through networked interaction, presenting both opportunities through broader engagement as well as challenges to effective coordination and collaboration between the public sector, businesses and civil society. In sum, integrated planning aims to be a form of collaborative *urban* governance.

Notwithstanding some gains achieved through public sector reform over recent decades, such as increasing public participation in planning policy, there is a legacy of cost transfer to the worst off communities and increasing ‘clustering’ of disadvantage in some neighbourhoods (Hess & Adams, 2001). It is within this context of unequal spatial development that stronger calls have been made to pursue more integrated approaches to planning. Often, tackling complex problems unfolds through place-based approaches as described above, such as through targeted urban renewal or revitalisation strategies. Organisational interaction and coordination are also central components of integrated planning, promoted to pursue strategic, operational and disciplinary integration (Kidd, 2007) through alignment of organisational behaviours (i.e. operation plans, budgets, processes). There are both vertical and horizontal dimensions of organisational integration relevant to strategic spatial planning processes in Melbourne.

### **Vertical integration**

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Coordination between different levels of government is commonly understood as 'vertical' integration (Holden, 2012). Vertical integration involves an element of authority and rule with a "transmission downwards of authorised decisions" (Colebatch, 1998, p.23). Vertical coordination has been a historical characteristic of planning in Australia's federated political system. Examples of Commonwealth-state coordination include the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation set up in the mid-1970s to lead 'whole-of-community' planning and efforts led by the Whitlam Government's Department of Urban and Regional Development in increasing the supply of services and infrastructure in rapidly growing urban areas. Local government in Australia is a 'power of the states' and in many realms of planning there is a downward transmission of decisions, for example with local policy required to reflect state policy.

Analysis of policy documents revealed a changing focus in the Victorian and Australian context away from this top down approach towards, at least in principle, a more collaborative form of interaction between different spheres of government. In Australian cities, vertical integration reforms were led by the Australian Public Service (APS) in the 1980s and 1990s, with the aim of developing an administration that was "more efficient and effective" (Australian Government, 1983, p.1). The reforms influenced a gradual shift away from a highly centralised control and command approach, towards a more integrated machinery of government. "Cross-program approaches" emerged as an early model of vertical organisational integration, which sought to maximise complementarity and "better integrate programs" between different agencies and levels of government (Australian Government, 1995, p.1). One key trend of this era was the 'one-stop-shop' approach to integrating the design and delivery of government programs at the regional level. A Melbourne example was the North-west One-stop Welfare Centre in Coburg, Victoria (Australian Government, 2004).

Throughout the 1990s, techniques of integration between different agencies and levels of government evolved. 'Whole-of-government' and 'joined-up' government arrangements increasingly became common parlance and intergovernmental entities, agreements, councils and committees became commonplace (Australian Government, 1995; OECD, 1995; Commission of Audit, 1996; Australian National Audit Office, 2003). Problems associated with "inter-jurisdictional gaps" encouraged integrated governance, for example through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) established in 1992, which has acted as a platform for debate and coordinated decision-making. A key example of vertically integrated planning from the 1990s was the previously mentioned ILAP. In particular, ILAP encouraged coordination of "related activities of different departments, organisations and spheres of government" and the elimination of "unnecessary duplication between government programs" (Australian Local Government Association, 1993, p.1-2). The Building Better Cities Program (1991-1996) was another example which aimed to "demonstrate better urban planning and service delivery as well as co-ordination within and between the various levels of government" (Neilson, 2008, p.88).

Vertically integrated approaches to government continued to evolve into the 2000s in response to intractable issues (APSC, 2015) or "increasingly complex and/or wide-ranging policy and operational issues" (Australian National Audit Office, 2003, p.1). A range of guides and methods have been developed, such as the Institute of Public Administration's (2002) framework of integrated governance. Achieving greater coordination in policy and service delivery remains "a high priority of public administration in Australia" (APSC, 2015).

In Victoria, vertical organisational integration efforts are often referred to as "joined-up government", with the aim of improving the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of communities (IPAA, 2002). Key Victorian policies that explicitly advocated for greater vertical organisational integration were *Growing Victoria Together* (Government of Victoria, 2001) and *Melbourne 2030* (Government of Victoria, 2002). Both were predicated on integrated governance and close working ties between state and local government agencies, for example through committees and information sharing protocols. The current *Plan Melbourne* promotes "integrated long-term planning" and influenced the creation of a new Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) to "help coordinate a whole-of-government" and streamlined approach to delivering the plan (Government of Victoria, 2014, p.17).

### **Horizontal integration**

Horizontal integration comprises integration across sectors/departments within the same organisation or level of government (Holden, 2012), or across jurisdictions (e.g. between neighbouring local governments), and may also involve the business and community sectors. It is characterised by "collaboration, coordination and the building of working relationships that span departmental and agency boundaries and policy areas" (Albrechts, 2006b, p.1158). It seeks to overcome inefficiencies related to duplication or policy deficiency, and avoid contradictions in policy (Kidd 2007). When asked about their understanding of the term 'integrated planning', interview participants most commonly described

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horizontal organisational processes. For example, a state policymaker spoke about “making sure that you've got a process in place; that the departments are working together”. Similarly, a former state government policymaker highlighted the need to facilitate coordination between sectors: “integration implies that you have an effective model of coordination across agencies”.

Interviewee interpretations varied on whether community and non-government stakeholder involvement is an integral part of horizontal networked governance, or whether it is a separate process of participation and engagement. These divergent interpretations reflect the long debate on degrees of citizen participation, decisively commenced nearly half a century ago with Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation representing typologies of participation from manipulation through to citizen control. Langford and Edwards (2002, p.8) have found that “many of the values, attitudes and specialised managerial skills central to successful [horizontal] coordination prove to be precisely the same as those required for partnership management and the integration of community stakeholders”.

Online information from the Australian Public Service Commission (2015) indicates that horizontal organisational integration “entails not only cooperation and collaboration across APS agencies, but also two-way communication with organisations such as community groups, business, academics and other governments.” This can involve partnerships with the private sector or not-for-profit organisations. The document analysis and interviews conducted highlighted that the community and non-government stakeholders form a ‘third sector’ that plays an increasingly important role in planning policy, for example through advocacy and engagement processes as well as in policy delivery, for example in the provision of community housing. However, some experts caution that the extent of integration of the third sector has been “selective with regards to who participates” (Davis, 2002, p.97).

Essentially, it is through horizontal organisational integration that the ideal of networked governance materialises through collaboration and alliance building (APSC, 2015). Enduring examples of horizontal integration in Melbourne and Victoria appear less common compared with vertical integration mechanisms (such as COAG). Commonly, horizontal integration occurs to resolve particular issues or define certain policy outcomes. Horizontal integration in this sense may occur without a specific spatial context but in terms of policy processes generally. For example, interview participants identified horizontal coordination in housing or infrastructure policy.

At the local government level, the policy document analysis and interviews revealed a strong desire and stated necessities for horizontal integration. Some interview participants attributed this to the need for resource-pooling and coordinated delivery, in order to respond to citizen demands more effectively. There is a plethora of local government policy examples that demonstrate horizontal management and engagement. For example, the ‘Together we do best’ principle of Hume City Council promotes “a genuine culture of partnership and collaboration of organisations planning and working with each other and the community to improve services” (Hume City Council, 2015). While consultation mechanisms are regularly used, there are also permanent features of horizontal integration, including the Collaborative Committee Framework in place since the late 1990s to advise and support Council, as well as steering groups used to guide the planning process (Hume City Council, 2015).

### ***Holistic Approaches to Integration***

Interpretations of integrated planning can relate to either spatial or organisational integration, or a combination of both. The analysis of policy documents and planning strategies, as well as the interview responses highlighted some experiences where spatial and organisational integration are embedded as part of a single approach to integrated planning (see Figure 1). In terms of the interviews, a few participants articulated this holistic understanding, incorporating both organisational and spatial components. One stated “It's a process by which people with diverse interests and backgrounds and experiences come together for the purpose of achieving something for a shared area or place or territory that is greater than the sum of the parts” (state government policymaker). Another state government policymaker commented:

For me, integrated planning is a concept ... [where] all the things that go to make up a good place are fleshed out, and then all the various planning processes across the different disciplines and sectors that impact on that place are somehow brought together or aligned in such a way that the activities, and outcomes, and impacts of the various processes align and mutually reinforce each other, and minimize duplication or minimise the likelihood of plans hitting up against each other and cancelling each other out.

Many examples were uncovered that demonstrate this holistic conception of integrated planning. The Regional Management Forums (RMFs) across Victoria are one such example of how holistic integration

can manifest in practice. The RMFs, which bring together local governments and state government departments in each region, focus simultaneously on joint organisational responses and “an area-based approach” (VicHealth, 2015). According to one interviewee, recent changes to the RMFs are encouraging more proactive action “in terms of brokering partnerships and identifying systemic issues on which to work in a collaborative, action-oriented way” (state government policymaker). The Regional Development Australia committees, such as the one set up for Western Melbourne, also focus on building “partnerships between all levels of government, local businesses, community groups and key regional stakeholders to provide strategic and targeted responses to economic, environmental and social issues affecting Melbourne’s West” (Regional Development Victoria, 2015).

Another example is the introduction of the *Transport Integration Act 2010* (Vic) which focuses concurrently on land-use and transport integration, as well as facilitating “integrated decision-making” that seeks to achieve policy objectives “through coordination between all levels of government and government agencies and with the private sector” (s.14.15). The former Growth Areas Authority was also tasked with combining multiple dimensions of spatial integration (e.g. urban expansion and service delivery) with vertical and horizontal organisational integration. NORTH Link is another case, operating as an alliance between business, university and local government stakeholders that emerged in response to changing economic conditions in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and has sought to identify and advocate for infrastructure projects that would stimulate economic development in Melbourne’s north. Finally, several interviewees commented on the PSP process as involving stakeholders from different government departments (education, strategic planning, engineering) at both state and local levels, as well as the private sector (such as developers) and non-government organisations (like community groups) to resolve specific spatial planning questions.



**Figure 1. Conceptualisations of integrated planning**

Source: Developed by the authors

### **Some challenges facing integrated planning**

The scope of this paper does not permit a comprehensive evaluation of the strengths and challenges confronting integrated planning in practice. However, the following section briefly summarises five emergent challenges uncovered to date. Research conducted by the authors also focuses on ingredients for effective integrated planning, although this has not formed a focus in this paper.

#### **1. Departmentalism can obstruct coordination**

While coordination has been an ongoing feature of urban policy, examples of interaction within and between levels of government highlight some political and organisational constraints. Coordination is “an undisputed virtue” and inconsistencies and duplication in policy are taken as evidence of government failure (Davis, 1995, p.16). Thus, “political survival requires a government to appear coherent and united, in control and able to account for the resources in its care” (Davis, 1995, p.16). For this reason, governments create coordinating mechanisms that promote consistency. However, departmentalism can obstruct coordination. As a report by the Australian Government on ‘Whole of Government Responses’ found, “there can be tensions between collaboration and organisational interests” (2004, p.46). Furthermore, interested stakeholders build ‘coalitions’ to influence policy and the competing interests of multiple policy communities hamper the task of governing as each is “more interested in its own objectives than in bowing to pressure for coordination and consistency” (Beale, 1995, p.14). Some interviewees reflected on the persistence of ‘siloed’ practices or ‘turf protection’ and the challenges of breaking the inertia of existing practices to promote coordination and integrated planning.

## **2. Tensions between horizontal and vertical forms of integration**

While vertical and horizontal forms of integration can be overlapping and reinforcing, at times they can also be conflicting. Curtis et al. (2010, p.6) explained that one main difference between vertical and horizontal integration relates to power: "As a reflection of differing power structures, the nature of interaction along these two policy dimensions necessarily differs, with vertical interactions tending towards authority and conformance, while horizontal interactions utilise negotiation, co-ordination and bargaining". In this regard, authority tends to prevail in vertical integration practices. However, building on Matheson (2000), Curtis et al. (2000) suggest that forceful authority employed in vertical integration can also erode consent-based horizontal relationships of integration.

This was an issue most evident in responses from local government planners who expressed some frustration at the pace and nature of change in Victorian state planning policy, for example with recent Precinct Structure Planning (PSP) processes. Changing PSP requirements place changing demands on local government planners, sometimes at the cost of plans, relationships and agreements built up through horizontal interactions at the local level. One local government planner described this tension between vertical and horizontal integration in relation to PSP preparation under the previous state government:

It was very top down. The interaction with Council, rather than being a consultative process and one of negotiation, (led to) Council getting cut out of the process and didn't have a seat at the table on some issues...In the context of a changing political climate it's very hard to sustain constructive relationships at the local level.

## **3. Integrated planning through changing political cycles**

Generating sufficient trust and a "networking or horizontal culture" is another hurdle (Australian Government, 2004, p.46), requiring leadership and political commitment. Meaningful integration requires time and trust to develop, which is not always factored in (Davis, 2002) and can be disrupted in a changing political climate. Interviewees identified three main challenges facing integrated planning through changing political cycles. First, addressing complex issues requires a "long-term commitment for change" (local government planner) and changes in the political climate can produce more or less funding for particular issues, such as roads building or social housing delivery. Policy redirections and associated funding cuts can directly lead to program terminations or significant changes, limiting their chance to achieve longer term objectives. Second, the political cycle leads to "churn" and, as one local government planner explained, this can mean "fewer hands on deck" or that those involved must focus on "relationship rebuilding" after restructuring. According to one state government policymaker:

You do need longevity of the engagement, and I think that's one of the risks for large scale place making initiatives, or even small scale: if there's a big churn or if you don't have enough people on the ground to make the change happen, that is a significant risk that can get in the way or stop good things happening.

The question of leadership is the third issue raised in relation to changing political cycles. One local government planner explained that "higher up there is a bit of churn" and other interviewees also discussed the impact of changing leadership. They explained that effective integrated planning relies on "central figures" and if these people are no longer in a position to build and maintain working relationships between stakeholders, initiatives can lose direction and "drive". For example, leaders can provide access to another department or organisation's information through relationship-building. One state government planner described this issue in relation to a specific project:

What we really needed then was for Dave<sup>1</sup> to step in and say, "These are the domains that I want to see leadership on." But unfortunately then he had to leave his position, his contract was up and it wasn't renewed and he left. So this is one of the risks; this is one of the things that leads to failures of integrated planning: it is like all social change initiatives, you need champions... You need people that go beyond what's on paper and actually provide the symbolic leadership and the charismatic leadership, as well as the intellectual leadership. And if for whatever reason they go before their time has reached a critical mass -you know you need to get to a tipping point- projects can lose their support and strength.

Other researchers have pointed to the diffusion of responsibilities with multiple players in policy-making and delivery as another issue: "who is responsible in a world without boundaries...who is in charge?" (Langford & Edwards, 2002, p.10).

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<sup>1</sup> Name has been changed to protect confidentiality.



#### **4. Data and skills deficit**

Access to data and skills deficit in certain areas to support integrated planning processes were raised as challenges in the interview process. While some interviewees commented on the essential role of “robust” evidence in driving policy change through integrated planning, others commented on the lack of access to “detailed, fine-grained evidence” at the specific level needed for certain projects. High quality data was seen as important to both support meaningful discussions about policy and project initiatives, as well as constructing strong arguments for policy and planning support. For example, one interviewee commented on the need for “irrefutable data” in order to have impact. Another stated: “if they [decision-makers] are going to accept our contribution it has to be absolutely robust to stand up to scrutiny. However, planners feel like they have had a hard time in the rigour of this process...due to difficulties in accessing good data.”

On the other hand, integrated approaches to planning require a skillset that goes beyond the technical and involves interpersonal skills, like communication and conflict resolution. The Australian Government (2007) has identified the ability to work cooperatively in multi-disciplinary ways as a core skills deficit:

the need to deal with the social complexity associated with wicked problems (working across organisational boundaries, engaging stakeholders and influencing citizens' behaviour) requires additional skills over and above the more traditional analytical, conceptual, and project management skills required by public servants involved in policy making and planning policy implementation (p.33).

Interviewees commented on some of the skills required for effective integrated planning, including communication skills, relationship building, interpreting non-verbal communication and listening skills. One interviewee, for example, explained: “It’s not just about formal processes, it’s about building relationships and having constant communication.” Better understanding these informal approaches, and their vulnerability to change (for example in changing political environments), is an important aspect of building and improving frameworks for effective integrated planning. Another interviewee discussed the importance of “learning different policy languages” to help different disciplines to work together and the problems and delays that have arisen when issues or agendas got “lost in translation.” Another aspect of skills deficit raised by two interviewees from local government relates to the transfer of responsibilities for service delivery to community organisations. One commented: there is “more onus on the community to have the skills to take on responsibilities.”

#### **5. Unclear roles for non-government organisations**

The varying role of non-government organisations within the different conceptualisations of integrated planning indicates broadly different interpretations and scope for further exploration and definition. Some interviewees framed integrated planning as essentially a government-led process where the focus is on departmental coordination and interaction between levels of government to encourage ‘coherency’ in policy definition and delivery. Within this framework, non-government stakeholders are often seen to play an important role through targeted consultation and potentially in service delivery. On the other hand, some interviewees commented that within their conception of integrated planning non-government actors were integral throughout the process, from policy definition to delivery. However, the mechanisms to achieve this were unclear and issues were raised in relation to the challenge of generating long-term engagement. As one state government policymaker commented:

They've [community groups] got to be authentically involved...and (there has to be) transparency about how people are going to be involved, how the information's going to be used and the promise that will be made to people. I think there's this huge cynicism which has had a dramatic deadening of the social contract between citizens and decision-makers, and that partition puts citizens in a non-decision-making role. We've got to turn that around and we need forms of governance that actually do engage citizens as shareholders in the decision.

#### **Conclusion**

This paper has elucidated spatial, organisational and holistic conceptualisations of integrated planning, helping to improve the clarity of this concept through a case study of Melbourne, Victoria. Further distilling the complexity and identifying the enablers and barriers of integrated planning is a pressing endeavour given the great need for integration in facing the complexity of contemporary ‘wicked problems.’ It is also important given the value of understanding the perspectives of multiple stakeholders and meaningfully enrolling them in policy definition and the delivery of solutions. Despite the many complexities associated with integrated planning, it is a widely supported and advocated approach to

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addressing problems and delivery policy in cities. It is not a relevant or suitable approach for all public policy and planning activities: there is still a role for sector-based planning. However, ultimately it is likely to be more efficient, effective and sustainable than separate or siloed processes for tackling complex problems in cities. For this reason, deepening knowledge of the elements that comprise integrated planning remains an important task and one that this paper sought to make a modest contribution towards.

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