COMPLEXITY, PLANNING AND FUZZY RESPONSIBILITIES IN CANBERRA SINCE SELF-GOVERNMENT

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Abstract. *On 1 January 2015 the embargo on the 1988/89 cabinet papers held at the National Archives of Australia was lifted. The information that has become accessible sheds new light on a critical transition point in the history of the Australian capital, the imposition of self-government on the Australian Capital Territory. The city had been a kind of national government company town since its inception in the first decade of the 20th century, subject to various forms of departmental control but with no self-government. The systems of planning and governance persisting up to 1989 were based on public ownership of land and, for long periods, high levels of political and financial support from national government – a kind of planners' paradise. These conditions led to the development of a city which has been described as a perfectionist manifestation of ideal concepts in planning (Fischer 2013; Fischer & Weirick 2013).*

The belated imposition of self-government in 1989 – against the wishes of its citizens – marked the beginning of a period of turbulent reforms. The way in which this was handled, from Cabinet level to administrative sectors of the bureaucracy, led to increasingly complex, fuzzy governance relationships and spatial planning verging on the dysfunctional. In the light of recent policy changes in Canberra and based on the newly released archival material together with interviews conducted since 2000 the paper traces the changing nature of planning and development in Canberra since self-government through the windows (Altrock & Fischer 2014) of planning complexity and fuzzy responsibilities.

Keywords. city visions, urban governance, fuzzy planning

1. Introduction and paper structure

The paper first places the Canberra experience in the context of the conference theme *Definite Space – Fuzzy Responsibility* (1.1). In a second step (2), we take heed of the recommendations in track 18 to *"make sure that the audience/readers have a good understanding of the region under consideration, relevant historical and actual development trends, and relevant politico-administrative aspects of national and urban planning systems."* To this end, we briefly outline the history of how planning in Canberra got to the stage of what might be described as exploding fuzziness. The paper then (3) focuses on the phenomena of complexity and fuzzy responsibilities in urban development in the Australian capital and concludes with a structural overview of the Canberra case study (4) based on Martens (2007).

1.1. Canberra seen through the window of the conference theme

In the context of the conference theme, the experience of the Australian capital, Canberra presents a particularly clear example of changes in urban development processes since the beginning of the 20th century. In this sense, to quote and paraphrase the conference theme, it can be said that planning in Canberra was indeed "*affected by drift from **strict hierarchic control***" by government – as pertained

from 1900 into the 1980s – to forms of governance with "*public-private partnership projects, where the actual field of public* ***government action is dissolving*** *and shared with business, with many services formerly provided by the public domain outsourced. Who should take responsibility for how cities and regions are being changed?"*

While this question has by no means been solved in a satisfactory way in Canberra, the problems encountered in the transformation process of governance are paradigmatic, and their analysis may help in the search for new solutions.

2. Canberra – from strict hierarchic control to dissolving government action

To understand the extent and qualities of the changes in governance, some spotlights on how the core features under consideration in this paper developed over time are required.

Seen from the point of governance, Canberra's outstanding feature during most of its history has been the degree of strict hierarchic control of its planning and development. This long history of Canberra as a kind of government company town – developed in a system approaching that of a planned economy – distinguishes the Australian capital from most other cities. Canberra's planners enjoyed an exceptionally high level of political and financial support over long periods of time. The reason lies in the cultural function the city has had to fulfill since its conception in 1900: Its mission was not simply to be an administrative capital but to become the prestigious symbol of a young federation, in fact "the finest capital city in the world – the pride of time" (King O'Malley, Minister for Home Affairs 1910, quoted in Harrison, 1995, p.6)

Therefore, the elements that shaped Canberra in the long run into the 21st century (discounting sometimes protracted hiccups in the development process) included

a *vision* for the future (which of course changed over time, sometimes even got lost, particularly in phases of stagnation),
an understanding of *history,* albeit selective,
a strong orientation *on international exemplary models of planning* and
overall tight *planning control* on the basis of public ownership of land.

Thus, the underlying principle of public ownership of land and leasehold tenure followed *international models*, but also owed much to Australia's bitter experience with a "squattocracy" of graziers and city based land-speculators through periods of boom and bust in the nineteenth century.

2.1 Visions created, lost and found

2.1.1 The vision of the 'Griffin Plan'

The core *vision* for the future of the capital took concrete shape in the 1911 plan designed by Chicago architects Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony G – a plan with amazing *international* linkages, rooted in *history* and anticipating principles in urban design and sustainable planning which planning history generally ascribes to much later phases of the 20th century.

The implementation of the plan – or rather the lack thereof – is a sad affair. This is however, not a consequence of a lack of planning control but rather of changing ideal concepts and power constellations. What happened? In his role as Federal Director of Planning and Development, Griffin did succeed in putting parts of the of City Beautiful skeleton of avenues on the ground. But World War I ended the implementation of the functionally and semantically rich concept (Weirick, 1988, pp.7-10).

2.1.2 Loss of vision in the inter-war years and setting up a system of strict hierarchic control

Following the termination of Griffin's appointment in 1920, the stagnation of the inter-war years and what might be described as a cultural re-orientation of the Australian way of life to suburban norms meant that the medium-density scheme and clearly urban character implied by the Griffin Plan changed to that of a garden town of bungalow suburbs. It would be an exaggeration to call this a *vision*. Canberra entered an adolescent stage – seven oddly configured garden suburbs in search of a city or, as it seemed at the time, 'a good sheep station spoilt' – all, however, within a system of strict departmental *control*.

But then, the experience of World War II changed everything. Political support, financial sourcing and executive clout of planning were upgraded on an unprecedented scale. What caused this change were the disadvantages experienced in the process of conducting the war from Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne. Following changes to the taxation system during World War II, most notably centralising income tax revenue at the Federal level, the various defence departments hitherto headquartered in Sydney and Melbourne were to be brought together in Canberra. But this was to be only the starting shot for concentrating a majority of government departments there. An enormous building program for the transfer of departments, staff, families and services had to be integrated into a process of efficient urban development.

To achieve this, Prime Minister Robert Menzies introduced Federal legislation which in 1957 created a powerful organisation, the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC), whose responsibilities lay in planning and developing the capital. Menzies ensured that the NCDC would have a large, single-line budget and a high degree of planning control based on continuation of the leasehold system. In the event, the NCDC acted as benevolent dictator in a city without self-government – a planners' paradise in a rapidly expanding city with growth rates averaging around 10% per annum.

2.1.3 Creating a new vision: The Y Plan

The professional planners oriented their work on the most modern international planning practice – mainly models of British New Town planning combined with US methods of automobile-centred land-use-transportation planning. In a reinterpretation of Howard's 'Centre and Satellite' model and Abercrombie's 1944 County of London Plan, the Canberra of the Griffin Plan became the 'Central City' – today called 'Inner Canberra' – connected to a set of satellite towns in surrounding valleys separated by a continuous green belt.

Reconciling the spatial configuration, size and functional structure of these satellites in terms of population numbers, employment concentrations, retail catchments, traffic flows and infrastructure provision has been a crucial factor in the development process of the city and its long-term sustainability. Under stress since the late 1970s, the 'Centre and Satellite' model appears to have entered a new, highly problematic phase in 2015. At the core of the problem lies the spatial disposition of functions within the topography in the central area:

In the Griffin Plan, the central area functions in terms of commerce, culture and civic administration were to be developed between the two poles of the municipal axis: the Civic Centre in the west and Market Centre in the east. In the 1920s, Griffin's successors had decided to concentrate both functions at the western end. The motorisation of Australian society following World War II put pressure on this decision. Transportation studies commissioned by the NCDC in the early 1960s revealed that a city centre in this location, squeezed between the two ridges of the central hills, would experience considerable traffic congestion if it was developed as a conventional CBD within a car-based overall radial-concentric urban pattern.

The solution was seen in a more linear urban form and in a reduced size of the city centre. In contrast to a conventional CBD, 'Civic' would focus on highly specialized services, while a large share of the office employment and retail functions would be decentralised into the satellite districts. These were termed 'New Towns' to emphasize that a high level of self-containment was intended. The key to

achieving this lay in the government's power of allocating the government departments – which were the city's major employment nodes – to the individual 'New Towns'. Government was also in charge of the construction of the government offices while private enterprise built the shopping centres. Together, these elements provided the core of the town centre structure of each 'New Town'.

The development plan thus envisaged 'New Towns' stretched into the form of a linear city with 'old Canberra' in the middle; connected by peripheral freeways and a central reservation for a public transport spine carrying a rapid transit system planned for implementation when the population reached 500,000. Public transport along this spine was predicted to be more effective by dividing the city at its northern end into two branches in the form of a Y; hence the name 'Y Plan' (fig. 1, NCDC, 1970, p. 226,).

Figure 1. 1970: The Y Plan

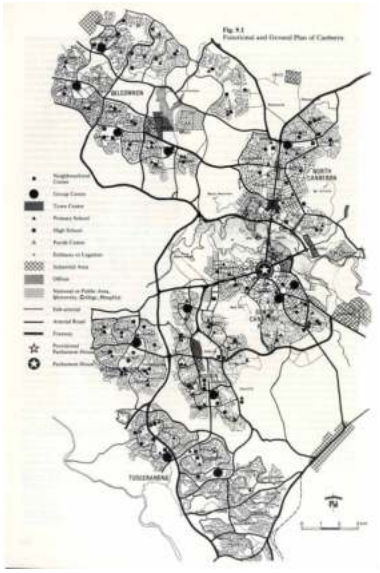

Figure 2. The built reality: Canberra's functional plan 1980

The frame of this network was fleshed out with neighbourhood units, community facilities and roads all graded in perfect hierarchies (fig. 2, Fischer 1984, p.134)

2.1.4 Implementing the new vision

The machinery created by the Menzies government ensured that these planning concepts were implemented with amazing precision while accommodating a population increase from 39,000 (1957) to 270,000 (1988) in three decades. This can be demonstrated by comparing the visionary artistic rendering of Canberra drawn in the late 1960s (fig. 3), which depicts the city in the manner of an aerial photograph as it might have looked at the beginning of the 21st century, with an aerial photograph from 2000 (fig. 4). The two images are surprisingly similar.

The city's functional and ground plan looks like a diagram from a planning text book (Fig. 2). But it displays the built reality of a city which can be seen as a perfect manifestation of planners' ideal concepts in the era of high modernism – a city we might call 'the ideal Garden City Metropolis' (Fischer 2013).

Figure 3. Visionary artist's rendering 1970. Source: (Reid, 2001, p.298)

Figure 4. Aerial: The built reality in 2000. Source: (Reid, 2001, p.324)

The basic principles behind this process were described in an impressive publication intended "to solidify [these principles] in a policy sense" (Nielson, 2000) and put them in print for the years to come. In its last chapters on 'Growth and Change' that book, *Tomorrow's Canberra* (1970) also reflected on the need to react flexibly to structural change. It focused on social change and consequences for the design of neighbourhoods. But it did not anticipate significant changes in the structure of governance, nor the way in which office finance and construction or more generally the urban market would change. And this is where the perfect pyramid of planning concepts began to crumble in the 1970s, in fact not long after it had been constructed.

3. Complexity and fuzzy responsibilities

3.1 Complexity and fuzzy responsibilities enter the scene in the 1970s

As early as 1972, the leasehold system was emasculated by eliminating land rent and transforming landholdings into what, from an economic viewpoint, was virtual freehold (Stein, Troy and Yeomans, 1995). In May 1970, Prime Minister John Gorton announced that land rents under Canberra's leasehold System would be abolished. This not only destroyed whatever value Canberra might have had as a model of a potentially self-financing town, 'The Gorton Gift' also meant that 27,000 leases of land valued at $230 million had been given away, converted into virtual freehold land. While the high level of planning control based on lease-purpose clauses was not immediately affected, the foundations were laid for a new way of financing the capital based on municipal rates.

A little later, in 1974, a newly appointed Commissioner chartered a new 'Corporate Planning' course for the NCDC designed to augment the role of the private market. Private developers would henceforth not only construct housing, shopping malls and private offices, but also government offices to be 'leased back' by the government. The fact that land values and the potential return on investments were considerably higher in the city centre than in the New Town centres led to immediate pressure from the private sector on the locational strategies of the NCDC, which responded by approving office building in the city centre contrary to its own plan (Gilchrist 1988).

The youngest district commenced under the NCDC, Gungahlin, was even planned without a core of government offices. Instead, the skyline of the city centre was beginning to mushroom with quite non-descript office buildings – in obvious contradiction to the Y Plan. But it was only following self-government that the established urban hierarchy came under significant pressure.

3.2 1989: Self-government

Introducing self-government appeared a step long overdue in a democratic society. But the democratic deficit was the least of the worries of Canberra's citizens. In view of the high level of Commonwealth

subsidies for the capital, a majority had even rejected self-government in a 1978 referendum. Change, nevertheless, was inevitable and in 1988, in a period of fiscal constraint, the Commonwealth forced self-government on the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) (Wettenhall, 2000).

As it turned out, however, the particular arrangements chosen in terms of urban politics, urban economics and urban planning created major problems for the city and its development. New information on the decisions taken at this turning point in Canberra's history have recently become publicly accessible following the lifting of the embargo on the 1988/89 cabinet papers held at the National Archives of Australia.

In 1988, an enquiry into the establishment of an ACT government including a review of the ongoing role of the NCDC was carried out under the chairmanship of an outside expert from the business sector, company director and former merchant banker David Block. The previous year, Prime Minister R.J. Hawke had appointed Block chairman of an Efficiency Scrutiny Unit within the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet to undertake a review of the Australian Public Service aimed at bringing business methods and cost savings to the public sector. This was on the lines of the Rayner review of the British civil service commissioned in the early 1970's by the T hatcher Government (Schäfer, 1994, pp.84-85). Block's responsibilities also included chairmanship of an Administrative Review Unit – the combination of business efficiency and bureaucratic reform infuses his recommendations to Cabinet on the planning of Canberra, which were distilled into a 1-page (!) Cabinet minute.

On 7 July 1988, the Hawke Government agreed to the abolition of the NCDC and creation of "a small national capital planning authority . . . to prepare and continuously review a National Capital Plan, which would be legally binding; subject to the National Capital Plan, the ACT Administration be responsible for local planning and development; the construction of Commonwealth and national capital works in the ACT be the responsibility of the Department of Administrative Services." Savings of 122 positions and $6.588m per annum were envisaged (Codd 1988; Block 1988).

This decision created a weak national planning authority with nominal control over a powerful local planning authority. Stripped of staff and its role in design and construction, the national planning authority was reduced to an oversight role, with limited capacity to even undertake this role.

Further complications arose over Territory finances. Separating national capital type costs on the one hand from municipal and State costs on the other was a complex affair, with which successive commissions of enquiry had grappled. Self-government now required decisions at the level of fiscal politics, the level of institutional competences and hence too, at the level of spatial planning and design standards. Canberra's planners had always pursued a strategy of thinking of the capital city as a whole, in contrast to most other capitals. This had meant applying the design standards of the capital to the entire city – as opposed to splitting the attention between a carefully designed capital district and an 'ordinary' urban area left to develop as typical Australian suburbia. This was now to be changed.

3.2.1 Two organisations, two plans

The NCDC was replaced by a two-level governance structure composed of a local authority (PALM: Planning and Land Management) and a national authority specifically responsible for the areas of national importance in the capital (NCPA: National Capital Planning Authority). Beyond the national area around the lake, these areas included the hills and ridges, the buffer zones between the New Towns, the approach avenues and other landscape features safeguarding the character of the capital. They were inscribed in a **National Capital Plan**. A complementary **Territory Plan** was to ensure, "in a manner not inconsistent with the National Capital Plan, the planning and development of the ACT." At both levels, a significant quality of planning expertise was required.

But the neo-liberal aversion to planning meant that there were too many 'P's in the recipe. Consequently the NCPA was downgraded to the NCA (National Capital Authority). Inside the authority itself, delusions of grandeur facilitated the acceptance of non-explicit planning responsibility. "We wanted the authority to be seen as an organization with a broader base, than just planning – it was too easy to attack it if it was just seen as a planning authority, but if it was seen as a land manager, constructor of things, asset manager, keeper of the state, then that was something that was desirable" (Neilson, 2000).

3.2.2 Exploding fuzziness

In fact, the planning role of the NCA was severely curtailed. This has been a continuing process culminating in the current call for its abolition. In an era of reduced power and influence, the NCA's planning competences atrophied – not only through reduction in budget allocations but also reduction in staff, culminating in the abolition of the post of National Capital Plan Director in 2003.

Conceived in Australia's heyday of neo-liberalism (Pusey, 1991), the new **Territory Government** took office at the beginning of a long phase of turbulent reforms and changes. On the political front, election of the ACT Legislative Assembly based on multi-member electorates and proportional representation made it difficult for one political party to achieve a majority, with the result that coalition governments would be the norm. On the economic front, the Territory Government could not afford the low-density, far flung city it had inherited from the Commonwealth on the basis of tax revenues alone. On the planning front, the division of responsibilities between the Commonwealth and Territory governments proved to be dysfunctional. Let us look at these issues in turn.

3.2.3 Fragmentation

At the level of municipal or territorial administration, a proceeding loss of focus soon became apparent. Its functions were fragmented into a multitude of Territory departments and branches –in terms responsibilities, physical location and overlapping ministerial control – in a way that has made the co-ordination between often competing branches difficult.

Since the capital was declared to be basically complete, it seemed obvious that it did not require spatial planning on a substantial scale any more. Running a city was seen as a task of **land management**. Planners, architects and engineers could be replaced by economists and managers. Privatisation, small government, staff reduction, de-professionalisation, and radical outsourcing were the key words for the following chapter in Canberra's history.

The ACT planning authority ended up with no transport planners; its urban designers were transferred to ACT Parks & Places; its subdivision planning function to the Land Agency; its major project evaluation role and its ACT/NSW regional planning role were taken over by the Chief Minister's Department.

On the issue of cooperation between the Territory Government and the NCA, it turned out both were unable to strike a compatible balance between Territory and National Capital needs. Relations have been characterized by routine interference and micro-management by ministers and their offices.

3.2.3 The economic dilemma

At self-government, municipal rates were not sufficient to meet the annual budget for the running expenditure of the Territory. A substantial portion of municipal revenue, including infrastructure investment (Sansom, 2009), was therefore to be financed from the sale of the Territory's only asset – the land that had been acquired in the first decade of the twentieth century for the foundation of the National Capital.

Under the new arrangements for planning and urban development, this estate was divided into Territory land and National land in terms of ownership, with an overlay of 'designated areas' of national significance on some parts of Territory land subject to Commonwealth planning control. In the debate on the enabling legislation in the Australian Parliament, Labor member and former Minister responsible for Canberra, Tom Uren made the issue clear:

> ". . . it must be understood that the land of the ACT belongs to the people of the nation as a whole, not just to the people of Canberra. Public ownership of and the development rights on it have enabled the Commonwealth to pursue its objectives free from the effects of land speculation and private interest. Public land ownership and integrated planning and development have enabled urban development to be coordinated on a scale far greater than anywhere else in Australia . . . . Under the proposed legislation, there would be a division between national and territorial land for funding certain planning development and for management purposes . . . . Self-government has been designed so the ACT government will have access to the revenues and land and development rights over most of the ACT, and economic necessity is likely to be the basis on which the future declarations of land will be made" (Uren, 1994, pp.424-25).

This came to pass. What had once been conceived as a sustainable method of supplying building land at equitable cost for the homes of average citizens and of channelling land-value increases into the public purse was turned into its opposite. The land policy of the ACT Government now focused on maximising land values, and by 2002 the head of the new Office of Land & Assets Management declared that it could "take pride in its success of raising land prices to Sydney levels" (McKinnon, 2002). By 2004, Canberra was reported to have left Sydney suburban price-levels behind. With the cost of land soaring, affordable housing became a difficult issue, and the low-density, far-flung city the ACT Government could not afford, was further extended by that government for short-term gain in revenue from greenfields development.

3.2.4 The dilemma of economics and planning: consequences of small government and outsourcing

The strategies of small government and outsourcing meant hard times for planners, more so than for economists and lawyers. Contradictory trends emerged over time. In order to maximise development opportunities and to reduce capital costs of urban development, suburban projects were packaged and handed over to builders who developed substantial estates in a deregulated environment. In many cases, suburban street patterns and site plans were no longer designed by planners, but by builders and their draftspersons; building control was thinned down in a manner that became instantly visible in a dramatic drop of standards. In other cases, planners and consultants found themselves entangled in growing spiders' webs of red tape; highly contradictory indeed. The development approval process was bureaucratised to a point of absurdity (fig.5)

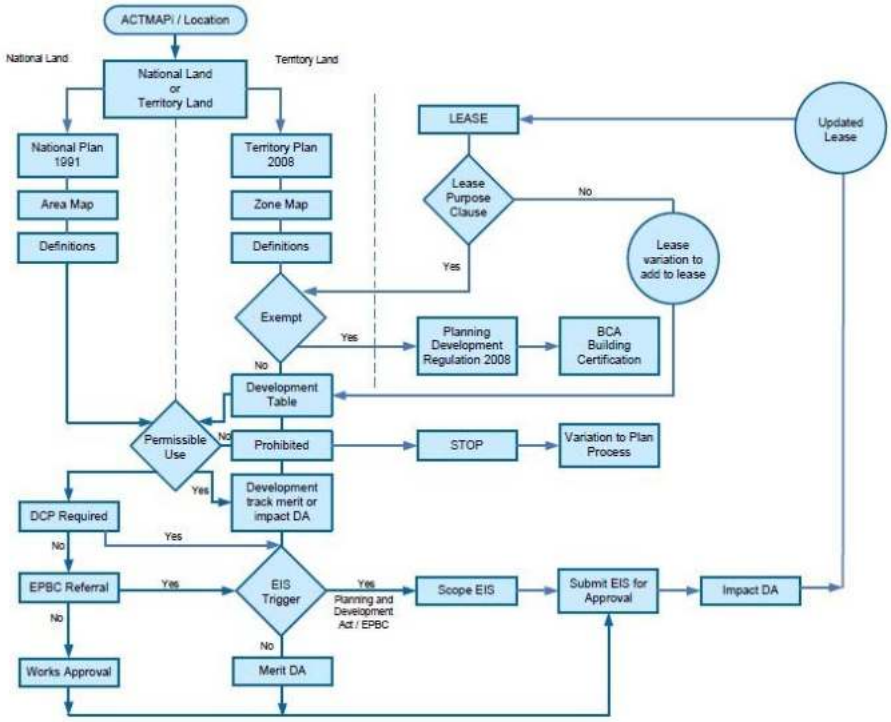

Figure 5. Development Approval process in the ACT. Source: (Sinclair, 2012)

Planning had left the path of the NCDC's (modernist) strategy of planning and development and proceeded more on the principle of 'planning by projects', wherever opportunities for development or redevelopment arose: a sports stadium; a waterfront project; a museum replacing the hospital; and so on. De-skilling and de-professionalization, the loss of corporate memory through staff reduction and the dissipation of libraries meant the loss of in-house competence. Eventually, this resulted in catastrophic, deadly consequences, when in 1997 the task of imploding the Canberra Hospital was arranged as the centrepiece of a public festival and was given to an economically competitive, but inexperienced demolition contractor, leading to loss of life among the spectators. The events of the late 1990s provide classic case study material for the study of urban politics in a neo-liberal phase.

3.2.5 Conflicts between the National Capital Plan and the Territory Plan

The ACT (Planning & Land Management) Act 1988 specified that the purpose of the National Capital Plan is to ensure that "Canberra and the Territory are being planned and developed in accordance with their national significance". This has, however, never been achieved. The NCA never had the financial and personal resources to fulfil their task in an adequate way, and the Territory Plan was watered down until it became simply a zoning scheme.

The division of tasks between the National and Territory produced similarly problematic results. Back in the 1970s, the NCDC had created an over-arching conceptual framework for the forested setting of Canberra in the form of an integrated network of public lands termed the 'National Capital Open Space System' (NCOSS). In 1989, responsibility for the NCOSS was divided. The Commonwealth retained control of the visually significant Inner Hills and the parklands of the Central National Area, leaving the ACT Government responsible for the ecologically significant mountain ranges and wilderness areas of the water.

In this way, a city government became responsible for a National Park and a National government became responsible for a city park – a major contributing factor to the Canberra bushfire disaster of 2003 with its loss of life and large scale destruction (Weirick, 2003).

3.2.6 Positive and negative dimensions of fuzzy planning in Canberra

Enter the OECD
At the nadir of purposeful planning in the National Capital, the neo-liberal agenda produced a positive outcome when the ACT Government turned to the OECD with an invitation to undertake one of its 'city competitiveness and urban renaissance' studies in Canberra – similar to contemporary studies of urban governance and urban innovation which the OECD had carried out in other case study cities including Berlin, Belfast und Glasgow. The study placed the ACT in the broader context of the 'urban renaissance' movement at the beginning of the 21st century (OECD, 2002).

Drawing together a broad range of local actors, stakeholders and community groups, the OECD's approach aimed at the development of locally specific solutions for the sustainable management of structural change. The OECD focused on identifying innovative structures for participation, mobilising social capital networking public and private partners in the context of civil society, integrating locally focused short-term projects into overall metropolitan strategic planning concepts, inventing and implementing new visions – an approach reflecting the state of strategy-oriented development planning as practiced at the turn of the millennium (Fischer 2007).

New initiatives and plans
Following an election campaign in which environmental sustainability and planning had been central themes, a change in the ACT government in 2001 to a Labor-Greens coalition led to ambitious programs following the recommendations of the OECD. Their report had criticised the absence of a strategic plan for Canberra. Now, social inclusion, increased sustainability through higher usage of public transport and innovative ways to engage different actors in new patterns of public-private partnership arrangements were incorporated in three integrated plans: a Social plan, an Economic plan, and a Spatial plan, developed in a consultative process between government and the community. They added up to a kind of strategic development plan for orientation and action that had not existed in Canberra since the all-encompassing modernist development plans of the NCDC – not as a simple repetition, however, but as something we might call 'modernism re-loaded' (Fischer 2007). Similar to the historic approach of the NCDC, this catalogue of themes addressed by the ACT government – integrated with public participation exercises– looked as if it had been compiled from a planning text book.

Rise and fall of the 'Griffin Legacy' study
Another promising government initiative emerged in the form of a study at the national level which projected a re-discovery and re-naissance of Griffin's City Beautiful concepts with a view to exploiting their potential for the re-urbanisation of Canberra. This combined an historical analysis the Griffin Plan with a kind of New Urbanist vision for the central area. In 2004, a lavishly produced publication with suggestive watercolour renderings presented the ideas of the 'Griffin Legacy' to the public (NCA, 2004). The concept promised to boost the city centre; to re-instate the Griffin vision of a boulevard city of cosmopolitan splendour; and in the process, transform the vast empty lawns north of the lake into prime real estate of immense value.

Certainly at this stage, the beautiful renderings should have been based on thorough analyses of the engineering and transport perspectives, heritage items, property values and other financial implications, consequences for employment, commerce and community facilities and the whole host of studies which form the basis of an urban development strategy including the phasing and timing of land release and infrastructure provision. But this did not happen. One reason can be seen in the deplorable state of the ACT and Commonwealth administration described above.

Instead, amendments to the National Capital Plan were approved in 2006, which bestowed upon the study the qualities of "a blueprint …directing public and private investment in core areas of the capital" (NCA, 2006, p.1). The assumption was obviously that this would lead to immediate investment without lengthy ground work and public involvement. A combination of factors including

the NCA's lack of control over the lands in question, lack of funding for the necessary infrastructure, and approval of a $600 million headquarters for the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) contrary to the plan, combined with community resistance to the fast tracking of development projects and the loss of heritage values, led to a collapse in the legitimacy of the so-called 'Griffin Legacy' project.

Private sector initiatives

In parallel with the public planning exercise of the Griffin Legacy, the Property Council submitted "Recommendations for an Outstanding Canberra Spatial Plan" (Property Council, 2004); and the developers of the privatised airport were employing the services of a former NCDC commissioner to develop a city centre redevelopment plan (Powell, 2005). Already in 1991, one of the major developers in Canberra's housing market had spent 1 million dollars on a study for the introduction of light rail (Winnel, 1991). These actors had played significant roles in the over-concentration of commercial offices in Central Canberra under the NCDC. But the new impulses created since the 1990s gave them a new understanding of their role.

Privatisation and spatial strategies: The Airport and the abandonment of the Y Plan

Further to this new role of the private sector, the public/private balance shifted significantly around the turn of the millennium in one major field. Canberra airport was privatised by the Federal Government in 1998 as a 'free enterprise zone' subject to neither the National Capital Plan nor the Territory Plan. In short order, the owners built a hitherto unplanned 'Edge City' with offices and factory outlets around the airport east of the Central City.

This led to a dramatic retreat from the principles of the Y Plan, ignoring the lessons of the transportation studies of the 1960s. With the airport 'Edge City' a *fait accompli*, the Territory planning institutions abandoned commitment to the linear disposition of New Towns and proposed a new urban growth structure based on a centralised radial pattern, similar to the one the NCDC had tested and rejected in the 1960s. The overriding interest of developing greenfield sites in order to support the Territory budget through land sales led to the establishment of a new residential satellite on greenbelt lands immediately to the west of the city. While the new satellite to the west and the privatised airport to the east embraced selective principles of sustainable design, the consequences for transportation were highly problematic. Rejecting the principle of strong functional decentralisation, the city centre was now to be built up as a conventional CBD. Forgotten were the warnings of the 1961 transport study which had predicted an overload of traffic in the city centre. Already existing traffic problems were ignored.

What thus emerged was a radial-concentric element similar to that of the first post-war development plan. Among the consequences is a traffic tsunami breaking its way along the lake shore from the new residential district in the west, past the CBD and the Russell defence offices to the 'airport city' with its competing interests of passengers, office workers and factory outlet visitors. Trying to make a virtue out of this, transportation planners proclaimed that the Y plan had now changed into an H plan, with the east-west motorway cutting through the symbolic heart of Canberra forming the bar of the H. The problems were exacerbated by the construction of a huge building block for the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation on this route. The sheer bulk of this complex sits in the urban fabric of the Griffin network like an embolism; far too big in terms of block size and outright deadly for urban life in terms of its security requirements. All of this is continuing to tear the Griffin concept, as a manifestation of good urban form, to pieces.

How could this have happened? Were the planners, and was the NCA in particular, not able to act as custodians of Canberra's urban legacy? As our interviews conducted between 2000 and 2015 have shown, they were not. Some of the reasons have been explained above, such as the NCA's scarcity of personal and financial resources and the Territory's overriding interest in maximising real estate values. Another reason lies in the fact that the NCA had lost the control over the lands even in the Parliamentary triangle. Commonwealth land had become a disposable good negotiated in the non-transparent power games between ministries. And the practice of 'leasing back' governmental office

space from the private sector anywhere in the city meant that government departments could locate wherever the market made the most attractive offer. In recent years this has had problematic consequences, with departments leaving their town centre locations to relocate in the city centre and in the airport office park.

A study carried out in 2007 had demonstrated that the jobs in the new towns were predominantly taken by residents of the new town or adjoining districts. It also identified that proximity to work was an important consideration in where people decide to live. In spite of the relatively high levels of self-containment in the ACT New Towns, the study concluded that "unless there is a commitment by all levels of governments to support the strategy, the potential benefits of employment dispersal to designated centres will not be fully realized" (Quirk 2007).

Recent developments and surveys, however, reveal that this commitment has been dwindling, and truly dramatic consequences are imminent. Following a growth of office floorspace at the airport from 4,000m^2 in 2001 to over 200,000m^2 in 2015, the level of floorspace is now higher than found at any of the town centres (EPD, 2015). The main problem with this is that the airport is difficult to serve efficiently by public transport and that the new pattern results in a higher level of travel in the city than if the development had been located in more accessible locations.

Several large departments in the New Towns have already relocated to central locations. But the most dramatic imminent shift appeared on the horizon early in 2015. The Conservative government had responded to the problems associated with illegal migration by merging the Australian Customs & Border Protection Service and the Department of Immigration into one 'super agency'. The Minister of this newly created 'Australian Border Force' announced that the combined staff of the old ministries would be centralised in one building, and that consequently, 5,500 jobs would be removed from the centre of the New Town of Belconnen to be relocated in the central area or the airport office park, now termed 'Aerotropolis'. The consequences for the commercial viability of Belconnen town centre, for the jobs in the associated service establishments, not to mention the patterns of the journey to work would be grave indeed. Recent announcements have again moved towards considering 'local impacts' when deciding where to base the Immigration Department's headquarters while emphasising that the Finance Department "will have a final call on where Immigration's 5500 ACT staff will be consolidated" (Canberra Times 11.05.2015).

3.3 Canberra at the centennial, 2012-2013

The cultural life of Canberra at its centennial more than demonstrated the energy and creativity of an active community but the physical form of the city remained problematic. Updated planning studies at metropolitan scale, an extensive consultation process, a new plan for the city centre, a proposal to extend the city centre to the lake and planning for a light rail line were inspired by critical reflection on the history of the city, in particular the Griffin Plan.

None of these exercises, however, did anything to change the return to the radial-concentric urban form and to the H-Plan with its problematic traffic implications. Canberra is moving towards higher densities in the centre, but at the same time adding new suburbs on the periphery. These processes are underway while the larger issue of divided planning responsibility is still being determined in the aftermath of Parliamentary enquiries and Ministerial reviews. For all the positive aspects of the centennial years, 'exploding fuzziness' remains the distinguishing characteristic of Canberra's governance and planning.

4. Concluding Remarks

Writing of Canberra in the 1970's, American city planner Edmund Bacon observed, "Here flourished, and continues to flourish, one of the greatest urban designs ever produced, conceived, nurtured and grown in circumstances fiercely democratic" (Bacon, 1974, p.309). Bacon was correct as far as the long-standing national debate on the National Capital was concerned but at the municipal level there

was no democracy in Canberra at that time. The introduction of self-government fifteen years later belatedly brought a measure of democratic governance to the citizens of the city. But with new actors and new institutions, the scene was set for the emergence of 'fuzzy' planning practices in terms defined by Martens (2007, p.50), "practices perceived as *fuzzy* in the sense that they are not based on a clear-cut framework about the roles and responsibilities of various actors."

Listing the main actors involved in government processes as "political institutions, governmental agencies, private business interests, issue-oriented interest-groups, locality-based citizen groups, and 'ordinary' citizens," Martens (2007, pp.44-49) usefully outlines three 'ideal models' of governance:

> the coordinative model, based on control and command – "the governing body is positioned above the governed and has the task to steer society for the good of the governed, it . . . collects information, sets goals and priorities, and selects and implements policies";
>
> the competitive model, based on the metaphor and reality of market forces – "governance is primarily seen as a competition between actors with diverse interests. Actors set goals and formulate policies independent of each other and try to achieve them through power struggles with competitors";
>
> the argumentative model, based on public participation and communicative action – "differences between governmental bodies, private sector agencies, interest groups and 'ordinary' citizens become obsolete. Every actor is respected as an equal participant . . . . The focus is on the knowledge, assumptions, arguments and solutions these actors bring to the table rather than formal responsibilities, power resources and interests of the actors."

The three models, represented in diagrammatic form as the 'governance triangle' make manifest the nature of fuzzy practices that "combine one or more models of governance" (Martens, 2007, p.50) (fig.6).

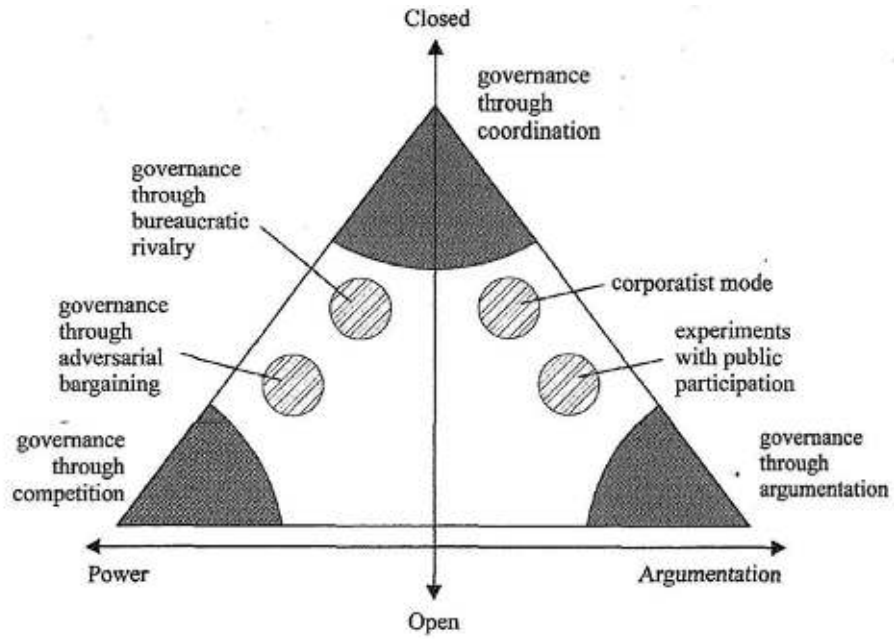

Figure 6. Fuzzy practices within the 'governance triangle'. Source: (Martens, 2007, figs 3.1 & 3.2)

This diagram from the work of Martens (2007) helps us see the emergence of fuzzy planning in Canberra in structural terms. The long history of central government 'control and command' of the development process, culminating in the work of the NCDC from the 1950's to the 1970's, is a classic case of the coordinative model in the field of spatial planning.

The first deviation from this model into the realms of fuzzy planning occurs in the 1970's when the NCDC adopts a corporatist mode, shifting marginally from a closed structure towards a more dynamic role of civic leadership together with an embrace of the private sector, in the process losing legitimacy and generating community opposition. This stimulates the move towards self-government but when this is imposed from above – the closed 'command and control' realm of the central government – its basis in the Block Report, driven by private sector perceptions of administrative efficiency, is detached from the planning traditions of the city, unleashing decades of bureaucratic rivalry and institutionalising the opposite of its intentions, administrative inefficiency. Meanwhile the private sector, advancing from the competitive model, begins to win monopoly rights over suburban development, commercial leasing and the privatised airport through adversarial bargaining. An informed public reacts to the erosion of environmental amenity and civic identity through the creation of citizen groups, which briefly aligned with OECD experts and Labor-Greens political representatives in the ACT Legislative Assembly leads to an idealistic period of participatory planning in the initial stages of producing The Canberra Plan, 2008. Private sector power and bureaucratic rivalry nevertheless quench this movement, and threats to the National Capital role and metropolitan structure of the ACT become the norm.

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