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Cross-national Lesson Drawing for Planning – Taking Advantage of Globalization

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Abstract

The forces of globalization have altered the context within which planners operate dramatically. Some believe that the consequences are grim – they point to growing economic and social divisions in societies, as well as environmental exploitation and the erosion of public safety as global terror finds its place in a 'borderless world'. A more optimistic interpretation of current trends suggests that, fuelled by advances in communications technology, global awareness is growing rapidly in the population at large. Moreover, transnational migrants are refreshing the culture and politics of many countries with the result that an increasing number of cities are now experiencing the benefits of 'dynamic diversity' – that is, a very rapid expansion in the percentage of foreign-born residents. In this paper, by drawing on the arguments presented in a new book [*Governing Cities in a Global Era* by Robin Hambleton and Jill Simone Gross (forthcoming)], we explore four themes: 1) The nature of globalization, 2) Global urban trends, 3) Dynamic diversity in the modern city, and 4) The implications of these developments for cross-national policy transfer. It will be claimed that the ideas that guide city planning theory and practice are being reshaped by a global conversation about the strengths and weaknesses of alternative ways of responding to these new challenges. By referring to concrete examples of cross-national policy transfer the paper aims to point towards new directions for planning scholarship and practice in a multicultural world.

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1) Globalization – the new context for planning

The economic, political, social, environmental and cultural changes implied by the term 'globalization' are truly startling. Hutton and Giddens bring together a collection of essays on the contours of contemporary capitalism that give weight to this view: 'It is the interaction of extraordinary technological innovation combined with the world-wide reach driven by global capitalism that give today's change its particular complexion. It has now a speed, inevitability and force that it has not had before' (Hutton and Giddens 2000, p. vii). Other studies in more recent years support this interpretation (Hutton 2002; Friedman 2005). At the same time, while global pressures may appear to be uniform, domestic responses vary as civic leaders seek competitive advantage within this evolving global system.

Friedman (2005) takes the view that the world has now been 'flattened'. Horizontal connectivity aided by computers, e-mail, networks, teleconferencing and dynamic new software mean that '…it is now possible for more people than ever to collaborate in real time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on a more equal footing than at any previous time in the history of the world…' (Friedman 2005, p. 8). Friedman argues, then, that new networks of communication have brought about the death of distance and that spatial location is now unimportant – all can succeed in this new flat world.

In our new book Jill Gross and I argue that the world is **not** 'flat', as Friedman contends (Hambleton and Gross 2007, forthcoming). Rather, along with other social scientists, we take the view that global forces map onto an **uneven** terrain of politics and power, and that this unevenness remains even in an era of hyper connectivity. As many urban scholars have demonstrated, globalization produces 'new centers and margins,' as cities seek to position themselves as 'strategic nodes' for investment and production within the 'space' of global economic 'flows' (Castells 1989, 1996; Sassen 2002). On this analysis those occupying strategic nodes within the global system are advantaged. They become magnets for people, investment, resources and power. Cities outside these flows are disadvantaged and can spiral into decline. It follows, therefore, that the world is far from 'flat'.

As Smith observes the urban world is also far from orderly, rather the city is '… a fluid site of contested social relations of meaning and power' (2001, p. 67). Smith is reminding us, that between cities and within cities there are some who are connected to beneficial global flows and others who are marginalized. Thus, even in the advantaged cities with spectacular levels of inward investment, the gaps between the wealthy and the poor are continuing to widen. How these uneven dynamics are understood and managed become central challenges for urban scholarship and planning practice.

What, then, does globalization mean for planning practice? Some authors argue that global forces mean that the scope for locality-based proactive planning is practically erased unless, that is, planners see themselves as a servants of the prevailing neo-liberal agenda. Scholars adopting this position argue that cities cannot do much other than compete for inward investment of capital. Tiebout (1956) pointed to this over fifty years ago, when he suggested that people and industry choose their locations based upon a simple cost-benefit ratio of goods and services available. Peterson (1981) later suggested that, due to local resource deficits and the need to

maintain their competitive position, cities (in the US at least) had become dependent on higher levels of government and private investment for survival. Thus, in his view, local policy is heavily constrained – in effect local leaders can do little in the face of wider economic forces. Urban dependency, on this analysis, increases as the world becomes increasingly global. Labor and capital are mobile, people follow jobs and industry opts to move to more distant locations, where the cost of land and labor are lower.

Other scholars argue, however, that urban dependency theories overstate the power of international and national actors and understate the power and influence of local leaders, city planners and activists. For example, Savitch and Kantor, in their cross-national comparative research on urban development, point out that city leaders can, in fact, bargain with business and that: 'Cities with strong popular control systems exercise greater influence over capital investment and influence the course of economic development decisions' (Savitch and Kantor 2002, p. 45) This is a key insight for modern planning scholarship – private power dominates urban development in many cities but this does not necessarily mean that public purpose evaporates world wide.

Indeed, some European urban scholars argue that cities are not at the mercy of multi national companies and even suggest that cities now have elevated importance in the global world (Jessop 1999; Denters and Rose 2005). Various US scholars have also argued for the development of a more sophisticated view of the importance of 'place'. For example, Abu-Lughod (1999) emphasizes the uniqueness of localities derived from local history, culture, geography and politics. Goetz and Clark (1993) in their analysis of 'New Localism' also suggest that it is the power of local leaders that is prominent in explaining urban success.

Of course 'globalization' is **not** just an economic phenomenon – it has social, political, cultural and environmental dimensions. Globalization enhances mobility and connectivity among people and can, as a result, enhance the local quality of life. In many urban centers we find the physical manifestation of these processes, as people with differing social, economic, religious and sexual orientations live in close proximity with one another. In turn cities become not simply economic hubs, but socio-cultural and political hubs. How the differing needs of local stakeholders are met, how conflicts and cleavages are managed become critical components of urban success. A central theme in our new book, which contains contributions from twenty authors covering all continents, is that place matters (Hambleton and Gross 2007). We suggest, therefore, that there is space for different approaches to city planning at local level depending on the pattern of power relations in the 'global-local' nexus of particular places (Punch et al 2007).

2) Global urbanization trends

And so to our second theme – global urbanization trends. More people now live in urban areas than in the entire history of the world. More than that, it is now the case that the urban population outnumbers the rural. In 2005 most of the 6.5 billion people on the planet lived in rural areas – roughly 3.3 billion rural and 3.2 billion urban. As urban scholars know only too well this year the urban population of the world is set to overtake the rural. As with globalization, urbanization also reflects some regional variation. According to the World Bank,

Western Europe and the United States are currently the most urbanized parts of the world at 77%, though Latin America is just a step away with some 75% of the population living in urban areas. In the Middle East and Northern Africa 59% of the population are urban, followed by 35% in East Asia and the Pacific, and 34% in Africa (World Bank 2002). The UN projects that the global urban population will grow in leaps and bounds – but the pace of growth will vary by region.

In fact, the world is urbanizing at a remarkable rate. **Figure 1** shows how the overall population of the world is set to climb from 6.5 billion in 2005 to 8.2 billion in 2030. By then five billion people (or 61% of the world population) will live in urban areas. This is a staggering increase of 1.7 billion in the world urban population in a comparatively short space of time. Consider the fact that London has a population of seven million at present. An increase of 1.7 billion is, then, equivalent to adding 250 cities the size of London to the global urban landscape in just 25 years. In 1950 there were 86 cities in the world with a population of more than one million; today there are 400, and by 2015 the UN predicts that there will be over 550.

Figure 1   World Population Growth
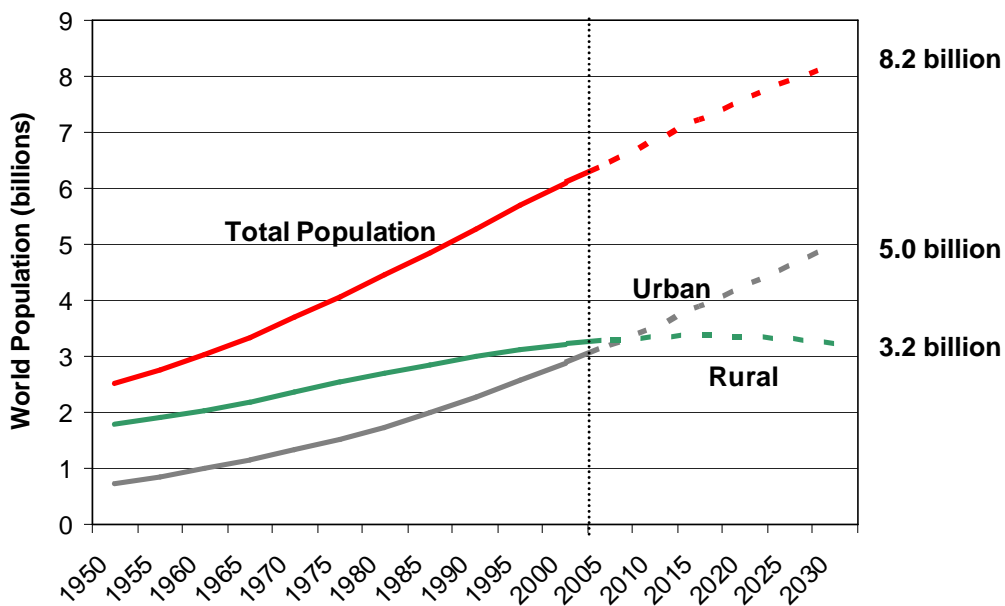
Source United Nations World Urbanization Prospects, http://esa.un.org/unup/

This urban population growth is spectacular. From a public policy and a city planning point of view it is just as important to record that this growth is mainly happening in areas that have **not** seen much in the way of urbanization in the past. As Davis (2006) points out most of this surging urban expansion will occur in the developing countries. He notes, correctly, that the scale and velocity of Third World urbanization dwarfs even that of Victorian Europe. For example, China is urbanizing at a speed unprecedented in human history. It 'added more city-dwellers in the 1980s than did all of Europe (including Russia) in the entire nineteenth century!' (Davis 2006, p. 2).

Table 1 lists the ten biggest mega-cities in 1950 and as projected for 2015. While we can argue about the definition of 'urban' boundaries, it is difficult to contest the view that a massive shift in the geographical pattern of the urban population is taking place. There were several European cities in the 'top ten' megacities in 1950, now there are none. Even the mighty New York – **the** mega-city in 1950 is now 'overtaken' by mega-cities cities in other continents. True, the growth rate of some specific cities in the Third World may falter as they encounter formidable air pollution and congestion problems. For example, as Davis (2006) points out, Mexico City, widely predicted to achieve a population of 25 million in the 1990s, experienced a slow down in growth such that its population is now in the region of 19 to 20 million. However, the overall pattern of massive global urban expansion is unmistakable. Most of the new city dwellers in the coming period will be in the Third World, and here the leadership challenge centers on supporting and managing these massive populations. Interestingly the growth of cities in Europe and North America has slowed, and the resident population is aging producing different challenges for city leaders.

Table 1   Top ten megacities: 1950 and 2015

1950 (population, millions)			*2015 (population, millions)*		
1	New York	12.3	1	Tokyo	36.2
2	London	8.7	2	Mumbai (Bombay)	22.6
3	Tokyo	6.9	3	Delhi	20.9
4	Paris	5.4	4	Mexico City	20.6
5	Moscow	5.4	5	São Paulo	20.0
6	Shanghai	5.3	6	New York	19.7
7	Rhine-Ruhr North	5.2	7	Dhaka	17.9
8	Buenos Aires	5.0	8	Jakarta	17.5
9	Chicago	4.9	9	Lagos	17.0
10	Calcutta	4.4	10	Calcutta	16.8

Source United Nations World Urbanization Prospects, http://esa.un.org/unup/

Urban economies are not all the same and it is clear that the size of a city's population does not necessarily provide a reliable indicator of the economic strength of a city. Indeed, the whole thrust of the analysis put forward by Davis (2006) in his thought provoking book, *Planet of Slums,* is to suggest that the cities of the South, despite their size, are in deep trouble. He argues that massive plant closures and de-industrialization have knocked the bottom out of the urban economy in cities like Bombay, Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo. Neuwirth (2005), in *Shadow Cities* estimates that one in six people, globally, are squatters: 'Every day, close to two hundred thousand people leave their ancestral homes in the rural areas and move to cities. … The overwhelming majority … are simply people who came to the city, needed a place to live that they or their families could afford' (p. 9). A consequence is that much of the 21st Century urban

world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement and decay. This environment of tension and distress raises formidable challenges for activists and leaders striving to improve approaches to urban government.

In contrast to the challenges of a burgeoning urban population many of the cities of the wealthy west have experienced population decline. Most shrinking cities in the last 50 years have been in Western industrial countries, especially in the USA (59), Britain (27), Germany (26), and Italy (23). Older industrial cities like Cleveland and Baltimore in the US, and Liverpool and Manchester in the UK, have never really recovered from the period of de-industrialization, when jobs and population moved to suburban and ex-urban areas. In areas like these, we find new initiatives to 'bring people back to the city'. This approach is commonplace in, for example, the US context and various studies have documented this trend (Gratz and Mintz 1998; Grogan and Proscio 2000; Gross 2005) and some city mayors have contributed to this literature (Norquist 1998). Indeed, there is a growing recognition among city leaders that key players in the modern 'knowledge economy' – sometimes referred to as the 'creative class' (Florida 2002) – are vital to any serious hopes of urban renaissance. These talented and creative people – scientists, engineers, professors, artists, designers, architects, writers, think tank researchers, editors, inventors and the like – as well as people in allied professions – like high tech industries, financial services, business management and so on – have strong views about where they want to live.

In relation to planning to conserve and protect the environment European cities are well ahead of those in other continents. As Newman and Thornley observe in their comparative analysis of city planning: 'Europe displays an environmental priority through both policy at the European scale and in the enthusiastic take-up of environmental planning in most cities' (Newman and Thornley 2005, p. 271). But there is no room for complacency. The environmental challenges facing all city leaders are formidable. Interestingly, while rapid urbanization creates significant stresses and strains in many cities it is also the case that, if designed properly, dense urban living can reduce the ecological impact of people on the planet (Mau 2004). This is because higher density requires less investment in transportation, fewer sewer and power lines, fewer roads and can, again if designed properly, be more energy efficient. Urbanization need not - indeed should not - create an unpleasant, unsustainable environment (Boone and Modarres 2006). But livable cities require strong approaches to city planning and urban design.

We will return later to consider the implications of these urban trends for cross-national lesson drawing and policy exchange. Already, however, two points stand out. First, the global need for professional urban planning and city management skills has never been greater and this need is set to **expand** at a dramatic rate. The unprecedented, rapid expansion of cities in the developing world lays down major challenges for the international agencies concerned to promote sustainable urban development as well as for planning academics and professional planners in the wealthy west. How can we help these countries cope? Second, how can we improve the dialogue between planners in the well resourced countries of the 'western' world and colleagues in countries lacking resources and professional skills? As we build dialogue how can we ensure that we develop sound partnerships and avoid unintended cultural imperialism? This challenge could become the greatest challenge facing planning in the coming period – and to meet this challenge requires more sophisticated approaches to inter-cultural dialogue and exchange.

3) Dynamic diversity in the modern city

The processes of globalization and urbanization outlined above are producing cities that are now much more multi-cultural than they have been in the past. In Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, for example, there was a 7% increase in foreign-born population over the past decade (Mayr 2003). In addition, as Stren (2007) observes, cities in the developing world are also becoming more multi-cultural, although patterns vary. In Latin American and African cities, growth is most commonly due to regional shifts. In Mexico City, for example, only 0.42% of the population is foreign born – the majority of new arrivals are from surrounding rural areas (Benton-Short et al. 2004). In Africa, tribal warfare in the countryside in some countries has forced migration to urban areas. In receiving cities, or immigrant gateway cities, like Toronto in Canada, over 40% of city residents are foreign born, with the largest concentration of immigrants coming from China.

It is not simply the number of immigrants, but the diversity and origin of new arrivals, that create nuances at the local level – as immigrants bring with them their own unique cultural heritage, which shapes their expectations and actions. As one analyst comments:

> 'International migration today touches the lives of more people and looms larger
> in the politics and economics of more states than ever before… One of the most
> urgent challenges most societies face in the years ahead is identifying a set of
> coherent responses to one of international migration's most important dimensions:
> its effect on receiving societies' cities and their residents – natives and
> immigrants'.
> (Papademetriou 2001, p. 98)

An increasing number of cities are now experiencing what Jill Gross and I describe as 'dynamic diversity' (Hambleton and Gross 2007, forthcoming). By this we refer to the very rapid arrival in a city region of diverse groups from various countries and cultures. This startling transformation of urban neighborhoods is now taking place in many European cities as well as US cities and, given its significance for city planning and local government, it remains relatively neglected.

Popular hyper mobility has, of course, multiple dimensions. In cities in Sub-Saharan Africa for example, the most educated are immigrating, while the poor are migrating. Here cities struggle to provide services for a growing population in the absence of resources and capacity. In other parts of the world, in post-industrial receiving cities such as Paris, London, tensions differ. As competition for jobs grows more intense these cities must respond to the diverse needs of asylum seekers and economic migrants if the new arrivals are not to be pushed to the margins of society. In cities such as Copenhagen and Oslo, where diversity is a more recent phenomenon, the challenges of responding to cultural and religious difference have moved to the center of the agenda for urban planners and policy makers.

In the US the cities of Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York are of particular interest in this context as they are all experiencing what I would describe as 'advanced' patterns of dynamic

diversity. D'Eramo, in his perceptive analysis of Chicago, argues that immigration is, once again, transforming US cities:

> '…immigration, which has begun to flow once again in the direction of the United States and has once more burst on its shores, is leading to a shake-up in human geography as profound as that caused by the immigrant waves of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.'   '...it is now possible to be at the same time American and Vietnamese, or Sikh or Iranian – that it to say, there is a new way of being American.' (D'Eramo 2002 p.414)

D'Eramo suggests that, in the US, the immigrant waves of old are now being submerged by new human tides from Latin America, the Middle East, and even Africa. This new America, he contends, is ceasing to be a Western nation built by European immigrants, in effect a white civilization, and has become instead a truly multiracial realm. Certainly the pace of population change is remarkable. For example, a recent study of the Mexican community in the Chicago city region indicates that the number of Mexican workers tripled between 1980 and 2000 (Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA) 2006). There are now 1.3 million Mexicans in the Chicago metropolitan area. They are already the largest ethnic group and their numbers are projected to more than double in the next thirty years. The CCGA report suggests that major problems are being stored up because steps to integrate this important ethnic group fall well short of what is needed.

Diversity can bring great vibrancy to the urban society, so long as new groups are integrated – socially, politically and economically. Indeed, the global city can be defined by the intermixing of cultures and ideas. Developing and adopting policies that head off conflict between insiders and outsiders is a challenge. In the modern multi-cultural city the interests of new stakeholders must be acknowledged, and their needs must be responded to. Recent urban riots in the *banlieues* on the outskirts of Paris are an illustration of the potential costs that can arise when governments fail to be responsive to local demographic changes and legitimate social needs. The variable geography of the multi-cultural city also requires city leaders to develop geographically sensitive policies. In the US some activists suggest that effective policies will require the introduction of Racial Impact Assessments (RIAs) in relation to new urban development proposals. Modelled on experience with Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) such RIAs would examine the consequences of developments for different ethnic groups before schemes are permitted or rejected.

D'Eramo (2002) argues that, in the US at least, history is about to repeat itself – and the picture he paints is not uplifting. The new waves of immigration to the US from Asia and Latin America are, in his view, going through the same process the Europeans went through in the nineteenth century: ' The same logic of capital that a century ago attracted such a huge workforce (enabling the bosses to keep the costs of labor to a minimum) exists today. … Just as furious competition between Blacks and White ethnics in the job market could be glimpsed in embryo in the 1919 Chicago race riots, so too have the LA riots of 1992 been seen as the explosion of a new hostility between Blacks and Hispanics' (D'Eramo 2002, pp417-418).

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC on September 11, 2001, and subsequent violent attacks in various European cities, right up to and including the recent bomb scares in London and Glasgow, add a new dimension to the debate about 'dynamic diversity' in the modern city. Patterns vary, but all European countries now wrestle with the challenge of how to welcome immigrants – how to adapt urban governance arrangements to meet new needs – while extremist groups continue to exploit the fears of host communities by fanning up prejudice and hatred (Levin and Rabrenovic 2004). These themes, which now deserve our focused attention, are explored further in chapters by Bockmeyer (2007) and Gross (2007) in my new book (Hambleton and Gross 2007).

4) Cross-national policy transfer

What are the implications of these arguments for cross-national dialogue? Is there room for improvement in cross-national urban policy exchange? Can countries and/or cities become more effective in learning from one another? Skeptics will say 'no'. They will argue that the differences – cultural, political, ideological – are so great that public policy for cities should rightly be nation specific. Optimists will say 'yes'. Notwithstanding the major differences between different societies there are significant possibilities for exchange – and that these possibilities have been sorely neglected by urban scholars. Elsewhere I have suggested that the case for a massive expansion of cross-national lesson drawing, not just for city and regional planning but for public policy as a whole, has never been stronger (Hambleton 2007a). In my view the question before us is not:'Should we engage in cross-national lesson drawing for policy?' It is: 'How do we achieve a step change improvement in the theory and practice of cross-national lesson drawing?'

In this context Rose (2005) offers some helpful advice on how to go about what he calls 'instrumental learning' from other countries. He suggests that policy makers do not seek fresh ideas for their own sake but to promote political satisfaction. This lays down a significant challenge for academics. Comparative research on public policy, including comparative research on urban governance and city planning, is an expanding field. But when this work is limited to advancing understanding – the traditional focus of scholarship - it falls short of instrumental learning. Cross-national lesson drawing requires investigators to go beyond description and analysis and offer evidence-based advice to policy makers.

There are four main reasons why those concerned with the future of planning – whether as academics or practitioners – should devote more time to instrumental learning from abroad.

- First, as Rose observes, learning can focus on actual accomplishments in another setting. This, he argues, can provide a better basis for policy innovation than merely making up ideas and speculating about what might happen if they were adopted.

- Second, in a rapidly globalising world, citizens expect professionals to be up to date with the latest developments – wherever they take place. Information, people and money now flow almost effortlessly across national frontiers in the worlds of science, business, the arts and culture. Why should public policy be walled into national enclaves?

- Third, city leaders, planners and managers operate in an increasingly multi-cultural world. Examining experience in other countries can enhance the 'cultural competence' of both politicians and professionals by exposing individuals to different ways of doing things.

- A fourth reason for studying experience overseas is that common problems do **not** produce an identical response. It is the **differences** in the responses that governments make to common problems that can offer powerful and compelling insights for both theory and practice.

True, there are pitfalls to avoid in cross-national learning and, again, Rose provides a helpful sketch of some of the main danger zones. First, mindless copying of an innovation is a classic error – local culture and context vary so that policies that may perform well in one location may be a disaster if transplanted across frontiers without adaptation. Sensitivity to local history, traditions and power structures is critical. Second, it follows that a search for 'best practice' is flawed – we need processes that lead to 'relevant practice'. Third, so-called 'successful' policies may not actually be 'successful'. With most cities now practicing some form of 'place marketing' (if not outright 'civic boosterism') it is essential that policies being considered for transfer are subject to evaluation before they are placed in the 'for export' shopping cart. Fourth, and this is a point not fully examined by Rose, there is an ideological dimension to policy exchange that we neglect at our peril. For example, critics of the World Bank and other international agencies claim to identify a 'Washington consensus' regarding what constitutes desirable rural and urban development in the world. However, hemmed in by the rubric of neo-liberalism, this 'consensus' may not be a consensus at all. Ramo (2004), for example, maps out a 'Beijing consensus'. Hutton (2006 p207), in his intriguing critique of modern capitalism, gives both these interpretations short shrift: 'Neither the Beijing consensus not the Washington consensus has a real grip on the dynamics of successful capitalism'. The point I wish to emphasize here is that any approach to cross-national lesson drawing needs to be mindful of the ideological stance (or value propositions) that underpin given policies. If these ideological underpinnings go unexamined trouble lies ahead.

So much for the caveats, how can we frame a conversation about cross-national lesson drawing for planning and what might a good approach look like? In my view it is helpful to distinguish two broad, albeit overlapping, approaches to cross-national policy transfer – the informal and the formal. We consider these before advancing some suggestions on how to improve cross-national policy transfer.

1) Informal cross-national transfer

Informal transfer arises when individuals take notice of experience in another country and use the insights they gain to influence their practice. This form of transfer, while it may not be that well documented, has been part of urban planning practice for centuries. Visit the stunning urban space lying at the heart of the beautiful hill town of Pienza in Tuscany and you will encounter an early example of cross-national transfer. In 1459 Pope Pius II decided to redevelop the central area of the town in order to create an ensemble of buildings and spaces to exemplify

Renaissance perfection. While Pius turned to Rossellino, a famous Florentine architect who worked closely with Leon Battista Alberti, to lead the design effort, it is clear that Pius was the prime mover.

Before he was elected to the papacy in 1458, Pius traveled extensively in Europe and it is clear that he brought his international experience to bear on the designs for Pienza. Thus, for example, the aisles in the new cathedral are the same height as the nave. This design – untried in Italy at the time – follows the model of the Hallenkirchen Pius had encountered in northern Europe. The result is a Tuscan cathedral with an unusually light, airy interior. Outside the cathedral the harmony of space and volume created by the new buildings is breathtaking. Not surprisingly planners and architects from around the world continue to make the pilgrimage to Pienza to learn from a classic example of how to create new urban spaces that integrate effortlessly with the existing urban fabric.

A modern example of informal policy transfer is provided by the 'waterside' or 'marina' approach to urban renewal. In the 1960s and the 1970s urban planners tended to neglect the decaying harbours and canals located in the central areas of many cities. These 'eyesores' were seen as relics of a bygone era and new urban development tended to turn its back on the water.

Donald Schaefer, when he was Mayor of Baltimore from 1971 to 1986, deserves credit for seeing the hidden potential of the run down docks as a focus for urban regeneration. The successful reinvention of the Inner Harbour, under Mayor Schaefer and, subsequently, Mayor Kurt Schmoke, as a major leisure and tourist destination is now something of an urban planning legend in the US. (Hambleton 1990; Ward 2006).

Certainly the Baltimore experience had a major impact not just on planning practice in other US cities, but also in the UK. For example, the creative and successful redevelopment of the Bristol harbour owes much to informal lesson drawing from Baltimore. High quality urban design, attention to the shaping of public spaces, ensuring access to the waterfront, mixing uses within buildings, bringing public and private stakeholders together, renovating important old buildings in a creative way - all features of the approach adopted in Baltimore – are concepts that have been exported to many UK cities. Indeed, this approach to waterside renewal has now become mainstream practice in the UK.

In a shrinking world with young as well as more senior planners traveling extensively we can expect informal cross-national policy transfer to mushroom in the future. In my view, this holds out great promise for the improvement of planning practice.

2) Formal cross-national transfer

Formal cross-national learning is, in theory, more systematic than the informal approach. It involves a government (national, regional or city) explicitly setting out to examine experience in another country in order to generate specific lessons for their practice. The focus for transfer varies considerably and it is helpful to think of different levels of formal transfer - reflecting different degrees of difficulty in effecting a successful transfer.

Thus, in its simplest form, lesson drawing might focus on specific **'measures'** – matters that might be regarded as fairly technical. For example, examining alternative approaches to the design of speed retarders on the highway could be seen as a mainly professional exercise. Exchange on nitty gritty issues of this kind may not hit the headlines but can lead to significant improvements in the built environment.

When cross-national learning moves up to the level of **'policy'** the challenges are greater. For example, deciding whether the London approach to congestion charging would be good for New York City moves the transfer process into highly contested political territory. Established core values about car usage and the role of the state would need to be re-examined. Powerful stakeholders on both sides of the argument can be expected to join the fray in a flash.

At the highest level the focus for transfer is **'institutional'**. Here policy makers ask whether the design of the institutional arrangements they have in place to govern society need to be reconsidered. Thus, for example, leaders may ask 'How are cities and metropolitan regions planned and governed in other countries? Can we learn lessons for the institutional design of urban government in our own country by examining foreign experience?'

A good example of 'institutional' cross-national transfer into the UK is provided by the Labour Government's approach to the re-design of the political management structures of local government in the period following the 1997 General Election. Spurred on by the enthusiasm of Prime Minister Blair for directly elected mayors and stronger leadership models, civil servants – aided by academic advisers – set out to find out about local government arrangements in other countries (Hambleton and Sweeting 2004).

Speaking as one of the academic advisers to Ministers, I can record that they were genuinely interested in learning about alternative approaches to urban governance. US experience with elected mayors and city managers came to influence directly the drafting of the UK legislation in the late 1990s because Ministers took the trouble to read about and debate these models. But the Local Government Act 2000, which introduced directly elected mayors and other new leadership models to English local government as a whole, was not a mere copy of US practice. On the contrary, Labour Ministers – notably Hilary Armstrong MP and Nick Raynsford MP – worked very hard not just to learn from abroad, but also to create a distinctively home grown approach to the design of English local government institutions. The models on the statue book are unique.

An example of 'policy' transfer that falls short of institutional re-design but has, nevertheless, been very influential, is provided by enterprise zones – a UK urban planning export. Invented by Sir Peter Hall in 1977 enterprise zones were intended to encourage the private sector to get stuck into blighted neighbourhoods. Firms inside the zones would receive tax relief and be freed from the 'burdens' of planning controls and other regulations. Sir Peter made it clear that his idea should be viewed as an 'extremely last-ditch solution' to be tried 'only on a very small scale'.

Blind to the subtlety of his argument Tory Ministers snapped up elements of the concept and banged it into UK legislation in 1980. Some 25 zones were designated in the next five years, including the truly enormous London Docklands zone. Subsequent research showed that – leave out the rubbish design - the cost per job generated was prohibitive. The result was that, even the

free market extremist, Nicholas Ridley, when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, decided to drop the policy in 1987. The absence of evidence regarding the actual performance of the enterprise zone concept did not stop President Reagan importing it to the US in the early 1980s. While never passed into federal law many US states have enacted enterprise zone legislation. In fact, in different guises, the concept – largely because it appeals to free market ideologues – has spread across continents like wild fire.

Thus, 'special economic zones' are to be found in China, India, Poland, Kazakhstan, the Philippines and Russia. In the 1990s Prime Minister Juppe imported the idea into France and designated 44 'enterprise zones' (*zones franches)* in especially 'hot areas' (*quartier chauds*). In 2005 President Bush – in his stunningly inadequate response to the impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans and surrounding areas – argued for the creation of a Gulf Opportunity Zone (GO Zone) that would enjoy a series of tax incentives and other measures designed to spur economic development. It is possible to argue that the experience with enterprise zones should put us off cross-national policy transfer for good. Rejected in the country that invented it the policy has, nevertheless, gathered momentum in the international circuits of policy dialogue often to the detriment of good urban planning. Surely a more sensible response to the experience with enterprise zones is to recognize the value of cross-national learning, but **also** to recognize that we have not been very good at it.

It is important to note here that the academic field of comparative urban studies and comparative planning has expanded significantly over this last decade. In some ways it can be claimed that scholars have been 'ahead' of their colleagues in practice in pioneering comparisons. In this context the European Union deserves much credit for spurring and supporting many successful cross-national comparative research projects on aspects of sustainable development and spatial planning. More broadly we can see that scholars in different continents are expanding the field. For example, a recent international conference on City Futures held in Chicago for urban scholars drew over 200 participants from 36 countries and the majority of the papers presented were comparative (Hambleton 2006a). Policy think tanks in various countries have been remarkably slow to pick up on the cross-national agenda, but there are signs that some of them are catching on (Nathan and Marshall 2006)

3) Improving our approach to cross-national policy transfer

Here I explore ways of improving cross-national policy transfer - ways that strive to avoid the pitfalls mentioned earlier as well as respond to the multi-cultural challenges modern societies now encounter. I offer three pointers. First, we need a marked increase in sophisticated policy evaluation research. Policy makers need to know more about the actual performance of different approaches. While there is a growing policy evaluation industry in most western democracies, it is disappointing to note that the field of prospective evaluation is still relatively neglected. Prospective evaluation is intellectually challenging but is not beyond us. In the context of cross-national policy transfer it involves trying to assess what would happen **if** a lesson from another country were adopted. This requires understanding of the policy setting, including power relations, as well as the policy itself.

Second, those involved in the planning profession – whether as practitioners or academics or both – should reconsider the current focus of their research efforts. In the UK the national Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is having a disastrous impact on higher education in general and on planning in particular. This is because it places a low value on lesson drawing for practice (Hambleton 2006b). The UK planning profession needs to be much more active in challenging this misdirection of vast sums of public money. And other countries contemplating the introduction of academic performance measurement systems would do well to avoid introducing regimes that look anything like the failed RAE model.

Third, efforts should focus not just on topics of pressing public significance but also on approaches where prior research suggests that the potential for effective cross-national policy transfer appears to be most promising. There can be no categorical list of criteria here, but Rose (2005 p118) has done us a favour in identifying what he considers to be six criteria that would increase the chances of successful policy transfer – see **Figure 2.**

Figure 2: Conditions increasing success in applying lessons

1.	There is a clearly defined objective.
2.	There is a single goal.
3.	The programme has a simple design.
4.	It is based on tested social, political, and technical knowledge
5.	There is flexibility in relating the elements of a programme.
6.	Political leaders are committed.

4) The Innovative Cities Program

The analysis set out above suggests that we need to reconsider the way we go about formal cross-national policy transfer. Based on my own experience in Europe, North America and elsewhere I have developed a four-part model for city-to-city dialogue. Known as the Innovative Cities™ Program (1) it distinguishes the following four components:

- **Research and analysis.**
  Successful dialogue must be underpinned by sound research and analysis of the issues being discussed. Too often international dialogue takes place in the absence of sound research and this can lead to policy makers drawing the wrong conclusions. The approach in the Innovative Cities™ Program involves preparation of Briefing Papers setting out facts and figures and documenting actual experiences. The preparation of these Briefing Papers can involve collaborative working between an urban university and the city in each partner city. The focus for examination is urban innovation.

- **Dialogue and exchange.**
  High quality interactive dialogue between leaders, managers and change drivers from the cities who wish to engage in policy learning and exchange lies at the heart of this model.

This dialogue can involve good quality video conferencing as well as highly organized International Workshops held in one of the partner cities. Informed by previously circulated Briefing Papers these sessions are highly interactive – with scrutiny of practice, testing of ideas and a focus on lesson drawing. Expert facilitation and clear ground rules are critical to ensure that learning across cultural divides can take place.

- **Action in cities.**
  It is imperative that action takes place within the partner cities as a result of the collaborative efforts. Following each workshop each city will be tasked with the preparation of an Implementation Plan. This Implementation Plan will identify actions the partner city intends to take as a result of their participation in the Workshop. Each city will, of course, choose its own actions. Each city will be expected to report back one year later on the progress it has made with its Implementation Plan, including identifying lessons for other cities. It is expected that Leadership Development will form part of the Implementation Plan in each city (Hambleton 2007b).

- **Dissemination and policy influence.**
  The Innovative Cities™ Program is expected to achieve significant breakthroughs in understanding and practice and a key part of the program is to disseminate 'lessons' from the exchanges to diverse audiences across the world. The program will include a variety of devices to achieve this end and will include a 'state of the art' Innovative Cities™ website and a sophisticated approach to partnering with other like-minded agencies to achieve effective dissemination to key opinion formers and decision makers. There will also be specific lesson drawing papers for each partner city. The purpose here is to spread knowledge of promising innovations.

The four components of the Innovative Cities™ Program are presented in **Figure 3.**

Figure 3: Components of the Innovative Cities™ Program
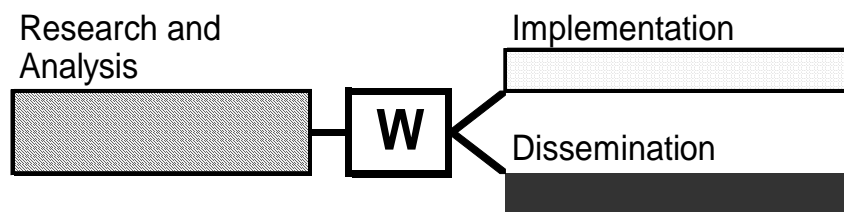
This Innovative Cities™ Program will break new ground in a number of ways as it:

- **Bridges practice and academe**.
  In this model the contributions of practitioners and scholars are equally valued and the approach involves team-based work crossing the town-gown divide in each city. This

requires a fresh approach on the part of both scholars and practitioners. Scholars need to demonstrate an enthusiasm for what Ernest Boyer terms, in his influential book, the 'scholarship of application'. (Boyer 1990). In this context Boyer raises two questions: 'How can knowledge be responsibly applied to consequential problems?' and 'Can social problems **themselves** define an agenda for scholarly investigation?' Just as scholars must turn their attention to serving the interests of the wider community so too policy makers need to recognize the value of research-based contributions to their own approach to agenda setting and decision-making.

- **Involves sophisticated city-to-city dialogue.**
  The dialogue between city leaders and managers will be well informed and highly organized and structured. Good preparation coupled with experienced facilitation will ensure high quality exchanges. Current arrangements for cross-national dialogue rarely meet this test.

- **Strives for the creation of cross-national wisdom.**
  The whole program is built on mutual respect among all partners. By threading together experiences from different cities and countries, the program should lead to profoundly new ways of framing problems and picturing possible solutions. The opportunities for generating significant steps forward in cross-cultural understanding are high.

- **Has a lesson drawing approach.**
  The research carried out as part of the Innovative Cities™ Program will certainly advance knowledge, in common with all good academic research. But it will do much more than this as the whole emphasis of the research effort is directed towards 'lesson drawing' as advocated by Rose (2005). This involves the professors involved having a value stance committing them to offering policy advice to city leaders on the basis of their research.

- **Emphasizes high quality dissemination of findings.**
  Dissemination is not an after thought in the Innovative Cities™ Program – it is built in at the outset. It is a bold ambition but the claim is made here that the innovative cities participating in the program are capable of generating innovations that will be of real interest to other cities across the world, as well as national governments and international organizations concerned with the future of cities. To succeed in reaching key opinion formers the program needs to have strong links to 'within country' networks of city leaders, as well as international networks.

Conclusions

This paper has suggested that the context within which planners operate is being transformed. The forces of globalization and urbanization are having an impact that is not just dramatic – the trends outlined in this paper are unprecedented in human history. The stance of this paper is that these trends, while they have their troubling side, are opening up spectacular opportunities for cross-national learning and policy development. If handled creatively the forces of globalization and urbanization can be turned to advantage and, with the right kind of leadership, could lead to a dramatic improvement in the quality of city planning and urban governance in cities across the

world. This is to make bold claims but, in this fast moving era, it is essential that those concerned with the education of future generations of planners and city managers take up the opportunities that present themselves.

Central to my argument is that the multi-cultural city is here to stay and, more than, that a rapidly increasing number of cities are going to experience 'dynamic diversity' – that is, a very rapid expansion in the percentage of foreign-born residents. Luckily, we have some collective experience of cross-national dialogue and exchange that we can build on. The paper has distinguished two kinds of cross-national policy transfer – the informal and the formal – and has outlined some thoughts on how to improve cross-national policy transfer. A new model of cross-national policy transfer – the Innovative Cities Program - has been put forward as a way of breaking new ground in cross-national policy transfer.

Notes

1) The Innovative Cities Program is © Robin Hambleton

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