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# **Negotiating strategic planning's transitional spaces: The case of 'guerrilla governance' in infrastructure planning**

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## Abstract

Strategic planning can begin as a deliberative and inclusive process of plan making, but then transition into a decisive and exclusive process of investment and priority setting at the stage of implementation. Citizens that once participated in the formal plan making process through government-designed engagement events fade into the background in this critical latter part of strategic planning. At this point they must invent avenues to influence investment priorities. In the context of bicycle infrastructure planning and delivery in Sydney, Australia this paper examines how strategic plans that embrace cycling as an important transport mode translate into decisions to commit to some projects over others. The paper explores four ways community groups seek traction in a highly contentious and transitional space of planning through a process we call 'guerrilla governance'. Evoking aspects of advocacy and insurgent planning, guerrilla governance broadens how the term 'governance' is used within urban planning scholarship, by incorporating such 'legitimised' agitation from beyond government.

Keywords: Infrastructure, Governance, Implementation, Cycling, Sydney

## **Introduction**

The process of strategic planning will move through a variety of governance and stakeholder participation arrangements: some phases marked by inclusive citizen engagement and others by exclusive bureaucratic decision making. There is a perception of practice that plan making is a discrete stage, often marked by explicit stakeholder engagement. When a new strategic plan is released, however, a shift to implementation can be seen – particularly in infrastructure planning – the process constricts to a more decisive one toward project delivery (March, 2012). Crucially, Albrechts (2004) describes this point where plan making and project delivery meet as an iterative and ongoing strategic space. It can sometimes be where priorities are established and budgets allocated. Given the significance of this transitional space – the point when governments commit to some projects over others, and when a dramatic change in governance can occur – little is known about the impact and role of citizen engagement here.

The aim of this paper is to investigate how community groups respond to changes in governance and to examine the ways they endeavour to engage within this transitional space of implementation. We examine a contentious cycling infrastructure project in Sydney, Australia, and argue that, in the name of expediency, the planning processes that lead from strategic plan to ‘shovel readiness’ – like prioritisation, funding allocation and detailed project planning – are significantly less inclusive than plan making. In this transitional space community groups are left to advocate from beyond formal structures. While the process resembles a politics-as-usual environment of interests vying for influence, some key distinctions were observed. By following the strategies used by community groups to bring support together and to give a project traction – that is, to draw a project through the contentious and sometimes long process of implementation – this paper articulates a distinct political response we call ‘guerrilla governance’.

Conceptually, guerrilla governance leans on an established tradition of alternative forms of planning. Guerrilla governance evokes aspects of advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965) and of the work by Needleman and Needleman (1974) in *Guerrillas in the Bureaucracy* where bureaucrats assume an advocacy role to support inclusiveness and equitable planning outcomes. Then again, guerrilla governance embraces features of radical planning (Beard, 2003) and insurgent planning (Miraftab, 2009). Here power is revealed through citizens performing “purposeful actions that aim to disrupt... a status quo through consciousness of the past and imagination of an alternative future” (Miraftab, 2009, page 44). Also, radical planning has been described by Friedmann (2003) as ‘action-oriented’ and allied with social and environmental movements. Distinctively, guerrilla governance responds to the creation of a collaborative ethos during plan making, where these groups then see themselves as part of a governance apparatus committed to transparency and inclusiveness (thus the ‘governance’ in guerrilla governance). However, in the absence of any formal inclusive processes, guerrilla governance, unlike advocacy planning, emerges as a bottom-up endeavour by stakeholders from outside the comparatively closed formal structures of decision making (thus the ‘guerrilla’ in guerrilla governance). Guerrilla governance contrasts with insurgent and radical planning, as it is constrained to advocating within the agreed parameters of the strategic plan and seeking to infiltrate, re-engage and open up the formal governance structure. It does not seek to mobilise epochal change, necessarily.

Contextually, the shift away from inclusive governance structures during implementation aligns with the neoliberal turn in urban systems (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2013; Brenner et al., 2010). There are some examples of inclusive decision making environments continuing into implementation – the recent series of Participatory Budgeting exercises and Citizens Juries offer a few examples (Thompson, 2012; Wampler, 2010). Nevertheless, Olesen (2014) critically explores the qualities of strategic planning within neoliberal political environments

and warns of a reshaping into a dominant growth logic. Examining planning systems shaped by neoliberal values, Ruming and Gurran (2014) describe a system where plan making is used to legitimise future decision making and where community agitation and advocacy post plan making is cast as menacing – a threat to efficient implementation.

The paper begins with an exploration of the temporal challenges embedded in strategic planning that result in a breakdown of legitimacy of some policy decisions over time, particularly at the transitional space of implementation. The second section describes the tension between government-led inclusive governance of plan making and legitimised agonism that surfaces when inclusive governance arrangements in the transitional space are contracted. The third section presents the case study findings on how stakeholders vie for traction in the transitional space of policy implementation. Finally we conclude by asking some questions about existing theorisations of inclusive governance.

### **Transitional spaces in strategic planning**

Where plan making was once seen solely as a rational exercise led by experts, planning scholars (Forester, 1999; Healey, 2006, 2007a; Innes and Booher, 2010) have argued that inclusive, network governance and deliberation can lead to equally rational plans, a broader collaborative ethos, and “a relatively stable horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous, actors who interact through negotiations” (Sørensen and Torfing, 2007, page 9). Over the past two decades, research (e.g. Albrechts, 2013; Gualini, 2010; Healey, 2006; Innes and Booher, 2010; Pierre, 2005; Sager, 2010) has contributed to new ways of conceiving and using inclusive governance to achieve particular social, environmental and economic goals. This thinking has subsequently formed a key part of the strategic planning practices, plan making practices in particular. Ostensibly, inclusive plan making can generate new knowledge producing plans that are accepted by government

planners, politicians, interest groups and residents alike (Mees, 2011). The support inclusive plan making garners also enables a smooth transition into implementation and, in theory, legitimacy is sustained by virtue of the rigorous process it emerged from.

Paradoxically, the legitimacy obtained provides governments with the mandate to move straight into delivery with little need to continue citizen engagement. Presenting an ideological argument, Olesen (2014, page 300) suggests that strategic planning has taken a neoliberal turn, producing governance arrangements with the very narrow remit of delivering certainty, and so limiting its transformative potential. Through this lens, the up-front engagement of citizens legitimises strategic plans, further enabling governments to implement projects in a comparatively quick and efficient way without necessarily presenting these projects for open public debate again. Brownill and Parker (2010, page 279) posit that the managerialist governance environment impelled by neoliberal planning during implementation has the additional advantage of limiting contestation. However, examination of the plan making process has led critics to argue that deliberative engagement can be used by governments to obtain ‘early buy-in’ for long-term growth and development, with the inclusive governance structures that support these processes legitimising this agenda (Purcell, 2009).

This sets up a tension between “the ‘input-oriented legitimation’ of the planning process [achieved through inclusive governance arrangements] and the ‘output-oriented effectiveness’ of implementation” (Mäntysalo et al., 2011, page 2110). This tension has led Brownill and Parker (2010, page 279) to suggest that planning theory needs to embrace ‘micro-studies’, or rather case-study specific research, to capture “the contradictory and essentially political processes at the heart of most examples of participation”. In practice, the overall process of strategic planning takes place in a somewhat disjointed environment: a philosophy of

responsiveness driving plan making to establish broadly agreed policy goals, and a philosophy of efficiency driving the priority setting and project implementation process that builds on those goals. On the surface, this may sound quite reasonable and legitimate. But there is a fear that upfront community engagement is simply being used as a tool, and that “routinized” community participation serves only to depoliticise subsequent decisions about priorities. Stakeholders can be sidelined even when seeking support of alternative projects that equally realise the broad policy goals, but which are much lower on a government’s priority list (Miraftab, 2009, pages 32-34).

It is, of course, argued that inclusive governance should continue throughout the entire planning process to enable more effective project delivery (Falleth et al., 2010). It will even be expected: Curtis (2008, page 110) writes that “[o]ne of the new challenges in setting the planning strategy into operation is the expectation that the close partnership with the community will continue”. The absence of such ongoing engagement further increases the scepticism in the community that inclusive upfront governance is only a smoke screen to backroom or delayed decision making (Mees, 2011). This has the unintended consequence of undermining the legitimacy claimed by the plan making process. Legitimacy can also be compromised by the passing of time, which sees new governments elected, economic conditions change, political capital expended and, ultimately, priorities shifted. The ongoing political nature of this period of implementation will mean a new governance arrangement is established in the transitional space between plan making and project delivery. It is this juncture – this transitional space – that this paper examines.

### **Contestation in strategic planning**

Strategic plan making is itself a contested process. Many strategic plans are broad in scope and light on detail, setting the stage for disagreement among divergent interests over aspects

not resolved in plan making (Legacy et al., 2014). Streamlining infrastructure delivery creates a perverse effect of limiting opportunities for reflection and ongoing discussion in the community about strategic issues yet to be resolved, including the already mentioned decisions of which projects to prioritise and finance (Groves et al., 2013).

Swyngedouw (2007) argues that governments, particularly the agencies charged with delivering metropolitan planning objectives, benefit from an environment where perceived 'front end' engagement allows dissenting arguments to be enveloped into 'all things to all people' strategies. Engagement is stifled during subsequent stages through a rhetoric of 'depoliticised' delivery (see also Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012; Inch, 2012). This less inclusive process is justified from within government by a belief that ensuing decisions align with the agreed upon strategic plan. From beyond government, though, any trade-offs and priorities demonstrated by a given decision will agitate those who feel it moves away from agreed upon policy goals set out earlier (Mouat et al., 2013). The shortcomings of strategic plans, particularly the lack of detail, might be attributable to some theoretical limitation to the process: namely that a glossy vision is all that is achievable through broad consensus building. Others (e.g. Healey, 2012), however, have suggested the lack of detail is rather a reflection of the imperfect political environment, where actors who feel they could benefit from less inclusive processes discourage details to be developed through more inclusive ones.

In addition to government agencies benefitting from fewer opportunities for engagement, Hendriks (2006, page 572) argues that inclusive governance can also be resisted by interest groups outside formal government structures who have previously enjoyed access to decision-makers and who have developed strategies to lobby governments outside of the formal methods of engagement. Benveniste (1989, page 280) echoes this, suggesting community campaigns can oftentimes be more rewarding for well-resourced community groups than



government-structured community engagement opportunities: “Formal citizen participation in planning has not yet resulted in significant successes, but community organizing has resulted in a much greater awareness of the potential power of clients and beneficiaries”. Obtaining political support by lobbying politicians can be an effective method for resident groups who are seeking to have their voices heard (Abram, 2000).

Advocating from outside of government-led engagement opportunities becomes a necessary strategy, particularly, when the decision making structures of implementation are less inclusive. It is a process more akin to pluralism – a political environment where community groups must compete for influence on decision making. The stakeholders involved in strategic planning are a collection of autonomous groups and individuals possessing different amounts of power, affording some interests greater influence over policy decisions than others (Held, 1987). In a political pluralism, policy makers take the role of mediating amongst these competing interests. Although pluralism can be described as being less hierarchical, it ignores the systematic, social and resource-based disparities within society and the unevenness of participation in the political system (Hirst, 1990). Lobbying tactics may also hinge on a political opaqueness, such as that described back in the 1970s by Yates (1977) in *The Ungovernable City*. Here Yates argued that urban policy making resembles a kind of ‘street fighting pluralism’ that is rooted in power politics and provokes actors to employ multiple ‘traction-building’ strategies to influence decision-making processes for the sake of desirable gains. Healey (2007b, page 198), noting the temporal challenges associated with planning, also describes a form of traction building as a need to “accumulate mobilising power” to continually legitimise ideas in “governance landscapes where power is diffused and attention is continually shifting”.

To explore the ways community members tap into the processes of strategic planning and project delivery – particularly how formal engagement processes shape their subsequent efforts – a contentious cycling infrastructure project called the GreenWay, located in the inner west of metropolitan Sydney, Australia, is examined. The second half of this paper examines the GreenWay in the transitional space between plan making and project construction, where leading community interest groups endeavour to get a desired project delivered in a political environment where little interest in their project exists. This empirical component of the paper draws upon analysis of government reports, strategies, news reports and media releases produced between 1999 to 2014. Ten key informant interviews with state and local government planners, locally elected councillors, members of the state parliament, campaign organisers and long-time active members from bicycle user groups and the Friends of the GreenWay group and Steering Committee were also undertaken. Community leaders interviewed were policy and politically savvy individuals, some of whom held appointed positions on community boards. The progression of the debates and events during 2012 and 2013 were also closely followed as part of the research, most notably attending a key parliamentary debate about the project.

### **Building traction for the GreenWay**

Located in the inner-western suburbs of metropolitan Sydney<sup>1</sup>, the GreenWay is a proposed five-kilometre shared cycling and pedestrian path that runs mostly through an existing former goods rail corridor about five kilometres west of Sydney's business centre (see Figure 1).

[Insert Figure 1: Map of GreenWay]

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<sup>1</sup> The metropolitan area of Sydney is in the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. It encompasses the City of Sydney and 40 other local government areas (NSW Government, 2013b: 81) making it the largest metropolitan area in Australia; in total number of local government authorities, total population as well as total geographical area.

The GreenWay is an aspirational project for some local community groups and residents living around the project corridor. Focusing on the relevant government departments, community organisations and elected officials involved during a transitional phase in the strategic planning and project delivery of bicycle infrastructure in the state, the research examines how a community group, the Friends of the GreenWay, gained support or ‘traction’ for the shared path, a process we are calling guerrilla governance. The momentum built around the GreenWay progressed through a number of traction-building exercises, providing insights into the relationship between Friends of the GreenWay and other community groups, government agencies, and elected officials during the transition from plan making to implementation. These traction-building exercises are: strategic traction (in policy), community traction (with local stakeholders), bureaucratic traction (with government agencies), and political traction (with elected officials). As outlined in the sections that follow, the multiple roles of stakeholder groups described here raise important questions about inclusive governance more generally and the role and potential guerrilla governance has on influencing a relatively under-studied space in the strategic planning process.

### **Policy and political context**

In 2005, metropolitan Sydney entered into a comprehensive and concentrated period of metropolitan strategic planning. The sheer number of land use, transport and indeed bicycle plans produced between 2005 and 2010 flooded the planning and transport policy space (see Table 1). Notably, in 1999, the state roads authority (at the time called Roads and Transport Authority, or RTA) introduced the *Action for Bikes: BikePlan 2010* (NSW Government, 1999), proposing a regional network of cycle routes across the whole of metropolitan Sydney. However, by March 2010 all transport and land use strategies were integrated into a new Metropolitan Plan (NSW Government, 2010b), and the subsidiary BikePlan was updated

(NSW Government, 2010c). It was in these two 2010 plans that the GreenWay made its first appearance as a strategic project.

The GreenWay's appearance coincided with the announcement of a much larger infrastructure project that involved extending an existing light rail line through the GreenWay corridor to Dulwich Hill. This was a previously unfunded and unplanned extension and, much like the GreenWay's inclusion in the 2010 *BikePlan*, this light rail extension was limited to strategic support rather than a dated commitment. Notably, the plan making processes that led to these plans included relatively modest forms of community and stakeholder engagement. Inclusive governance appeared in the forms of a Metropolitan Reference Panel and working groups, conferences, workshops and forums in 2010. The plan itself committed the government to ongoing engagement with stakeholders throughout the implementation process, particularly with local governments.

In almost all cases, priority statements were vague and delivery times and budget allocation remained absent until July 2010, when a commitment was made by the NSW Government to fund the construction of the GreenWay as part of the light rail extension. At this point, planning for the GreenWay – at least the shared path component – was passed to the Department of Transport tasked with undertaking the coordination of the light rail. But a year later in 2011, following a change in government, the GreenWay was given a major setback when it was not included in the 2011/12 State Budget (Friends of the GreenWay, 2011). The new government cited the inadequate cost forecasts for the light rail and the GreenWay by the previous government (NSW Government, 2011). For the NSW Government to progress the light rail, aspects like the GreenWay needed to be left out of the current budget. The budget also stated, and this remains the government's position, that the construction of the light rail

was not to preclude the future construction of the GreenWay and it would preserve the native vegetation corridors produced by GreenWay supporters.

Following this announcement, the newly elected Liberal-National government released the *Long Term Transport Master Plan* in late 2012 (NSW Government, 2012), which outlined a long-term, overarching strategy for transport, but deferred a number of detailed strategic decisions to specific modal or geographic subregional strategies. In light of this, the cycling strategy was revisited and released in 2013 citing the GreenWay as a medium term project (4-7 years; and falling outside the current term of government), with a particular focus on investigating demand and opportunities to leverage other funding sources (NSW Government, 2013b).

[Insert Table 1: Sydney Strategies and statement of engagement and priorities]

### **Community traction**

In the absence of clear opportunities to engage in decisions about project funding and priority setting, community groups may initiate campaigns and commence aggressive lobbying efforts to see a desired project funded. Often, the execution of lobbying tactics represents the coalescence of a slowly evolving support base; its genesis situated within a carefully articulated ‘want’ by a community. Before ever appearing on the strategic policy radar in metropolitan Sydney, the GreenWay was first envisaged by local interest groups. Seeing the potential this corridor provided for transport and recreation, in 2000, local community groups coordinated efforts to lobby the NSW Government for a shared pedestrian and cycling path, along with environmental remediation<sup>2</sup>. Groups including the Inner West Environment Group and the local bicycle user groups with a common interest in the GreenWay formed a new

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to these two primary outcomes, the GreenWay is also used as an opportunity to build connections in the local community. The GreenWay has, among other things, supported school art projects and bicycle tours.

community group called Friends of the GreenWay. This group developed a base of approximately 400 local residents that supported a vision to create “an environmental corridor between Cooks River and Sydney Harbour at Iron Cove” (Friends of the GreenWay, *undated*). This support was garnered by carefully articulating multiple community benefits that would attract the interest of a variety of groups. This included accommodating a shared bike and pedestrian path as well as securing it as a place for children to play, for local community gardens, a place of bushland conservation, and more:

“The beauty of the project [is] it doesn't just connect people with a path. It connects people with arts, we've got schools education, biodiversity, a whole host of little events happening, training, tours, et cetera, and it connects everybody through that” (Member of the GreenWay Coordination Team ).

By subsuming the cause under the auspice of the Friends of the GreenWay, the incremental achievements and activities undertaken, including Greenway tours and bush care days engaged the community and brought attention to the GreenWay proposal. Local media was also used to advertise educational activities and events. In particular, the contribution and impact of the local news reports in developing a mass of support was critical to strengthening lobbying efforts, according to this volunteer:

“we had these people knocking and saying, ‘we want to write a letter’, because we had kept the GreenWay in the local press. They knew about it.” (Friends of the GreenWay Volunteer)

NSW Government support would be necessary for any project requiring existing road and rail corridors to be used, as well as the necessary scale of financing. However, state and federal governments will assess projects according to their regional context and significance in relation to this context: to obtain funding it would be necessary to demonstrate how a project

would add to a broader network of infrastructure. In the absence of state and federal commitment, local councils assume the role of connecting and filling in infrastructure ‘gaps’ that may exist.

In 2006, understanding the challenges of securing funding and a commitment from the NSW Government, and following the growing interest in the community, four of the five local councils situated along the GreenWay corridor coordinated respective staff efforts and financial input for the central purpose of building the GreenWay shared path and managing bushcare efforts. The councils successfully secured multiple grants including the Metropolitan Greenspace Program grant administered by the then NSW Department of Planning, and a Urban Sustainability Program grant, administered by the then NSW Department of Environment. This funding enabled a GreenWay Coordinator position to be created, and the establishment of a steering committee (formed of council and community representatives). The steering committee produced a GreenWay Master Plan and Coordination Strategy (Marrickville Council, 2009). Establishing a governance arrangement that included a coordinator and steering committee enabled completion of activities like the master plan, revealing valuable information about the extent of works and estimated costs required to complete the GreenWay. The GreenWay’s steering committee structure similarly enabled funding opportunities that are only available to local governments to be exploited.

Local councils played the important role of legitimatising this project and the advocacy work of the existing community groups. The collaboration of a number of local councils provided institutional structure to the effort of the Friends of the GreenWay group as one local politician posited:

“the participation of the councils isn't necessarily important because of its financial standing, but because of its community standing and how it's positioned

in the mosaic of power. ...If the mayor backs you, that's big.” (Member of NSW Parliament)

The involvement of these local councils was critically important to consolidating finite resources to support administration costs. This is particularly so in a context where local councils have minimal financial capacity to deliver infrastructure, principally those that extend across multiple local government jurisdictions. As Healey (2011, page 52) argues, drawing on her empirical work on ‘city regions’ in the Netherlands and England, cross-jurisdictional initiatives, such as a shared path, are best mobilized by local governments who embrace an “integrated place development approach”. This is achieved through cooperative partnerships (e.g. the steering committee), which create a broader network of stakeholders. The incremental, yet focused nature of this network’s growth gave credence to a vision, and developed support, but lacked any agonistic clash between competing groups. The efforts, which sat outside government-sanctioned strategic planning processes, resembled Inch’s (2012) post-political agitation to give an idea political clout. This combination of the community group’s efforts – including creating a broad network that includes local councils, influencing policy, implementing master planning and governance structures, and seeking government resources to deliver an outcome regardless of a formal commitment – is also unique to what we define as guerrilla governance.

### **Strategic traction**

Strategies, in the context of this case study, were a means of avoiding a decision. Both temporally, as evermore strategies were introduced, updated, amended, scrapped and replaced, but also departmentally, as the strategies became a depository of ‘good ideas’ that no one wanted to take carriage of. The GreenWay, like other projects of its kind became subject to deflection tactics by a sitting government. It gained some permanence



as a desired ‘regional’ cycleway for metropolitan Sydney in the 2010 *BikePlan* and the 2010 *Metropolitan Plan*. However, its status again became uncertain with the most recent *Long Term Transport Master Plan*, and the revisiting of the subsidiary cycling strategy. Following the announcement of yet another plan making process, a growing concern that the processes would not necessarily mean delivery created a growing disregard and fear of tokenistic citizen engagement processes as suggested by this local government planner:

“there is a lack of faith in the state government. A lot of the residents and steering committee members, I think, have the opinion that the [latest cycling network] study is pure tokenism...” (Local government planner)

The GreenWay stumbled from the strategic plans as a desirable project. That is, the strategic traction was not, notably, the only form of traction that would be necessary to actually deliver the GreenWay. Instead, getting onto the strategic agenda was the outcome of getting traction in other forums (e.g. bureaucratic and political as noted below). Even so, it was suggested by one community group representative that their involvement in these processes led to the eventual recognition of the GreenWay in 2010: “Well, [the Friends of the Greenway] made submissions. They made a *lot* of submissions” (Friends of the GreenWay Volunteer). However, despite its policy presence in the 2010 *Metropolitan Plan* and *BikePlan*, this did not necessarily mean immediate priority and would not guarantee implementation.

There was the perception that the strategic planning process was, in essence, a collaborative environment. However, it was not a level one, particularly, as the strategic planning process progressed towards implementation when decisions made about funding were made within the confines of government. This is a distinct contrast to the

ideal of inclusive governance that makes all stakeholders feel ‘at the table’. As the purpose or status of any one strategic document was not always clear nor was the level of priority given to the GreenWay known, it was difficult for community groups to ascertain when implementation would occur if at all and what their involvement would be.

The constant ‘engagement’ in the area of planning and transport in NSW is evidenced by not only the number of policy documents produced between 2005 and 2013 – although this is partly reflected by a changing political environment (e.g. new government elected in 2011) – but also with the announcement of a new plan making process to develop a long term transport strategy for the state. While engagement around strategic policies may ‘frame ideas’, if the ideas continue to ‘live inside’ these plans (Healey, 2013, page 49) without continuing engagement post plan making to implement them, frustration within and beyond government may mount. Community groups and residents may perceive the commencement of a new plan making process as a deferring tactic. In response to this delay, community groups may try to gain traction through guerrilla governance, which reflects a refocus of their efforts and limited resources available.

### **Bureaucratic traction**

Efforts to build traction in the community may go astray if the project cannot obtain support by those agencies tasked with implementing or managing it. In NSW, the responsibility for funding and constructing the cycle paths lies with the state, not local, government. As such GreenWay supporters sought support among the responsible state government agencies. Given that the transport agencies involved had metropolitan, or even state-wide, remits, the focus of these agencies was on larger-scale projects. For the provision of cycling

infrastructure this equated with a network analogous to arterial highways, with smaller-scale cycling infrastructure (like signage and lane painting on local streets) left to local councils:

“The state government needed to identify a network, an arterial cycling network if you will, that [they] could get on with... but not stop [councils] from doing their basic localised network connections” (State Transport Planner 1).

In the context of restricted budgets and defined remits, individual agencies adopt narrow definitions of a successful policy outcome to fit with their specific government agency mandate. The fragmented nature of large government bureaucracies also meant that a project with multiple benefits advantageous to a wide number of government portfolios dilutes and stretches those perceived benefits, creating a situation where it is not clear who should take responsibility for implementation. Moreover, if the benefit is soft and difficult to measure – e.g. health benefits that will surface many years into the future – rather than a hard measure which a transport agency is more accustomed to supporting – e.g. decrease the number of cars on city side streets – garnering support may be difficult. If the proverbial policy buck can be passed on, government departments will do so to protect their limited financial resources for another, more desirable project that aligns more acutely with their policy remit:

“the vast majority of the benefit streams in that analysis [of cycleways] are health related. That's still challenging for Government. Not that [the Government doesn't] like health benefits for projects. But ... and this is something where perhaps silos do come into play – if you're dealing with a transport budget, the benefits you want are transport benefits” (State Transport Planner 2)

Within the community, there was an overall perception that the inflexible agency agendas resulted in a lack of openness to new ideas, or a ‘path dependence’ for delivering existing policy directions (Bunker, 2012). Moving institutions in another direction, particularly when

there is little political clout to do so, can be a painstaking exercise for project supporters as stated by this community campaigner:

“if you ...[look] at the charter of the [roads agency]... their number one priority was to maintain or improve vehicle transit times. That's always what they say [if a bikeway or similar is suggested]... ‘No, we can't do that. That will hold up vehicles’” (Bike Activist).

While the bureaucratic leviathan poses challenges for project supporters outside it, in the GreenWay case effective approaches were used by the project supporters to seek out government department support. By being opportunistic and politically astute, namely, recognising their projects had potential benefits in a number of policy portfolios they were able to obtain grant funding (e.g. from the Environmental Trust within the environment department and from the planning department). Also, GreenWay supporters used the announcement of the light rail project through the GreenWay site to focus their campaign efforts on how a shared cycling/pedestrian path could specifically benefit the light rail project:

“[The steering committee] sat down and ... agreed a list of key statements on ... how the GreenWay would benefit light rail. ... [Then they] went into Transport ... [with a] couple of community members, [and] three mayors... They were blown away... they made an announcement two weeks later: ...we basically sold the idea to them at that meeting.” (Member of the GreenWay Coordination Team)

Obtaining traction within government bureaucracies required a different approach to the one that had successfully secured community traction. Where once the GreenWay campaigners had been able to channel “that spontaneity and that community passion” (Member of the GreenWay Coordination Team), now the community groups had to bed down a longer-term

strategy to correspond with the timeframes of bigger infrastructure projects set up by the NSW Government.

### **Political traction**

Building community traction is typically sought to either oppose something from happening or to lobby in its favour. Beyond government-led engagement opportunities, community traction can be seen as the most desired way to influence decision-making. Up until this point, the GreenWay had remained a non-political project, but rather a project situated within a base of grassroots community support. However, project supporters felt that the incremental bureaucratic support was not helping the cycleway progress towards delivery. Responding to these challenges, community groups modified their campaigns to seek traction with elected officials, particularly the local politicians, but also the relevant ministers. These efforts were a logical escalation of the efforts to acquire support from local councillors, with the shared underlying logic being that elected officials' power is awarded to them by their constituents. Supporters made a deliberate attempt to seek support from elected officials who could communicate the community-wide benefits associated with the project to the Transport Minister for NSW. These efforts paid off for the GreenWay when in July 2010 the announcement of light rail within the GreenWay corridor included a commitment to build the shared path (NSW Government, 2010a).

The methods employed to achieve political traction share a number of parallels in the methods and arguments used to obtain local community traction. However, unlike local traction, the political traction was not as uniformly successful. This was particularly evident in two ways. The first was that while political traction led to announcements and funding for the GreenWay in 2010, it was not embedded in the delivering agencies' strategic directions and thus lacked a tie to government budgets. The light rail announcement aligned with the

lead up to an election, the funding was new and did not come out of existing strategic project budgets:

“[The government at the time] had to come up with something, so they just came out with the light rail: ‘we're going to build it and we're going to do the GreenWay’.

Subsequent to that we know they didn't even have a budget. There was no funding for it. They just pulled it out of thin air and said ‘we're going to do it’” (Member of NSW Parliament)

The result was a push back from those agencies, which maintained the reservations – of funding priorities and measures of success – outlined above. It meant that the absence of sustained political commitment (discussed momentarily) led to a reversion to established strategic directions.

Another tension between the elected governments and the public agencies, was the restructuring of the Department of Transport and the RTA, with most RTA functions to be handled by the newly established Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) agency. Significantly, strategic transport planning functions – including the cycling network – became a departmental responsibility, under the rebadged ‘Transport for NSW’. Representatives from the community groups had established relationships with members of the former RTA, but they no longer had responsibility for cycling paths, as that had been subsumed under the new Transport for NSW department. The community would have to seek out new relationships with those in Transport for NSW.

Beyond the political-bureaucratic nexus, the second and more evident shortcoming was that any successful political traction became a liability when there was a change in government. This occurred, and had notable impacts, when the 13-year Labor government was replaced by a Liberal-National one after the March 2011 election. As outlined above, the change in

government led to a deferral of any commitment or funding for the GreenWay cycling path. At this juncture, the Friends of the GreenWay increased political pressure, and sought to bring the issue to the attention of the new parliament with a 10,000-signature petition. In February 2012, the petition was handed to the Parliament and on 31 May 2012 the debate was held. However, while this petition was supported by local MPs, none of these MPs were in the political party that formed government. This politicised the GreenWay and gave the opposition a greater chance to brand the project as politically aligned. A number of people involved were not happy with this: it derailed much of its to-that-point bipartisan support, and it made it difficult to entrench the project into broader strategic policies. This was seen as a misstep by some stakeholders, as it was thought to further discourage the new government from delivering what would be seen as ‘the other guy’s’ idea:

“it would more likely be acceptable to the Liberals if it wasn’t called the GreenWay.”

(Friends of the GreenWay Volunteer)

“there’s a lot less political heat if someone seeks to implement it ... different people can support it without feeling like it’s a partisan issue. That is the most important thing because if it’s owned by someone [of a particular political party], no-one wants to touch it.” (Member of NSW Parliament)

Indeed, while the petition did lead to a parliamentary debate on the issue, it failed to obtain any change to the position held by the Minister for Transport. While the process reaffirmed and reinvigorated community support for the GreenWay, it did not yield any immediate commitments from the NSW Government. From our position as observers, it was evident that supporters – somewhat deflated – would work to leverage the galvanised local support by focusing on neighbourhood projects that could serve to improve the GreenWay as a shared corridor, rather than misuse valuable time and scarce resources lobbying a government that

was clearly not interested in delivering the cycleway. In some respects it was thought that it would have been better if the supporters had trudged away in the background with the agencies responsible for delivery, so it did not get derailed following the change of government. To date the lobbying for the construction of a shared GreenWay continues.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has argued that, in the absence of government-structured inclusive governance arrangements, guerrilla governance reactively fills that void and contests decisions by building traction and legitimacy from beyond government. The GreenWay case study illustrates the influence guerrilla governance can have on building traction across community, policy, bureaucracy and party politics; when the community groups endeavoured to advocate for the GreenWay, multiple strategies needed to be employed to gain traction across these four spaces. To the extent that plan making is inclusive, it has long been known that policy goals and investment into infrastructure is steered by the elite few – politicians, senior bureaucrats, large business and powerful interest groups (Healey, 2012, page 28). The position of the GreenWay as a medium to long term ‘priority project’ prompted the Friends of the GreenWay to interface directly with the broader forces at play – path dependence and party politics – that were fraying their efforts to see the GreenWay built. Seeking traction had the intended outcome of making the project political, but the unintended consequence of connecting it to the Labor political party. When that party lost the 2011 election and the Liberal-National party gained power, the GreenWay was abandoned as an immediate priority. Guerrilla governance seeks to bridge the gap between deliberative engagement and agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 1999) and, we argue, broadens how the term ‘governance’ is used within urban planning scholarship, by incorporating such ‘legitimised’ agitation from beyond government. As systems of strategic planning endeavour to become more efficient and



amendable to a neoliberal planning context (Gleeson and Low, 2000; Olesen, 2014), at the same time as expectations for an inclusive and transparent system of planning decision making pervade, greater attention needs to be paid to the transitional spaces between policy creation and delivery and expose the ongoing role inclusive governance must play in this space.

Even though guerrilla governance may be described as an inclusive governance arrangement, it lacks comprehensiveness in its reach to all other sectors of the community. Instead, it leverages common sets of interests in the community to advocate for a particular outcome, and the passion and energy of those that may already be engaged. Seeking broader community traction is one way that guerrilla governance spreads its tentacles to solicit additional support (and thus be more inclusive) from others that may be less engaged currently. It positions those citizens and groups that have the resources, time and inclination into places of greater influence with the perverse effect of reinforcing disproportionate power relations across the citizenry – a key criticism of pluralistic models of governance.

However, in departing from pluralism slightly, guerrilla governance is indicative of a groundswell of community activity to overcome a lack of engagement opportunities. It illustrates how inclusion into decision making spaces is actively pursued in a unified way by interested community groups and it confronts and intercepts the point at which legitimacy achieved early in the process of plan making may start to break down. To ensure a desired project remains on the strategic agenda, the role of community groups changes to one of ongoing piecemeal implementation – chipping away at the problem by gaining community, bureaucratic, policy and political support. As a term, guerrilla governance captures the informal, irregular and opportunistic approaches involved. It also captures the fact that it is done with a mandate, legitimised through the evident support of other community groups,

local governments, politicians and even – through grant funding – parts of the broader government bureaucracy. It also aligns with official government strategic plans, both in terms of achieving the plan's objectives, but also its perceived philosophy of inclusive governance structures, evidenced by the ongoing efforts to gain traction across the diverse spaces in strategic planning and infrastructure delivery. Guerrilla governance keeps ideas on the agenda and keeps accountability through implementation and fills in the gaps when inclusive governance breaks down. Such malleable governance structures were also shown to be able to withstand and negotiate the lack of continuity in the direction of formal government (such as changing governments at elections and restructured government departments). It hints at a planning process that is able to transcend formal government and embrace inclusive governance.

The existence of guerrilla governance is suggestive of a 'legitimacy paradox' contained within strategic planning. Project planning is a highly contentious aspect of strategic planning, particularly at the point when the decision to pursue the project is made. Rather than collaborate at the point when difficult decisions about prioritisation are being made, inclusiveness is stymied. It would seem that government stumbles at this last hurdle before implementation. Needless to say, even if that final hurdle was inclusive, not all parties will be satisfied with the decision and so will seek out alternative methods of keeping *their* project on the agenda (Van den Broeck, 2013). Pluralism takes over and groups use the resources available to them to influence the outcome. Building support for an outcome – from the ground up – is similar in trajectory to what governments undertake to give a policy legitimacy in plan making from the top down. Further interrogation of the notion of legitimacy in the context of planning decision making in these transitional spaces is required as well as the role that 'inclusive' governance plays in these processes. In the space of project implementation, legitimacy may need to be continuously negotiated. Governance systems can only

accommodate – that is help bring legitimacy to a policy or project – when that system is inclusive and legible. In the context of infrastructure delivery, as Dodson (2009, page 12) writes, there is a growing concern that the governance systems that support the entirety of the strategic planning process are ineffectual. When those systems constrict post plan making and turn into a managerial model of urban management, residents’ and community groups’ energy and strategies to lobby for a specific outcome is redirected. Here the focus is on a kind of ‘street fighting pluralism’ where one’s desired project will only be delivered through stealth.

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