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Mapping Hyde Park Futures with Effective Public Participation

Peter Herborn - University of Sydney

Awais Piracha - University of Western Sydney

Abstract

Mapping Hyde Park futures with effective public participation is both possible and desirable. This paper will argue the case for making the best use of creative futures thinking, mapping technologies, global media and effective public participation. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the planning system and Hyde Park will be discussed. The future of Hyde Park is protected by a very comprehensive Plan of Management and Masterplan. While local government has no constitutional status in Australia, the City of Sydney is an exceptionally strong local government organisation with a record of innovation and leadership. However, it is relatively weak compared to the state and Commonwealth governments and to large corporations.

The main focus of geographic information systems (GIS) development in NSW has been on efficient administration but there is an opportunity to now apply GIS to the effective and inclusive planning of public spaces such as Hyde Park which occupies a central and symbolic location in the global city of Sydney. Many different interest groups would like to have a piece of Hyde Park and so effective and transparent planning is necessary to preserve its heritage and amenity while allowing it to meet the needs of its future users. Public Participation Geographic Information System (PPGIS) can be a valuable tool for effective public engagement in this regard. This paper discusses state of PPGIS use for planning and its portrayal in media in NSW Australia.

Hyde Park histories

While history is often spoken about in the singular, places usually have multiple histories and Hyde Park is no different. Some histories are given official status while others are not. While Governor Macquarie named Hyde Park, as defined place it was historically part of the country of the indigenous people, especially the Gadigal people and the Eora nation, and for this reason we cannot assume that there were no stories about the place and its relationship to the indigenous owners. These histories may be lost forever but it is possible that some may be recovered with sufficient commitment to finding them.

Official histories

Official histories, like all histories, are selective. Hyde Park is an important place in the history of Sydney and Australia. It is a place in which events have occurred but is also a place in which historical events occurring elsewhere are commemorated. However, while no trace of thousands of years of indigenous occupation is to be found in Hyde Park, Captain Cook is commemorated with an imposing, larger than life sculpture with an inscription that reads: "discovered this territory". The largest structure in the Park, the ANZAC Memorial, commemorates the Gallipoli campaign of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps in 1915. In 1984 the Memorial, while retaining its name, was dedicated to the commemoration of all fallen Australian soldiers in wars and other operations up until the present. The ANZAC Memorial and the adjoining Pool of Remembrance dominates Hyde Park South and is the south end of an axis that runs through the length of the Park through Queen's Square and into Macquarie Street. That axis has been the stage upon which significant events in the history of New South Wales and Australia have occurred. It contains historic buildings and key institutions in the life of the modern nation.

Official histories are inscribed in the landscape through place names and physical structures. There is a layer of indigenous names and stories underneath the official namings and mappings. The name Hyde Park was chosen by Macquarie with reference to Hyde Park in London. The street which provides the park boundary on the western side is named after his wife Elizabeth. The colonial status of New South Wales is reflected in the naming of the Park and in many of the streets of Sydney. The Park contains 24 monuments and these monuments recall events and people in the official history of the colony and the

nation. Therefore the statue of Captain James Cook as discoverer is consistent with the view of Australia as "terra nullius", an empty land waiting for discovery and development by Europeans. An alternative view is the beginning of an encounter between two groups of people or the invasion and colonisation of the Indigenous people.

War and sacrifice is a recurring theme in the official history and landscape of Hyde Park. The statue of William Bede Dalley for example commemorates a prominent figure in the legal and political life of the colony, although Dalley is best remembered as the acting Premier who offered troops from the New Wales Corps for the campaign in Sudan in 1885. However, while the Federation of the colonies and the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia is not commemorated anywhere in the Park, it is the Great War that has left the most prominent landscape item in the Park. The ANZAC Memorial was first planned and discussed in 1916 and a design competition was won by the architect Bruce Dellitt in 1930. The Art Deco style memorial with a central sculpture called "The Sacrifice" by Rayner Hoff was officially dedicated on November 24, 1934 by the Duke of Gloucester. It was built to commemorate those who fell (and served) in the Great War. At the time it was described as the "war to end all wars", but it was later to become a memorial to the fallen in all wars in which Australia has participated.

The Pool of Remembrance completes the ANZAC Memorial complex with a reflecting pool and a vista down the main avenue. Wartime cooperation between the Australian and French armies is commemorated in the Archibald Memorial Fountain at the end of the main avenue in Hyde Park North. The main axis of the Park is anchored by a major and a minor war memorial. The Archibald Fountain provides a vista of the Hyde Park Barracks a reminder of the colonial military and convict past. Minor war memorials are to be found near the ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park South. A gun from the German raider the Emden scuttled by HMAS Sydney dominates the southeast entrance and approach to the Memorial. An Oddfellows Memorial in the southwest corner commemorates its fallen in two world wars while another small part of the Hyde Park deathscape is a memorial to fallen Olympians. Hyde Park is not unusual in having war memorials though the ANZAC Memorial is one of the major memorials in the country. War and sacrifice dominates the public art in the Park.

The Nagoya Garden is the only memorial in Hyde Park concerned with international peace-building. Created in 1983, it celebrates the Sister City relationship with Nagoya Japan. Its future appears less secure than the military (Defence and Sacrifice) items. In the HBO + EMBT Heritage Review Study (2006) the Nagoya Garden is classified as one of the "Civic items located within the Park" (20). This is in contrast to the military items which are classified as "Items directly associated with the History of the park or of historic and symbolic values compatible with the role and meaning of the Park (20). From this perspective, a war trophy, the Emden Gun, is given a higher classification than a garden celebrating a sister city relationship with a Japanese city.

The Centenary of Anzac in 2015 will put Hyde Park on the national stage for what promises to be a major event. While the significance of Anzac in popular culture and official history is today probably greater than ever, it is in need of critical historical re-examination and its role in the construction of Australian cultural identity continues to be problematic. In exploring the growing mythology of Anzac and the militarisation of Australian history, Marilyn Lake (2010b: 1) has encountered vehement personal criticism. McKenna (2010) sees the reinvention of Anzac as the key to understanding what has been described as a "resurgence" of the Anzac spirit. On the conservative side of the debate Bendell (2009a, 2009b, & 2010) has described the work of Lake as revisionism and has described it as the second front of the history wars. Bendell urges the custodians of the legend to emulate the diggers and go "over the top" to win the debate.

Other histories

While Hyde Park is the setting and the commemorative space for the official history of Australia, it is also rich in other histories. While there is an official programme of events occurring in Hyde Park every year such as ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day, the Festival of Sydney, there are also unofficial spontaneous events such as political demonstrations. A huge march against Australian involvement in the war in Iraq in 2003 started in Hyde Park. Hyde Park functions, from time to time, as a political public space. Unlike the official uses of the Park which are reflected in the design and landscape of the park, the unofficial uses are in a sense invisible.

Further, an indigenous counter-narrative has developed about the First Settlement and Australia Day. During the sesquicentenary celebrations of 1938, historic meetings of the Aboriginal community took place in Australia House, Elizabeth Street within the immediate vicinity of the Park. The indigenous perspective on the ecology of place around Sydney is being rediscovered, a recent contribution being Hinkson and Harris (2010).

Hyde Park has been one of the public spaces that have played an important role in the dissenting political life of the city and it has historically been a rallying point for various groups engaged in street marches and protests, the protest against the 2003 planned invasion of Iraq possibly being the largest. It is part of "radical Sydney" described by Terry Irving and Rowan Cahill (2010) in their recent book. The 2007 APEC lockdown (Epstein & Iveson, 2009) provided an example of how it is easy to lockdown parts of the city in the name of security and to neutralise dissent by restricting it to places remote from the action. While Australian democratic traditions have been forged over long periods on Australian soil through mostly nonviolent protest, school children could be excused for believing that Australian democracy was won on the beaches of Gallipoli and other battlefields overseas (see Lake, 2010a).

The existing planning framework

Hyde Park is on Crown Land that is owned by the Department of Lands. The care, control and management of the Park are the responsibility of the City of Sydney. The main planning instrument is the 2006 Plan of Management (PoM) and Masterplan. A Plan of Management (PoM) is the document that guides the future planning and management of a park while a Masterplan is a design document that shows a physical concept for how the park might appear in the long term future. The implementation and management of the Masterplan is described in the PoM. In the case of Hyde Park, these two plans were combined to

provide a comprehensive basis on which all future design, planning and management of the park will be developed. The Plan of Management and the Masterplan fits into a framework provided by the Local Environmental Plan and other planning instruments (see Fig. 1).

The Anzac Memorial is managed by the Anzac Memorial Trust which was established by legislation during its construction in 1923. The PoM is comprehensive and plans of management for other parks and reserves in the City can be accessed through the City of Sydney website. Consultants with relevant expertise have been used in the preparation of the PoM and it is an example of good practice. The current PoM has a life of about ten years, which means that it is due for renewal in 2016 and therefore the present is a good time to be thinking strategically about Hyde Park futures.

Geographic information systems and public participation

In the 1950s, population and transportation data were routinely processed by computers and what quickly followed was various simulation modelling initiatives (Batty, 1996). It was evident that those grand-scale operations that were run on mainframe computers, had very limited utility (Piracha & Kammeier, 2002). Starting from the 1970s, both the profession of planning as well as computer hardware and software underwent fundamental change. Slowing economies of the West forced planning to be more humble, bottom-up and small-scale and more appropriate for dealing with structural adjustments.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the computers became smaller, inexpensive and more powerful. In the 1990s, personal computers (PCs) were being extensively used for routine tasks in planning (Batty, 1995). At this time a discussion about using computers at the strategic level, in the form of a Planning-Support System (PSS) began. Wegner (1994) argued that modelling in planning was a serious consideration, Batty (1995) provided a famous sketch of how a PSS would look in the future while Kammeier (1999) discussed the tools that could be used to build an incremental PSS. A broad consensus evolved that the future for computer applications in strategic planning was bright.

Figure 1: Relationship of the Plan of Management and Masterplan to current legislation, environmental planning instruments, policies and documents (Source: City of Sydney, 2006)

Bishop (1997) hinted that that a PSS was not going to be a single program that could be applied to all planning problems. Batty (1995 & 1996) envisioned a PSS for strategic planning purposes that involved use of a combination of different computer tools. Klosterman (2001) moved the discussion forward through his work on integration of GIS, models and visualization tools. He asserted that most planners use computers for general office work such as document processing, budgeting, record-keeping, and not for planning functions such as forecasting, analysis and evaluation. Klosterman also observed that even GIS was used for routine mapping tasks such as permit processing and not for planning analysis or evaluation. The GIS functionality, and the capability of other tools for strategic planning, has since improved (Maantay, 2006; Pamuk, 2006).

Public Participation GIS (PPGIS) originated in the planning profession (Obermeyer, 1998), the phrase describing a "variety of approaches to making GIS and other spatial decision-making tools available and accessible to all those with a stake in official decisions" (Obermeyer, 1998). Depending on the nature of a project, PPGIS can take different forms. It can vary from internet-based map servers to field development methods. Public participation GIS (PPGIS) is more than a set of technical skills, it is a suite of concepts that incorporates both the technical use of GIS and the larger contextual elements of participation, policy making, and social change. GIS, in addition to being a tool for making static maps or representing complex data in simple map form, is also a tool that can facilitate bottom-up participatory decision making. Many non-profit organizations and community groups have started using GIS in this way. Although there is no fixed definition of PPGIS, it is understood as engagement in which community empowerment through GIS is a stated intention (Harris & Weiner, 1998). GIS can facilitate a wider set of participants in the planning process because of its visual orientation when addressing spatial issues (Al-Kodmany, 2001).

Leitner et al. (2002) formulated six models for successfully making GIS available to community organizations to ensure the realization of the positive returns of PPGIS. The six models are: community-based (in-house) GIS, university-community partnerships, publicly accessible GIS facilities at universities and libraries, map rooms, Internet map servers, and the neighbourhood GIS centre. PPGIS developed gradually and has developed niches in recent years. Grassroots GIS, Collaborative Process GIS and New Technology GIS are examples of those niches. Grassroots GIS emphasises marginalized populations and the study of power in participatory processes using off-the-shelf technology for GIS while Collaborative Process GIS places emphasis on technology development to support face-to-face meetings and the study of participation process. New Technology GIS lays emphasis on new technology development and the study of access; includes multimedia and web technologies; what can be referred to as GIS2. Google Earth is a culmination of remote sensing satellite technologies, mega database and 3D animation: a tool for militarised vision and also a tool for an embodied compassionate vision (Summerhayes, 2010: 1).

Like Google Earth, PPGIS can be a tool for centralised control and also a tool for "an embodied compassionate vision." PPGIS can be used for token public participation but on the other hand it can use and develop local knowledge and become a space for dialogue and an expanded urban democracy. The planning of the Callan Park site in the harbourside inner city Municipality of Leichhardt involved a very sophisticated combination of professional design input and PPGIS 1. Like Hyde Park, the Callan Park site is complex and involves a large number of stakeholders with conflicting objectives.

Geographic information systems and planning in New South Wales

According to reform documents in NSW (DoP, 2007), electronic planning is used around the world and Australia to improve customer service, deliver simple experience for users (developers) and to make it easier for business to find out where to invest. The objectives, applications and recommendations for electronic planning in the planning reforms in NSW in the document (DoP, 2007) indicate, electronic planning is about facilitating development assessment, improving general office

efficiency and use of prescribed standardizing tools. Participatory or collaborative planning practices are not anticipated within the NSW ePlanning drive (Piracha, 2009).

Contents of other planning reform related documents from NSW (DoP, 2008) and the rest of the country can be cited to prove that computers-use is for routine planning only. The NSW Cities Taskforce (2008) has guided Penrith City Council in preparing the Development Control Plan (DCP) for Penrith City Centre. According to the plan, developers wishing to construct new buildings along High Street must demonstrate that views to the Blue Mountains are maintained in their plans using 3D modelling. Another example from NSW is the online delivery of the housing codes for complying development (DoP, 2008). Both Penrith DCP and the housing code are examples of the nonstrategic use of computer applications.

The Commonwealth/Federal level Development Assessment Forum's (DAF) eDA project promotes electronic submission, tracking and assessment of development applications. It also aims to facilitate the use of standard computer tools to ensure the smooth flow of information and interoperability across local jurisdictions and states (DAF, 2005). DAF's initiatives are another example of stress on use of ePlanning for routine tasks and not for collaborative plan-making. Yigitcanlar (2005) concluded that a large number of councils in Australia have the background infrastructure to establish online planning services. Yigitcanlar (2005) has looked into the level of readiness of local governments for internet-assisted public participatory planning in Australia. He highlights the importance of reaching "common-consensus" by going beyond the traditional methods of community participation. He quoted from The Royal Town Planning Institute (2001) which said that:

Local councils have a task to prepare community strategies which will engage the commitment and participation of the public as partners in decision making. This is a strategic partnership for the process of preparing local government plans collaboratively.

The capacity for online planning services in Australia has not been utilized for public participatory planning. Indeed, online participatory planning mechanisms are inconsistent with the centralizing of planning and the reduction of community participation which are being pursued in planning reforms (Piracha, 2008). Nowhere do we see any mention of collaborative community planning helped by computer-aided policy making tools.

Planning in the City of Sydney

The City of Sydney was one of the earliest local government adopters of Land Information Systems and Geographic Information Systems in Australia. It now has a very mature system and is well placed to demonstrate the state of the art in local government GIS and Public Participation GIS (PPGIS). The City of Sydney covers little more than the main Central Business District of the Sydney Metropolitan Area. It has a large daytime population of commuters from other local government areas that use parks and other facilities it provides. Indeed as a global city it has a large number of stakeholders that are interstate or overseas at any one time. GIS on the web can enable the City of Sydney to exchange information with residents and other stakeholders all over the world. If PPGIS is going to work anywhere then the City of Sydney is a likely prospect.

Global sustainable and connected is the image that the City of Sydney tries to live up to (City of Sydney, 2008a; 2008b). These broad goals can be addressed in the planning Hyde Park futures. As a global city it has a cosmopolitan population and culture and it offers hospitality to visitors from all over the world. The image of Australia is shaped by a limited number of places. Hyde Park is one such place and its plan should reflect its use by overseas visitors. Hyde Park is part of a connected green-space that includes Cook and Phillip Park, the Domain and the Royal Botanic Gardens. Though fragmented by heavily trafficked roads, the park system connects the densest parts of the CBD with the Harbour. As a component in a green-space network, comparable with New York's Central Park and London's Hyde Park, it contributes to the moderation of the urban heat island effect and contributes in many other ways to the sustainability of the city. In the following we will have a closer look at the two important planning initiatives the City of Sydney has been pursuing. These initiatives are Jan Gehl's "Public Spaces Public Life Sydney" and John McInerney's push for Sydney as "City of Villages".

In the modern liveable cities debate, Jan Gehl is the most recognizable figure. In his influential book *Life between Buildings* (1987), Gehl advocates documenting urban spaces, making gradual incremental improvements and then documenting them again. In a nutshell, Gehl likes to know how spaces are actually used, why, and what designers can do to improve them. In addition to his work in Europe (Copenhagen and London) and the USA (New York), Gehl has been influential in Australia, where he has conducted Public Life studies for the CBDs of Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Sydney. While there is little reason for optimism about PPGIS emanating from the state and Commonwealth government at the local level, in progressive Councils like Sydney and Leichhardt there are signs of grassroots support for PPGIS.

PPGIS for planning in NSW and its portrayal in Media

The issue of community participation in planning decisions is a very tricky one. In its most simplistic form, it is a tension between the state and the local levels. It was widely believed that the NSW Labor state governments of the recent past took powers away from the local councils (communities) and that past governments stifled the community input into planning decisions and reduced community's say into land development in their neighbourhoods. The whole issue was framed in local communities' struggle against power hungry (and "corrupt") politicians and their "greedy" developers. There is evidence to support this argument. It is also evident that the state clearly favoured efficiency enhancing ePlanning (of GIS was a component) over the one that would help engage local communities in planning decisions (such as PPGIS). This position is a summary of how the public participation debate in NSW has played out in media. As a matter of fact the Liberal-National coalition greatly benefitted from frequent reporting in the media of power grab by the state government and won the March 2011 state election campaigning on planning-related issues.

While media may present issues as black and white, they rarely are binary and community empowerment in urban planning decisions is no exception. Related to the community engagement debate in NSW are issues of *NIMBYism* 2 (not in my backyard) and entrenchment of privilege, consolidation/redevelopment and its relation with density and sustainability and the East-West socio-economic divide. When communities like Ku-ring-gai go up in arms against any redevelopment or increase in housing density, then the matter is not a straight forward issue of community's say, it is perhaps NIMBYism and entrenchment of privilege as well. It also can result in pushing new housing development further to the West which already lacks sufficient infrastructure or employment opportunities. While this caveat should be kept in mind, the fact remains that PPGIS can provide an effective means of community engagement in planning matters. It is also clear that the state level has not shown any inclination to use PPGIS while the local councils/communities have shown keen interest in this tool.

A look at a few large and high profile development projects shows PPGIS was not employed by the state level agencies for community input. Barangaroo East Darling Harbour, Redfern Waterloo and Western Sydney Employment Lands are examples of such projects (RWA 2011; BDA 2011; DoPI 2011). Numerous media reports and opinion pieces (such as those by Elizabeth Farrelly) point to lack of genuine input from the community. It can be deduced that the state authorities do not engage PPGIS due to the fears of delay, dilution, and expense.

PPGIS was employed by the Leichhardt Council for community engagement in determining the future of Callan Park (Leichardt Council, 2011). In this widely discussed in the media case there was genuine desire, even determination to have the local voices heard (Marshall, 2011). PPGIS was used in an elaborate engagement exercise that took long time and cost \$500,000. It is worth noting though that this engagement exercise was employed by a Green mayor in an affluent and privileged inner-city council area. The resulting Callan Park Master Plan has been approved and is now being presented to the state government for funding (Tovey, 2011; SMH, 2011).

Conclusion

Hyde Park is a relatively quiet and still place in the middle of a noisy bustling city. It invites us to slow down and reflect upon the natural environment and the past. It is an open space in a physical sense but also a space open to alternative futures. Those alternative futures can be considered in an expanded urban democracy with PPGIS.

It is well recognized in literature that effective community engagement is a basic ingredient of successful planning. Community engagement is even more crucial when it comes to discussion on the future of Australia's most historic park that houses the memorials that have very strong emotional ties. We also know from the literature that PPGIS is a proven and effective means of involving and empowering public on planning issues. PPGIS has, by now, established itself as a theoretically and technically sound means of public engagement. Australia also has the technical capacity to use PPGIS for formulating and evaluating alternative futures (for Hyde Park).

At the level of City of Sydney there are excellent urban design (Gehl) and participatory (McInerney) frameworks in place within which PPGIS use for Hyde Park can very well fit. However, as earlier discussion in this paper indicates, proper provisions for effective public engagement are missing in the state planning system and its reforms. Lessons learnt from PPGIS applications in planning in NSW and their portrayal in media are:

- PPGIS can be an effective tool of engaging local communities and incorporating their wishes into local planning.
- PPGIS can be expensive and time consuming and requires authorities determination to effective community engagement.
- PPGIS has not been employed by the state level planning agencies in NSW. It seems to have been used by the affluent local communities.

Community empowerment is favored by media and hence PPGIS is looked at favourably. In case of Callan Park the community was not only encouraged (Friends of Callan Park, 2011) to participate in the PPGIS but also to actively contact and canvass the media outlets and personnel. PPGIS and resulting effective participation at the local level may have unintended consequences at regional/metropolitan level.

Footnotes

1 See the Municipality of Leichhardt website for details and a portal to related sites.

2 Not in My Back Yard

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About the Author

Peter Herborn is an Adjunct Fellow at the University of Western Sydney and a part-time lecturer at the University of Sydney. He has worked as town planner in local government and as an academic in geography, urban planning and peace studies. He is interested in place management, sustainable urbanization and peace education. He serves on the Council of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney and on the Council of the Geographical Society of New South Wales.

Awais Piracha is an urban planning academic based at the University of Western Sydney. He has previously served as a planning researcher at the United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) Bangkok and University of Dortmund Germany. His research interests include planning policy, sustainable transport planning and planning support systems.