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**Place-based Strategic Planning:  
The Politics of Participation**

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## **Place-based Strategic Planning: The Politics of Participation**

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### **Abstract**

The Global Financial Crisis has placed considerable pressure on government service delivery responsibilities throughout the world. This comparative analysis of the participative policy-making approaches and their impact examines the political processes of negotiation and developing consensus. Participative democracy is the foundation principle of *Oregon Shines* and *Tasmania Together*, and to varying degrees in the three Australian cases examined here: *Growing Victoria Together*, *South Australian Strategic Plan* and *Territory 2030*. How effective have these regional planning strategies been compared government-driven planning projects? Tasmania Together has been globally recognised as innovative and unique in its process and outcomes because of its bottom-up structure. A comparison of Oregon, Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory illustrates the various styles adopted in engaging citizens, and its impact.

### **Keywords:**

## **Introduction**

Strategic planning gained traction in management processes with the unfolding of managerialism, or New Public Management in the late 1970s. This style of strategic and operational planning and management by objectives continued at an institutional [or agency] level through the 1980s and it was in the 1990s that planning processes reached a peak in their aspirations and importantly their span (Howlett and Ramesh 1995, Stoner 1985). The third way political movement gained traction which led to enthusiastic pursuit of NGO and community endorsement of policy, frequently couched in community-wide plans (Giddens, 2001). The content of these powerful plans has come to be heavily reliant on community support for their legitimacy and their carriage. It has become a crucial factor to ensure successful adoption and implementation. Strategic plans have provided a basis for political decisions and claims of success and progress, as well as providing the foundation for effective public management through policy development and implementation. The process is heavily reliant above all else on community engagement at every stage. It is debatable as to how much responsibility should be handed to the community and what form it should take, and how much control and leadership should be retained by the ‘responsible’ government of the day. A range of models have been adopted which invite comparison.

Planning at an organisational or institutional level was expanded and reconceptualised to accommodate larger scale inter-sectoral planning. Federal political arrangements and increasing complexity in policy environments has seen the emergence of a gap in coherence at the state level. Sub national regional planning, or ‘state planning’ in a federal system, found popularity during an era in which state policy was increasingly susceptible to national and global factors utterly outside their control. A strategic plan with community support and acceptance allowed a structured collective consideration of goals and aspirations, and the amenity to invoke a shared responsibility for their achievement.

A comparative analysis of five sites in which state level planning has been implemented demonstrates a range of approaches and the impacts these have had on process and potential outcomes. These five states in which regional planning was implemented are known to have had contact with and to have influenced each other. While not a case of policy transfer as such, their consecutive roll out facilitated intra-regional learning and shared experiences with each taking elements. It quickly became clear that a necessary but not sufficient requirement for success was a degree of community engagement. This commentary is based on interviews with a range of key informants<sup>1</sup> and a stratified literature review and document search.

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<sup>1</sup>This interview process has been scrutinised by the Tasmanian Human Research Ethics Network

## **World-Class Planning**

### *The Agenda Setting Phase*

The state of Oregon USA encountered a serious economic downturn in the 1980s. The economic recession that followed was exacerbated by a number of related social factors that included a relatively poorly educated workforce, poor health and wellbeing among the population generally and a resource-based economy that had traditionally responded to market demands rather than practising 'greater sensitivity to the global economy' (Leichter and Tryens, 2002, 3). Oregon's administration responded to this dilemma by embarking on a comprehensive courageous and ultimately globally influential strategic planning process: Oregon Shines. In a very direct sense, the world was watching this bold social experiment. In Australia in particular where similar economic and social difficulties were being encountered state-level public sector managers were watching closely. As an exercise in economic and social planning, comprehension and endorsement by the community was essential if it was to succeed. Initially in 1990 Oregon Shines had a strong economic focus and was politically driven: in 1987 incoming governor Neil Goldschmidt conducted a summit 'of nearly 200 business, labour, education and government leaders' as a means of eliciting support and building a visionary agenda to map a future for Oregon (Leichter and Tryens, 2002, 11). This exercise in community consensus-building laid the foundation for the plan. "The governor empowered a steering committee of statewide leaders, community leaders and elected officials to develop the underlying themes and goals' to fit with the government-defined agenda of economic revitalisation (KI 1, 1).

Legislators in the state of Tasmania, Australia, had noticed developments in Oregon, and recognised that the two states were facing similar economic slumps with similar demographics contributing to the problem (KI 10, 1). A research visit to Oregon by the then opposition leader Michael Field and several advisers in 1997 was inspiring, and it was agreed by the group that a similar planning and benchmarking project would benefit Tasmania. Following his ascension to the role of state premier, Jim Bacon decided to support and continue the process and a search conference was held to identify themes and priorities. This was a deliberate decision to place this power in the hands of the community: it was an attempt to engage in 'outsourcing the notion of development of vision and strategy, outside of politics' (KI 11, 5). The search conference of eighty people involved senior bureaucrats, known community leaders and people of prominence in the Tasmanian community, as well as grass roots community activists 'genuinely involved in their local communities' (KI 16, 3).

Growing Victoria Together was at the outset a government strategic approach. In his own words, then Premier Steve Bracks commented in his background document to the Victorian people: 'I want to tell you about my Government's priorities for the next decade' (Growing Victoria Together, 2001, 2). Growing Victoria Together was intended in part to provide 'a clear over-arching framework for Government policy-making and resource

allocation to provide direction to the full range of public sector agencies' (KI 15, 2). In addition the plan drew on the outcomes of the Growing Victoria Together Summit, which importantly recommended an expanded focus in policy to encompass 'a triple bottom line framework which would bring together economic, social and environmental priorities' (KI 15, 3). It was clear from the outset that this plan was intentionally and overtly politically driven, that 'there's no question that fundamentally and right from the start Growing Victoria Together was... driven through the Premier's department and indeed by the Premier' (KI 15, 4). There was input from the party platform and relevant agency sources, with deliberations 'informed by the policy platform, the Government, plus input from a range of departments as well' (KI 15, 4).

In South Australia (SA) the program structure provides stability and a less politicised environment, with its establishment and subsequent reviews all scheduled to run soon after the state election, at the beginning of a four-year fixed term electoral cycle. This was without doubt an initiative of a Premier leading a potentially fragile minority government, and in that sense there was some wisdom in adopting an approach that could give an opportunity for unity:

...the Liberals were kind of on the nose but... it looked like they would get in. But the Premier just went around and mopped up all of the independents into a sort of coalition with Labour (KI 6, 9)

The summits conducted by a government-funded but independently minded advisory board were the starting point for the strategic plan. Public involvement was a part of the process:

During 2002 and 2003 the key advisory board to the state government, the Economic Development Board held a series of summits and public consultations (KI 6, 2010). Subsequently Premier Rann accepted the Board's advice to develop and implement a state strategic plan which he took direct responsibility for himself with assistance from agency heads, and this was launched in 2004 (KI 14, 1). Within two years there was feedback from the community that '...they just didn't feel like there was enough public involvement' in the first iteration (KI 6, 3). As a result an extensive revision was undertaken in 2006:

The impetus for the 2006 consultation was almost to say... we've had this plan for two years... how do we get the community more involved and what is it you want to see in the plan? ... The 2004 version of the plan ...[was framed by] the Economic Summits... but 2006, it was framed by the South Australian public. (KI 6, 4)

This willingness to listen to feedback at this early stage resulted in a wholesale change of direction for the plan, with all the theme areas being modified to be consistent with community sentiment (KI 6, 4) elicited through direct consultation through a cycle of community meetings (KI 14, 3).

The Northern Territory (Australia) commenced its planning activity following a change in government. Some controversial policy failures on the part of the previous administration, despite the most honourable intentions, drew the new administration's attention to the process of policy-making and governance as having contributed to this shortfall. Planning was siloed and

relatively short term. Agencies ‘all had their own three year corporate plans [but] there was no one clear direction from Government in terms of longer term planning’ (KI 7, 1). An independent steering committee was appointed at the outset to develop the plan. This group of eight, appointed by the Chief Minister on the basis of their skills and expertise (KI 7, 9), were given access to a range of topic expert round tables to assist them (KI 7, 1) and also conducted numerous dispersed community forums (KI 2, 4). A notable feature of this particular plan was the surprising speed of these initial steps. Extensive consultations had been held with representatives and experts from Oregon and South Australia. It seems likely that much was learnt from this previous experience and that this advice contributed to the team’s capacity to anticipate and avoid operational difficulties and to ensure communication at this early stage was open and unimpeded. Although not policy transfer in a technical sense, key informants from both South Australia and Northern Territory note that there was considerable collaboration and what could be described as professional generosity of spirit that facilitated policy learning from institutional experience.

All five cases embarked on this bold and wide-ranging planning process immediately following a point of crisis in their location. In a direct sense, in every instance it occurred immediately following a change in political direction and in several instances this was connected with a perceived loss of shared focus, and certainly a loss of focus that was consistent with the preferences of the electorate.

#### *The Development Phase*

Following the 1990 Oregon Shines economic-themed plan, there was a realisation in 1996 that it was time to bring the community more actively into the process and to broaden the themes of the plan to include social policy areas. ‘The economy was now in much better shape... The leaders’ group held public workshops on the different themes around the state with extensive community involvement. In 1996, those themes were tested in focus groups with everyday citizens as well’ (KI 1, 1). Much of the activity in this phase, such as the identification of appropriate benchmarks was negotiated at bureaucratic level and involved the ‘crafting of a new relationship with the federal government known as the Oregon Option’ (KI 1, 1). In Oregon shines had an independent Progress Board responsible for managing the process, support and legitimacy were maintained by ‘having the movers and shakers... from across the middle 75% of the political/ business/ community spectrum’ involved (KI 1, 2). The role of NGOs nonprofit organisations and their representatives during this stage was was apparently particularly important.

In Tasmania ‘[Premier Jim Bacon’s] view was a true community partnership agreement between Government and all the community sectors’ (KI 16, 2). Hence as in Oregon, the Progress Board was independently structured to ensure political interference was kept to a minimum. Because it transcended the electoral cycle Tasmania Together was widely regarded as ‘a

very risky strategy' (KI 16, 2). For this reason community endorsement would be essential for its survival.

A community leaders group of 25 was then formed to run the process in the community. This was Members were selected through a process of public nomination and selection by government advisers (KI 10, 8). Their role was to consult widely:

...they had the job of going out and talking to people... The objective was to reach as many Tasmanians as possible, but also to give everybody an opportunity to express a view if they wished (KI 16, 4).

There was extended consultation that took much longer than expected and required a great deal of analysis and interpretation to develop into a set of proprieties to which bench marks could be linked.

Growing Victoria Together was an explicit expression of government who wished to state publicly their vision for Victoria and what their plans for the state's future were. In terms of context, this came immediately following a change in government from a conservative neo-liberal focussed government who had made a number of apparently unpopular decisions about school and hospital closures with minimal consultation and prior warning. So the incoming more left-leaning government were keen to make their intentions known well in advance, or 'as it says on the website "what's important to Victorians and the Priorities the Government has set to Build a Better society"' (KI 8, 3). This policy process is used as an agency tool, and accountability is built in through the budget papers process (of which it is a component) which invites the scrutiny of the Auditor General. Although it was introduced with a highly political rationale, the relationship with the budget papers is effective removing the opportunity for political interference to distort the outcomes report. As a key informant explains, 'it was felt it was kind of keeping it a pure document, ...and plus because it was in line with how the budget papers are set out, very factual, it wasn't the space to put any political commentary in there' (KI 8, 3). In that sense Growing Victoria Together adopted a more 'responsible government' role, accepting the responsibility to draw policy preferences from the community and deliver on them, aiming for previously determined benchmarks. The role of the community was one of scrutiny and monitoring, conducted through the amenity of the Auditor General, rather than a more 'hands on' molding of policy directions.

South Australia's Economic Development Board, which was fiercely independent and enjoyed a reputation for making visionary statements and decisions, had initiated the impetus for the plan. While the first version was a product of bureaucracy, in 2006 'the premier determined that this wasn't good enough- it didn't have any community consultation' (KI 14, 2). In all, more than 35 meetings were held throughout the state, accompanied by 'quite widespread publicity about "have your say"... a little bit of a catchphrase at the time' (KI 14, 2). Participants in the 2006 review included local government, regional development boards, and community leaders from various groups, with less focus on ordinary citizens. Nevertheless the extensive publicity ensured an extensive range of issues were added. There was 'an open



book...there were no subjects that were missed out. It was anyone could come; anyone could raise any subject they liked' (KI 14, 3).

The Northern Territory approach took an important step in development. It was recognised that 'it was going to be important to have dialogue with Territorians and put a draft document out for comment... that was crucial otherwise you can gather lots of information and put together a document at the end of all that and probably not hit the mark' (KI 12, 2). There was a strong commitment to being proactive in consultation and that there was a real 'need to speak to people at the coal face' (KI 12, 3). These consultations were inspiring and visionary, 'conversations with people that are not necessarily about a strategic plan but more about our future' (KI 12, 3). The Steering Committee undertook to incorporate the changes, however extensive (KI 12, 5). Government was also showing good faith. An example of a significant review of policy commitment already achieved is the staffing formula for remote schools. In the past the department has provided a single teacher and undertaken to send more when enrolments increase: this created an impression of under-resourcing and neglect. As a result of the consultation, the 'need to establish the buildings and to put the teachers in place, and then work the other way round' was accepted by government (KI 12, 7).

#### *The Implementation Phase*

Although Oregon Shines has now concluded, it is not possible to make any conclusive comments by way of comparative analysis on the impact of these plans, without falling victim to the perils of short-sighted evaluation as explained by Sabatier when he contends that 'the 4-6 year timeframe used in most implementation research misses many critical features in public policy-making' (Sabatier, 1986, 21). Subsequent governors had changed the emphasis of Oregon Shines, with the most recent directions to the board being to identify means of achieving benchmarks. At its conclusion it is estimated that there was approximately 255 awareness of the process.

It was at this stage that several key informants reported that Tasmania Together experienced a loss of community awareness and support. While there are some structural aspects that may have contributed, by and large it seemed that the community overall and the NGOs involved (a number of whom are still Tasmania Together Partner organisations) were appreciative of the new approach and participated in good faith. The difficulties have been attributed to political factors:

...there wasn't broad scale embracing of the concept within government. ...The premier was genuinely behind it but I think the sad thing was that all his colleagues weren't (KI 16, 6).

In addition, a benchmark to eliminate old growth logging in Tasmania was not supported by the Government of the day. When it was explicitly rejected as a goal, despite the retention of the other 98% of the benchmarks, 'there was a view in sections of the community that the whole thing was a failure' (KI 16, 6). At this point the process was discredited and in the general level of community awareness declined steeply. Within the agencies however

Tasmania Together remained powerful as an organising tool, and several agencies including Tasmania Police used a number of the benchmarks as performance goals. The progress board continued to monitor progress towards benchmarks and to report to the parliament and to the wider community. As it approached its tenth birthday, approximately 30% awareness of Tasmania Together was been reported. Tasmania's small and vulnerable economy suffered considerable damage during the course of the Global Financial Crisis and the effects continue to be felt today. A heavy reliance on federal government redistributed funding is an influential factor. In 2013, the Tasmania Together secretariat and its board were disbanded to reduce government expenditure and because it was argued that while the data collected was invaluable, the anticipated planning outcomes were yet to be realised. Tasmania now has an economic plan, a product of the Department of Economic Development. Scaled down data collection continues with Tasmania Together secretariat operations relocated to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

In Victoria, following commencement in 2001, implementation has been a matter of government getting on with the business of government. A 'refresh' was conducted in 2005 'that only kind of tweaked things really. It was sort of a check to see how it was going. So from the public face of it, it didn't change very much at all' (KI 8, 5). While this seems early in the life of the project, unlike the others this is a 10 year program. There was recognition that the Victorian example did not have a strong community focus, that 'wasn't the intent... you [would] end up with a hybrid and how does Government then try and gear itself to reach those outcomes other than through its financial system?' (KI 8, 8). In its tenth and final year, and moves were made to identify what policy processes should replace it. Following a change in government and a review of access to government services in 2009, a planning structure was introduced by the new government called 'Gov 2.0 Action Plan' to address matters related to the processes and delivery of services for which the state government was responsible. In other words, it did not purport to be a strategic plan for all of Victoria, focussing on government agencies. The underlying principles espoused included extensive consultation and participation, particularly utilising internet communications and social media. This currently in place, with each state sector agency required to commit to develop a Gov 2.0 project. This represents a narrowing of scope for strategic planning and a risk that siloed modes of operation could develop.

The South Australian government approach was much more 'hands on'. While themes and concerns were identified from the community, and benchmarks set in the development phase, implementation has been a subtle combination of government impetus and community involvement. The message from the board and the Government has been:

...we can't do it without you. You know, without business, without the community, without you as an individual, we'll never achieve these targets. (KI 1, 2010)

Simultaneously state agencies have been mandated to plan to achieve aspects of the plan and to improve performance against the targets. In this way, Premier Rann, who interestingly has had carriage of the plan since its inception, has maintained a leadership role and delegated responsibility for particular relevant aspects to agencies who are expected to take active steps towards benchmarks. But responsibility also rests with the community at large. The forthcoming review will emphasise increasing the participation of mainstream South Australians and will be 'looking at engaging groups... We found last time not many Aboriginals came to meetings' (KI 14, 5). Representation will also be arranged from 12 state consultative councils who provide policy advice on people with disabilities, youth, social inclusion and sustainability among other topics. Between 25 and 30% awareness of the South Australian Strategic Plan has been reported. The South Australian Strategic Plan remains vibrant and relevant, with recent revisions and target adjustments informed by the 2010 Audit Committee Progress Report and ongoing consultation and public dialogue.

A change of government in the Northern Territory heralded the abandonment of the 2030 Plan. The incoming chief minister showed less commitment to allowing territorians to directly feed into the strategic planning process, and the 'Framing the Future' Plan was conceived. The draft blueprint was released in August 2013, with feedback invited by email and written response by October 2013. This kind of approach is likely to exclude people with limited literacy and poor access or a lack of familiarity with technology. Nevertheless, the identified themes of a prosperous economy, a strong society, a balanced environment and a confident culture are all consistent with the ground work conducted for Territory 2030.

Each state site has taken a distinct approach to the issues they face in adopting a regional planning process (see table 1). Leadership in all cases has come from the top initially, but several states, and Tasmania ranks the highest in this, have taken steps during agenda setting to shift leadership to the wider community. This was more prevalent at the program development stage. Victoria because of its particular circumstances, relating to the perception of damagingly low levels of transparency in government, used the device of an over-arching planning process to different ends. The South Australian model combines a strong central leadership and control of the process, while allowing (or perhaps requiring) control of the content from outside government, conspicuously separate from party politics. Nevertheless it appears to enjoy the support of current premier Jay Weatherill.

**Table 1.** *State Site: Level of Community Engagement (CE) by Stage of Policy Cycle*

State	Level of CE: Agenda Setting	Level of CE: Development	Level of CE: Implementation
Oregon****	1 then 2	2	3
Tasmania ****	4	3	3
Victoria ****	1	2	1
South Australia ***	2	4	3
Northern Territory **	2	4	2

Scale: Age of project

\*Project in early or juvenile stage, \*\* project in midlife stage, \*\*\*project in maturity stage, \*\*\*\*project completed/ disbanded.

Scale: level of community engagement

- 1- Low, Centralised Decision Making [Dm] On Structure And Content, Non Participative Process, Few Or No Proactive Consultation Mechanisms
- 2- Moderate, Some Evidence Of Input From External Stakeholder Reps, Some Participative Components To Process Evident, A Number And Range Of Consultation Mechanisms
- 3- High, Degree Of Decentralised Dm, Participative Components Drawing On Ngos And Citizens,
- 4- Very High, Decentralised Dm Adhered To, Full And Frequent Participation Highly Visible And Validated

**The Ladder of Participation in a Policy Planning Environment**

Table 2 (below) depicts Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation. This can be applied to analyse the level of citizen engagement in the various state sites (see table 3). At different points and where there are different imperatives at play, it can be argued that it is justifiable that the style and extent of citizen engagement should vary.

**Table 2.** *Arnstien's Ladder [based on Arnstein, 1969]*

8. citizen control	Degree of citizen power	Very infrequently occurring-when citizens have direct uncompromised control over policy or program [eg a school].
7. delegated control		Through negotiation citizens attain dominant decision-making authority. Citizens able to assure accountability to them.
6. partnership		Power redistributed through negotiation between citizens and powerholders resulting in power-sharing, not subject to unilateral change
5. placation	Degrees of tokensim	Where an apparent position of power is given, but powerholders retain number majority and veto power
4. consultation		A legitimate step to full participation but a sham as there is no assurance that concerns and ideas will be taken into account
3. informing		Info about rights, responsibilities and options-an important first step but a one-way flow without feedback or negotiation
2. therapy	Non-participation	Group therapy in which individuals are blamed for their disadvantage and given 'treatment' to reform them in the guise of citizen planning
1. manipulation		Membership of 'rubber stamp' advisory committees, to 'educate' or engineer support, a PR exercise

Arnstein's somewhat value-laden terminology reflects a strong affinity for citizen engagement to be full and frequent and this is commendable. In practice however those engaged in policy planning projects such as the ones examined often find that there is a kind of consultation and engagement fatigue that can occur. For this reason steering committees need to decide at which point community and citizen involvement is going to be most valuable, and when time will allow for the kind of extensive consultation needed to ensure legitimacy is best undertaken. There is some indication that these choices have

been made in a number of the states, but in other cases such as Tasmania and Victoria a sustained approach has been adopted throughout (table 3 refers).

**Table 3. Overall Ranking on the Arnstein Ladder**

state	ranking		
	Agenda setting	development	implementation
Oregon, USA	3, 4	4	6
Tasmania, Australia	6	4, 6	6, 7
Victoria, Australia	1	3	5
South Australia, Australia	4,6	6	7
Northern Territory, Australia	4	4, 6	4,5

### **Conclusion: Roadmap to the Future, Detour Ahead**

There are inherent problems with state level planning processes that take a community-wide approach. The policy process shifts from a centrally controlled predictable model to one in which external impacts are numerous and frequently national, if not global in origin, and utterly resistant to control. Choices need to be made about where the leadership will fall and more subtly who is responsible for progress. Coupled with this is the difficulty of inevitably polarised positions. As one informant explained, ‘...in a community like this on any number of issues you’re going to get views that are completely at odds to each other’(KI 11, 3).

The evidence suggests that while a high level of public involvement in the policy process is widely regarded as appropriate and desirable, it can have disadvantages too. It is useful to distinguish between consultation with recognised community umbrella organisations and advocacy groups, and recognised stakeholders and topic specialties, and a kind ‘open door’ approach in which any member of the community is encouraged to have an input on a particular topic regardless of the expertise or experience. In setting up the framework for a regional strategic plan, it is useful to have political leadership and commitment to ensure adequate resources and to provide momentum before the plan becomes popularly known and understood. There are some benefits in this political leader identifying some uncontroversial themes at this stage.

The agenda setting phase is an important one in capturing the imagination of the wider community- the plan will depend on this for its relevance and success. So there is good reason to consult widely and frequently, using a range of formats and points of access, providing feedback during the process and consensus building. There is always a risk that such diverse views will be expressed that agreement will be if not impossible, very difficult to arrive at. As one informant comments with regard to their experience, ‘the vision was

never a compelling one, and perhaps that's something that actually [this project] couldn't have generated' (KI 11, 3).

During the development phase, in which the benchmarks are identified and agreed upon, and the policy design emerges, there are benefits in limiting consultation and participation in the formal process to NGOs and agencies who are aware of the agreed positions arising from the agenda setting process and are equipped to advance the project to establish the course of events and appropriate benchmarks. If participation is too broad at this stage, hard-won gains and consensus achieved may be lost in revisited debate and an unravelling of agreements. The policy development stage relies heavily on the expertise and capacity of third sector organisations and their representatives to translate a set of interests into practical policy and realistic benchmarks.

Implementation and benchmark monitoring is a technical process, but care must be taken to ensure regular frequent reporting against and the widest possible publication and promotion of the benchmark 'scorecard'. If this community-generated strategic plan and schedule of benchmarks is to remain the responsibility of the community, progress must be readily available and understood.

The duration of the plan is a debatable issue. Of the plans examined in this study, most have opted for at least 20 years, consistent with Sabatier's proposition that in order to observe any meaningful change in human affairs, this duration would be preferable. The 10 year plan in Victoria while seeking to achieve improved community outcomes, adopted a more top-down style with an explicit party-political tone that was unlikely to be able to survive any longer than 10 years. In addition, party politics appear to pose a serious threat to any long-term strategic process. Where there has been a change governing party in a state parliament, it has invariably led to a disbanding or radical change of direction and form.

Writing about Oregon and the impact of Oregon Shines I in 1998, Kissler et al note that 'new technologies and global competition [have resulted in] more stress on families, but less trust and support in communities for those in need' (Kissler et al, 1998, 7). This social trust, a key characteristic of the bridging social capital needed for robust caring communities, is linked to economic well being, but economic success will not guarantee high levels. It was discovered that social problems, such as poverty and abuse, which it had been assumed would reduce with improved economic conditions. Despite a stronger economy, Kissler found that were not easily reversed, that the links were not direct (Kissler et al, 1998, 7). Social capital is connected with perceptions of security, stability and support, of which financial factors are just one component. Oregon Shines II, now in its maturity having concluded in 2009, has much to teach us.

As Kingdon (1995) suggests, policy change is possible when a window of opportunity appears as a result of the alignment of political and administrative factors, a complex and in some senses serendipitous intersection of events and circumstances that allow a particular policy reform to gain support and within agencies and in the community. NGOs and representative bodies have a crucial

role to play as trusted agents and advocates and a conduit between government and citizens. As the evidence shows, place-based strategic planning processes are a powerful tool in managing third way policy arrangements. It has the potential to make policy content and accountability transparent and well understood by the electorate. There are many hurdles along the road, and because of the duration needed to implement the social change sought, reviews need to be frequent and thorough. Even when there are detours and restructures, there is strong support for participative governance as a robust and effective process:

It was a really fantastic process. With all the distance of time it was fantastic to be involved in (KI 16, 18).

The rationale for Growing Victoria Together adopting a relatively top-down set of arrangements does however draw attention to one of the major tensions in this approach to planning: that of control. As a key informant explained, ‘you’re trying to tie a set of outcomes that the community and the Government have said in partnership they’ll get without that sort of bureaucratic underpinning to it’ (KI 8, 8). This is true of course, but globalisation and the dramatically reduced capacity of the state to meet the needs of citizens through its own resources means that public policy is unavoidably heading down this path of inter-sector policy-making and service delivery with its accompanying contradictions and structural hurdles. Nevertheless the lessons of these cases suggest that success is more likely where there is strong political leadership with a commitment to a process of participative democracy.

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