

# Communication Struggles in the Construction of Sydney as a Global City (1983 — 2000)

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The concept of the world or global city appeared in the urban sociology and urban planning literature in the early to mid 1980s (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982; Friedmann 1986). Friedmann (1995: 317) identified its genesis in earlier methodological shifts in urban studies linking the growth and development of cities to larger historical shifts in industrial capitalism, and attributed the initiative in these shifts to Manuel Castells (Castells, 1972) and David Harvey (Harvey, 1973). More recently Castells (Castells, 1989, 1996, 1997, 1998) has argued for an epochal shift in the relations of production of advanced capitalism from flows of material to flows of information. In this conception, global cities are key nodes in a 'space of flows' which structures the international economic and social relations of production. There is some criticism of this conceptualisation (for example: van Dijk, 1999), though there is general acceptance of the phenomenon of



increasing internationalisation of some economic relations, and the role of cities in that process.

The defining characteristic of a global city is that it has a significant proportion of its economy linked into international economic transactions, which in turn has the effect of differentiating that city from other parts of the host country or region in terms of patterns of employment, income levels, types of 'producer services' available, types of infrastructure, levels of 'cultural amenity', real estate prices, and so on.

Sassen (Sassen, 1991) identified the first rank of global cities as New York, London and Tokyo. The crucial criterion for such status was the significance of the city in global capital flows, and at that time Japan via Tokyo was the major source of internationally available capital, the United States via New York was the major recipient and the City of London had the largest financial market for processing the flows and providing the necessary ancillary services.

Below this primary troika, there was a level of secondary or sub-global cities identified by various researchers, each using slightly different criteria (Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 1991; Knox and Taylor, 1993; Knox, 1995; Daly and Stimson, 1992; O'Connor and Stimson, 1995). Sydney appears in all of them, sometimes as the only global city in the southern hemisphere and one of as few as four in Asia (Knox in Johnson et al, 1995).

Global cities are not unified entities: Castells

early identified the 'dual city' phenomenon (Castells, 1989) and this divide has now become a commonplace of both the academic and Australian government planning literature (see, for example Brotchie, et al, 1991; Brotchie at al, 95; O'Connor and Stimson, 1995; Searle, 1996; Murphy and Watson, 1997; Dept of Planning, 1995; Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1997, 1998; Baum et al., 1999).

Global Sydney has different characteristics from non-global Sydney, and indeed from the rest of Australia (NIEIR, 1999; Baum et al., 1999). It primarily occupies an arc extending from North Ryde across to St Leonards and North Sydney, over the Harbour and through the CBD and South Sydney to Sydney Airport and Port Botany on Botany Bay (NIEIR, 1999). In absolute, relative and trend terms, global Sydney has greater wealth, higher incomes, lower unemployment, higher real estate prices, better telecommunications infrastructure, better public and private transport facilities, greater participation in 'producer services' industries and in employment related to international trade in goods and services (NIEIR, 1999).

Sydney's emergence as a global city was a result of an international restructuring of economic relations that commenced in the early 1970s (Castells, 1989), and consequently of the Australian economy (Searle, 1996; Edwards, 2000). It required fundamental reorganisation and development of infrastructure (both regulatory and material) to acquire the essential characteristics of global cities, viz.

- integration into international economic and

financial flows through deregulation of the stock, finance and foreign exchange markets and sectors

- provision of advanced telecommunications and media infrastructure and services linked into international information flows
- provision of advanced urban transport facilities (especially freeways and international airports) within the globalised region of the city
- provision of 'world-class' domestic and commercial real estate, and associated infrastructure within the globalised region of the city
- provision of 'world-class cultural amenities' to attract business tourism and international executive employment.

The key landmark in the reorientation of the Australian economy was the adoption of the recommendations on financial deregulation contained in the Campbell Report (1982). The Australian Labor Party in opposition under leader Bill Hayden had strongly opposed the recommendations, but in 1983 the incoming Labor Government of Prime Minister Bob Hawke and Treasurer Paul Keating moved to adopt the recommendations and overnight floated the foreign exchange rate (Pusey, 1991; Toohey, 1994; Edwards, 1996, 2000). Key decisions and projects in the globalisation of Sydney include

- Deregulation of foreign exchange (1984); relative deregulation of banking and finance (1980s); privatisation of the Australian Stock Exchange (1998-99); reduction of tariffs and subsidies (1980s); deregulation of foreign investment (1980s)

- Relative deregulation of telephone and telecommunications services (1980s); cross-media ownership regulation (1987); rollout of cable and satellite TV services (1990s); emergence of internet related services (1990s)
- Building of freeways and tollways, especially M2, M5, Harbour Tunnel, Eastern Distributor, airport tollway; building of Third Runway at Sydney Airport (Fitzgerald, 1999), and proposal for second Sydney Airport at Badgerys Creek; redevelopment of Port Botany as a container port.
- Planning decisions for office, hotel and residential accommodation in CBD, North Sydney and Chatswood; new industrial zone at North Ryde; commercial and residential redevelopment in Central Industrial Area (South Sydney and Botany Local Government Areas); medium density housing policies introduced across metropolitan Sydney; City West Development in Ultimo-Pyrmont; rise in real estate prices in global Sydney and flow-on areas.
- Redevelopment of Darling Harbour as tourist and convention centre, including Star City Casino; redevelopment of Sydney Showground for Fox Studios; hosting the 2000 Olympics;

Clearly, this restructure involved specific government and corporate decisions in specific policy contexts to spend often large amounts of private and public money on specific projects to the advantage of certain sectors of the population and economy and to the relative

(and often absolute) disadvantage of other sectors of the population and economy. Often these decisions were controversial, and entailed considerable political opposition by organised groups in the community and industry.

At the macro level, the emergence of Pauline Hanson, the One Nation Party and Independent parliamentarians in rural and some urban electorates, and the rejection of the 1999 republic referendum, are cited generally in public debate as instances of a class, ethnic (Anglo-Celtic) and geographically based reaction against the direction and pace of economic and social change associated with the restructure.

At a more micro level, there were specific instances of opposition and competition in the case of each of the instances cited above. This opposition and competition took many and various forms, but it created problems for the proponents of specific infrastructure projects or changes to the regulatory environment. To overcome these problems the corporate and political proponents of change adopted business and political strategies to advance their proposals and to thwart the opposition to them. An essential part of these strategies was the communications strategies in dealing with key stakeholders and the public.

This research project will identify and analyse these communications strategies and their impact on the decision making processes for some of the key projects and changes linked with the restructure of Sydney as a global city, with particular reference to the role of the media in representing these changes and

projects to the public. In turn, this evidence will enable an evaluation of the adequacy of the key contemporary paradigms in the analysis of power relations between the media and other centres of public and private power (primary/secondary definer: Hall, 1978; policing organisational secrecy: Ericson, 1989; news as discourse: Hartley, 1995; economic vs political vs symbolic power: Thompson, 1995). In turn this will have ramifications for the conceptualisation of the operations of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989; Calhoun, 1992; Peters, 1993; Fraser 1989, 1990, 1992; McLaughlin, 1993; Dahlgren and Sparks, 1992; Dahlgren, 1995; Negt, 1980, 1988; Kluge, 1988; Thompson, 1995) as a contested field of power relations (Bourdieu, *passim*; Hall, 1978; Thompson, 1995).

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