In 1999 I was conducting some field work for the first time in Australia. I am involved in two research initiatives that have links to development issues in Sydney: one is a research project which involves examining Singapore's 'global reach' (in terms of inter-regional and inter-urban linkages), the other brings together a team of people interested in establishing a large-scale Sydney-Vancouver comparative project on the impact of immigration on these two similar yet unique cities. In this context I have been searching for literature on urban development issues in Sydney. I am much more familiar with what has been written on Vancouver as it is my home town and former place of work (at the University of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver Planning Department).

In the course of my field work in Sydney I was surprised by how little has been published on the processes reshaping this truly fascinating city, which is not only Australia's largest in terms of population, but also one that plays an important national and regional (Asia-Pacific) role in economic, social and cultural affairs. To be sure, a variety of insightful articles and chapters appeared in the 1990s by the likes of Kay Anderson, Scott Baum, Ian Burnley, Margo Huxley, Peter Murphy and Glen Searle, amongst others. The slim yet intriguing text *Surface City* by Peter Murphy and Sophie Watson also stands out, as does the longish report by Glen Searle on Sydney as a global city. Yet, in the context of major growth trends, significant urban restructuring and increasing integration with the Asia-Pacific region, there are few key (fundamental, highly influential, seminal, whatever) texts or articles being published and widely (i.e. internationally) read on urban change and urban politics in Sydney. Where is the 'Sydney School'? If it exists, where are the people who make it up publishing their material? Where are the new (more advanced) materials that follow on from influential texts such as Maurie Daly's *Sydney Boom, Sydney Bust*?

At this stage I can only speculate, and here I am more than happy to be knocked down for seeking what should not exist, for being blind in my search or ignorant in my analysis. From my brief visit to Sydney and from interaction with Australian colleagues in academia (mainly geography and planning departments), the silences I perceive are the product of three inter-related trends/practices.

The first is declining levels of support for fundamental research on the processes (e.g. immigration, investment, labour markets, urban politics) that reshape Australian cities. I have been struck by the intransigent attitude of the Howard regime towards higher education, especially the social sciences. At this time in history it confounds me that higher education and research is
perceived to be of so little value to Australian society in the short and long terms. In such a context, the silences reflect research proposals that were never funded, research proposals that were never submitted due to other work commitments (e.g. teaching, administration), and an overemphasis (in infrequent academic hiring procedures) on 'practical', 'marketable', technical skills above all else. In short, there are not enough broadly educated scholars to conduct research and publish.

The second reason for the silences I perceive is the lack of cooperation and coordination between academics and academic departments in Sydney. In this era of higher education restraint, it seems as if universities and departments have become much more competitive, leaning to the accentuation of difference between institutions to attract research funds, students, good public relations etc. Sydney is a relatively large city, and there are four or five universities in the region; surely it is time for the establishment of a more coherent strategy that brings together the urbanists in all of the universities, in the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, and outside academia for some common project(s)? At the moment all I can perceive (and, again, I may be completely uninformed here) is a disparate group of urbanists, some cooperating, some disinterested, some disparaging of the others. Of course, vibrancy requires conflict and disagreement, but conflict and disagreement need to be fostered. This does beg the question of whether the institutional culture and the 'old boy networks' that shape much of academia in Australia are helping or hindering cooperation, coordination and renewal in Sydney's urban research community. My limited impression is that these networks are hindering discussion and debate, and holding back renewal, particularly in Sydney. This is in marked contrast to the relative diversity (in terms of age, gender, class etc.) of urban research networks in somewhat similar places like Melbourne, Toronto or Los Angeles.

The third is the publishing strategy of Australian urbanists. There seems to be a large volume of research on urban issues in Sydney and other Australian cities. However, much of it is published in 'fugitive' or 'grey' outlets which are inaccessible to interested observers from other cities, and especially other countries. While working papers and local presses are valuable outlets for the development of local debate, a disproportionate amount of work on Sydney is published via these dissemination mechanisms. Even *Urban Policy and Research*, valuable as it is, is not in the Institute for Scientific Information ® (ISI®) on-line citation index for the humanities and social sciences; this is the key vehicle for the establishment of citation indices and an increasingly important computer desktop data base that academics and policy makers use to locate research materials.

Is it not time to participate to a greater degree in the discursive fields that operate at an international scale? The benefits of doing so include the feed-
back one receives from anonymous reviewers, the ability to reach local audiences in Australia (via well circulated journals and book publishers) and the opening up of debates to international consumption and scrutiny. While not wanting to put anyone on a pedestal, it seems to me that the texts produced by Brendan Gleeson at the Urban Frontiers Program, University of Western Sydney, are marked by the ability to speak to both 'local' and 'global' audiences, invigorating debate and enhanced knowledge acquisition at a variety of scales. Similarly, Leonie Sandercock's work, while controversial, is valuable in that it stirs up debate about critical issues being discussed in a variety of countries, while also providing insights into the nature of urban politics and planning in Australian cities. The fact that Sandercock and Gleeson publish much of their work via international outlets has, as far as I can perceive, not diminished their local contributions.

Academics and urban policy makers in Australian cities like Sydney are faced with difficult circumstances that are unlikely to improve in the immediate future. That said, choices are made on a daily basis of who to hire, where to publish, what institutions to establish or maintain, what projects to fund and how to manage departments. In an era of restraint, it is all the more important to operate in a strategic, open and inclusive fashion, aware of local complexities and priorities, yet cognisant of the value of becoming embedded in a diversity of extra-local networks.

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