Opportunity Spaces
Community Engagement in the Planning, Use and Governance of Shared School Facilities

Working Paper #3
Rethinking Urban Schools

By: Ian McShane

20 March 2015

Contact ian.mcshane@rmit.edu.au
Contents

1. KEY POINTS ................................................................................................................. 3
2. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 4
3. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY AN URBAN SCHOOL? .................................................. 6
4. SETTING THE SCENE: MELBOURNE AS A GROWTH CITY .............................. 7
5. SOME POLICY CHALLENGES FOR URBAN SCHOOLS .................................. 9
   5.1 Managing the educational demand cycle .............................................................. 9
   5.2 Coordinating education, transport and housing policy ................................. 10
   5.3 Developing school-based responses to climate change .............................. 12
   5.4 Connecting schools with urban digital networks ........................................... 13
6. SOME REFLECTIONS ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ........................................ 15
7. CONCLUSION: BEYOND THE COLLABORATIVE MOMENT? .................... 17
8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PROJECT DETAILS ............................................ 18
9. REFERENCES .............................................................................................................. 19
1. Key points

This paper discusses some challenges for the provision of schools and schooling in twenty-first century urban settings.

Current growth in Australia’s major cities, notably Melbourne, is placing pressure on the provision of educational and community infrastructure in greenfield suburbs and in the re-populating inner suburbs and CBD. Growth projections also suggest that infrastructure provision will emerge as a key issue in re-generating middle-ring suburbs.

In this light, the paper questions whether a conventional school model with a large physical footprint and suite of single-use facilities is well suited to emergent conditions of urban growth and densification.

In response, the paper argues for an educational model that promotes the closer integration of schools with their surrounding physical, institutional, technological and environmental settings. We describe this as an urban school model.

Discussion of urban schooling in the academic and policy literatures has focused on inner cities and disadvantage. We argue for the reworking of this concept and its application to schools and schooling across metropolitan regions.

Key points made in the paper are:

- Educational planning and provision is a notable gap in urban research and urban planning, hampering coordinated policy and practice in these two areas.
- School planning in urban settings should follow a set of principles directed towards engaging schools with challenges of urban sustainability across social, economic and environmental dimensions.
- Policy options for managing educational land assets through demand cycles, especially in inner urban areas, require further research and discussion.
- To promote equity, social mix and efficiency, school planning needs to engage with policy and planning debates around housing affordability and transport-oriented development.
- Climate change and community resilience are emerging as increasingly significant elements of local governance in the twenty-first century. As key local institutions, it is likely that schools will be called upon to play a leadership role in this area.
- As public wireless networks extend through cities, schools are well-placed to contribute to network provision and access, and take advantage of the pedagogical possibilities of ubiquitous mobile connectivity. This emergent field requires nimble policy responses.
- Spatial and fiscal constraints will be important factors in encouraging educational partnerships and facility sharing. Attention to ‘soft’ infrastructure, including specialist infrastructure brokers, can optimise investment in such arrangements.
2. Introduction

Education planning and provision has been a notable gap in urban research and urban planning (Billingham 2013; Gulson & Symes 2007; Vitiello 2006). A search of major education, urban studies and urban planning databases shows few explicit links between educational planning and urban or spatial planning. Schools and schooling feature incidentally in key Australian planning texts (for example, Thompson & McGinn 2012; Gurran 2011). In turn, the literature on school planning and design has concentrated on the design of learning and teaching environments, with limited attention to the world beyond the school gate (OECD Centre for Effective Learning Environments 2011).

There are signs that this situation is changing, though. In Australia, the adoption of precinct or master planning is designed to open the ‘black box’ of school planning, traditionally a top-down, state-level activity exempt from local planning laws. Victoria’s precinct structure plans (PSPs) underpin development in outer-urban growth areas, aiming to manage urban amenity, ensure timely infrastructure provision and, in the educational arena, promote school choice (Metropolitan Planning Authority 2015).

Building on these developments in coordinated planning, this paper seeks to widen the focus of debate over school provision in settings of urban growth and densification. Australia’s major cities are experiencing various rates of demographic and physical change, with Melbourne growing fastest (Victorian Government 2014; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012). In Australia’s major cities, a ‘smart growth’ planning vision seeks to contain growth occurring on the urban fringe with development around transport hubs and suburban activity centres. In Melbourne, particularly, this planning vision also seeks to balance vertical or high rise expansion in the inner city. This development calls for a strategic response to urban intensification, and its emerging challenges, by education providers.

Traditionally, greenfield school developments have followed a nineteenth century model that sought to bolster liberal learning and school identity through the provision of playing fields and ancillary facilities as well as classrooms. The conscious shaping of a ‘community within a community’ reflected the professionalization and corporatization of schooling, and desires to separate school-based learning from socialization processes and physical environments that were seen as harmful to proper development (Campbell & Proctor 2014; Cutler 2000). The low-density configuration of Australian cities supported this model through the twentieth century.

While the model’s pedagogical foundations changed significantly, its physical template has endured. However it, too, has come under strain. Specifically, critics have pointed to the social and environmental impact of ‘big box’ campus-style schools, as contributors to suburban sprawl, car dependency and greenhouse gas emissions (Reid 2011; Tachieva 2010; Haar 2003; Strickland 2003). Large high schools have been criticized for their poorer student outcomes compared to smaller counterparts (Leithwood & Jantzi 2009), and for their negative impact on neighbourhood sociality and walkability (Hillier 1996). Land economies, site constraints and pressure on public sector outlays are calling attention to the increasing use of extra-mural resources such as libraries and recreation facilities, as well as the sharing of facilities on school campuses.
The repopulation of inner cities has seen adaptive re-use of buildings and sites, and the incorporation of schools and other education facilities in inner-city high-rise projects. Predictably, this has generated significant publicity on ‘skyscraper schools’ (Winter 2013). In recent years there has been renewed Australian experimentation with inner-city schooling (Haileybury 2015, Melbourne City School 2015), and an increasing use of schools or early childhood centres as a bargaining chip for planning approvals (Dow 2013). Inner Melbourne’s changing skyline has brought new research interest in the needs and experiences of young people living in a ‘vertical’ environment (Whitzman & Mizrachi 2009). Victorian planning documents are using the rhetoric of *urban schools* to identify design parameters and educational needs of schools in inner Melbourne (for example Learning By Design et al. 2010; Tweeddale & Herel 2010).

While acknowledging the context of these planning discussions, we argue against the exclusive identification of urban schools with inner cities. Rather, we argue that the urban school concept serves as a useful analytical tool to examine current developments in diverse urban locations in Melbourne and to examine how schools engage with emerging conditions of urbanism.

To illustrate these arguments, we draw on field research at the Broadmeadows educational regeneration project. This project included the construction of a new senior secondary college on a compact site adjacent to the Broadmeadows town centre. The Hume Central Secondary College Town Campus is in many ways a model of the urban school that we reflect upon in this paper: well-located for public transport access, sharing recreation facilities, partnered with social enterprises, and part of a wider community education network. Significantly, this school is not located in inner-city Melbourne, but twenty-five kilometres north of Melbourne’s CBD.
3. What do we mean by an urban school?

The vocabulary of urban schooling emerged in educational theory and practice in the 1960s, to critique educational disadvantage and its connection with racial and class stratification in inner cities (Franklin 2010; Foster 2007; Steinberg & Kincheloe 2004; Grace 1984). This association of problem schools and inner cities came under strain with changing urban demographics in the late twentieth century. In advanced Western economies, many schools with ‘urban’ educational characteristics are located in outer urban or rural areas (Ehrenhalt 2012; Russo 2004). Inner city schools are, in some areas, now seen as agents of urban economic development (Hyra 2014; Cucchiara 2012; Butler & Robson 2003), and the OECD has identified an “urban advantage” in the superior performance of students in population centres over 100,000 in almost every country that participated in the 2009 PISA assessment (OECD 2013a).

The limited Australian literature on urban schooling has adopted the conventional focus on educational disadvantage (for example, Lawrence 1994). Generally, though, the concept has not strongly informed Australian educational policy and critical analysis. This leaves a space that is relatively free of entrenched or defensive actors and positions, while the term’s legacy reminds us that disadvantage remains a central concern of educational policy and practice.

What do we mean by an urban school for the purposes of this paper? Urban locations are characterized by relatively dense and diverse populations, institutional and service clusters, information flows and economic activity. Urban locations are also distinctive ecologies and areas of concentrated resource consumption. Clearly, the concept is not restricted to inner cities, but applies at scale across metropolitan and regional centres. Although some analysts define an urban school quantitatively (OECD 2013b), our approach is qualitative, focusing on the relationships of schools with their urban settings. We are interested in how those settings influence schools and schooling, and what influence schools in turn exert on their urban environments.

There is a high level of congruence between urban planners and educational planners on the challenges for cities and for schooling in the twenty-first century, as illustrated by the table below. Our conception of urban schools, then, involves their active engagement with key challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Planning: Challenges for Twenty First Century Cities</th>
<th>Educational Planning: Principles for Twenty First Century Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• economy (work and wealth)</td>
<td>• life-long learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• society (social cohesion)</td>
<td>• community building and social cohesion,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• shelter (housing for all)</td>
<td>• ecological sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• environment (stable ecosystem)</td>
<td>• resource sharing and adaptive re-use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• access (resource-conserving mobility)</td>
<td>• digital connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• liveability (quality of life)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• democracy (voice and participation).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hall and Pfeiffer (2000)                                              
Source: Learning By Design et al. (2010)
4. Setting the Scene: Melbourne as a Growth City

Melbourne provides an instructive Australian setting for this discussion. Metropolitan Melbourne grew faster than any other Australian city in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and is projected to overtake Sydney as Australia’s largest city by mid-century. Recent growth has been fastest in inner Melbourne and the outer urban growth areas, with earlier planning visions for infill growth around suburban activity centres faltering.

The population of inner Melbourne – defined here as the five central Melbourne local government authorities (LGAs) - is projected to grow by 4% per annum between 2011 and 2031, with growth in the Melbourne LGA (the City of Melbourne) predicted to be the third fastest of any Victorian LGA (Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure (DTPLI) 2014).

There is no agreement on whether the expansion of high-rise housing provision in inner Melbourne will attract families with young children, creating demand for the first stages of formal educational provision. Birrell & Healy (2013) point to limitations in the supply pipeline (dominated by small one and two bedroom dwellings), whereas the City of Melbourne (2014:35) argues that investment in new inner urban schools may change the profile of housing demand. The Victorian government’s current estimates are that the population of the five central Melbourne LGAs will grow by 268,000 by 2031, and one in five residents of this region will be aged under twenty (DTPLI 2014:10). These projections have generated significant publicity and media commentary over school provision (Topsfield 2014).

Around half of Melbourne’s housing growth over the past decade has occurred in the outer urban growth areas, and an estimated 610,000 dwellings will be constructed in these areas by 2051 (Victorian Government 2014:62). Concern has been expressed about a mismatch of physical planning and social planning, or the advance of developer-driven estate housing over the provision of social infrastructure and social programs (Growth Areas Planning Tool Reference Group 2014). Specifically, there has been significant lobbying by outer urban LGAs and media publicity around existing educational provision and future school demand on Melbourne’s fringe.

However, it is also projected that 650,000 new dwellings will be constructed in established middle-ring suburbs by 2051 – around 8% more than in outer Melbourne and double the inner city projections (Victorian Government 2014:62). There has been vocal public debate over schools, particularly high schools, in middle-ring suburbs, following school closures and subsequent local demographic change (Davies 2010). Here debates focus on the regeneration or re-opening of schools, rather than initial provision.

The Impact of Growth on Melbourne’s Planning Narrative

In the space of two decades the tenor of Melbourne’s planning narrative has changed dramatically. Where concerns were voiced about depopulation and underutilized infrastructure in the Victorian government’s 1987 document Shaping Melbourne’s Future (Ministry of Planning and Environment 1987), attention is now turned to strains on current infrastructure and policy options for future provision (Victorian Government...
If the historical pattern of infrastructure provision in Melbourne is a guide, the projected population will, on one account, require an additional 2,500 hectares (ha) of land for educational, civic and light commercial infrastructure, and 4,000 ha for major transport infrastructure and parks (McLoughlin cited in Lewis 1999:117). Whether this pattern should, or indeed can, be followed is open to question. Clearly, land supply in inner urban areas is a major constraint. However, in recent years, social infrastructure policy has paid greater attention to the qualitative aspects and service outcomes of infrastructure, not simply the quantum of supply. Policy goals have been framed in terms of economic and environmental efficiencies, service accessibility and continuity, place-based partnerships and governance structures, and human and social capital development. Recent developments around the shared and extended use of schools, and the co-location of educational and community facilities clearly illustrate this direction in social infrastructure planning.

The changing social, economic, technological, demographic and environmental dynamics of major cities, though, pose a challenge to the physical form and pedagogy of schools, and to the institutional position of schools in urban settings. Working broadly off the challenges and principles enumerated in the table above, the following section discusses some key policy issues for urban schools.
5. Some policy challenges for urban schools

Educational planning and urban planning are future oriented. Schools have been famously defined as “four walls surrounding the future” (Barth cited in MacGilchrist et al. 2004), rhetoric that has been used by the Victorian government, most notably in Schools of the Future (Department of School Education 1993). Urban planning, too, has been characteristically concerned with the spatial organization of future growth. Recent planning literature asks critical questions about the growth dependence of liberal market economies (Rydin 2013). However, a more precise framing of our interest here is the growth dynamics of cities and how educational planning authorities and schools engage with the changing urban contexts in which they operate.

5.1 The educational demand cycle

Land availability has been a contentious issue in recent campaigns for inner-urban school provision. Is this issue confined to inner city land economies, or does it reflect a wider structural challenge for educational provision, especially in a context of urban growth?

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) has the third largest land portfolio in the Victorian government, with estimated holdings of 2,363 hectares in 2011 (Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC) 2011:65). The portfolio is subject to whole-of-government public land policy administered by the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF), which require departments and agencies to “consider land surplus to their requirements if the site no longer contributes to current or future service delivery needs” (DTF 2015). Land sales are intended to free up capital for future social infrastructure projects. Current policy includes processes and criteria for identifying surplus public land, and sets annual revenue targets from its sale (for a listing of educational land sales in 2014 see DTF 2015). VEAC (2011:56) observes that DTF’s criteria for assessing public land values do not specifically canvass the future impact of urban densification. Incorporating this perspective would, in economic terms, involve placing greater weight on the option value of public land – that is, the value placed on preserving options for the future use of the land – than on realizing its market value.

Education authorities, like other public land managers, clearly need to weigh up the opportunity cost of retaining underutilised or unsuitable land assets. However, does the current system prioritise disposal and distort decision-making in the absence of alternative policy mechanisms? Patrick Troy (1996) has been one of the few Australian voices arguing for policy settings, design input and institutional experimentation to manage educational demand cycles. There is a modest literature on the re-use of urban land (for example Greenstein & Sungu-Eryilmaz 2004) and on the adaptive re-use of schools (for example Fox et al. 2012), but there is little published research specifically addressing the merits of disposing or retaining educational sites.

Managing the politics of school planning

School building projects may involve land purchase on the open market, or the transfer
and re-purposing of land held by other government jurisdictions or the community sector. *Opportunity Spaces* field research, and related research on the re-purposing of community sector land assets (Sharam & McShane 2015) show the political valency of school planning in these situations: new projects may be welcomed as beneficial uses of underutilized assets, but may also attract controversy and community opposition.

Many variables influence the degree of community support for such projects. An initial finding from our research suggests that the strength of local institutional and community networks, and the links of the educational authority with these networks, are important factors in achieving project support. An example is provided by the Broadmeadows high school regeneration project. The Broadmeadows project involved a transfer of scarce public open space from the local authority to the state education department, to build the Hume Central Secondary College Town Campus. Interviews and documentary evidence indicate that while there was vigorous debate over the transfer, and negotiation over the size of the land parcel, a prime factor in gaining overall public and political support for the project, was the development of a vision for community education, institutionalized through the Hume Global Learning Village network. That is, establishing the ‘soft’ infrastructure of the learning network, and the cohesive power of “weak ties” (Granovetter 1973) around community learning, appear to have been key factors in project success.

In summary, we need more research and policy discussion around the provision and siting of schools and other educational facilities in conditions of urban growth. Specifically, the relationship between the sale of educational land and its re-use for housing development, with subsequent impact on educational demand, merits research. Given the thin empirical or case-study literature in this area, it would be instructive to examine successful innovations in educational provision under circumstances of land scarcity, whether through repurposing, adaptive re-use, land swap or other mechanisms.

### 5.2 Coordinating education, transport and housing policy

A series of Melbourne planning strategies issued in recent years has advocated business, public service and housing development around suburban transport and commercial hubs (Victorian Government 2008; Victorian Government 2002). Policy objectives include containing urban growth, reducing car dependency, developing vibrant and equitable urban precincts, and reducing the infrastructural, social and environmental costs of urban sprawl. Compact, walkable, mixed-use development near transport facilities is variously referred to as transport (or transit)-oriented development (TOD) (Curtis et al. 2009), smart growth, new urbanism, the twenty minute city, and the walkable city (Victorian Government 2014).

The relative failure of earlier plans to achieve this vision has been attributed to deficiencies in their original conception (Mees 2011), unprecedented population growth (Victorian Government 2014), and the eclipse of spatial planning by major infrastructure developments as the strategic basis for Australian metropolitan development (Dodson 2009).

There has been little specific attention to the relationship between schools and TOD, in Australia or internationally (Bierbaum et al. 2010). However, the re-emergence of a strategic focus on TOD or compact cities (Victorian Government 2014) offers a chance
to raise the profile of schools in planning discussions. One noteworthy attempt is Reid’s (2011) construct of school-oriented development. Reid proposes institutional co-location with different stages of schooling (for example, community services or aged care facilities with primary schools; employment and cultural precincts and secondary schools). The concept has some currency amongst US advocates of ‘new urbanism’, but has attracted limited attention in Australia.

The centrality of transport and housing to the TOD development model is significant for schools. Historical data show a steep increase in the use of private vehicles for school transport in Melbourne in the late twentieth century, with an associated decline in ‘active’ transport such as walking or cycling by students (see the much cited study by Peddie & Somerville 2005). Imaginative strategies such as walking school buses have responded to concerns over childhood obesity, neighbourhood walkability and safety. TOD principles, though, have particular relevance for the siting of secondary schools, as secondary students generally travel further than primary students. An efficient and safe public transport system may foster school networks and curriculum choice by facilitating coordinated subject offerings amongst neighbouring schools. Victorian data also show there is greater community use of secondary school facilities outside class time than their primary counterparts (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission 2009). Good public transport and well-sited secondary schools may encourage further shared use, while minimising car dependency.

Housing affordability impacts on educational provision by influencing the housing choices of the educational workforce and the social mix of student populations. The Australian policy literature pays some attention to the influence of social infrastructure provision on social mix (for example, Growth Management Queensland, 2010). The US literature goes further, with Bierbaum et al. (2010) urging that new urban developments based on TOD or compact city principles specifically engage with questions of housing affordability, to address concerns with segregated school populations and to ensure adequate housing supply for the educational workforce. The housing choices of key public sector workers (including teachers) has come under recent scrutiny in Australia’s major cities (City of Sydney 2014; City of Melbourne 2014; Williams & Finney 2013). Australian state education authorities offer housing services and subsidies for teachers in regional and remote regions. Is there a case for extending this system to urban settings?

Housing affordability also impacts on the social mix of school populations. Melbourne’s outer urban councils have expressed concern about the lack of household and generational diversity in new growth areas, driven by the spatial patterns of affordable housing (Growth Areas Social Planning Tool Reference Group 2014). The stratification of school populations is also evident in established Melbourne suburbs. Around 80% of Hume Secondary Town Campus students are in receipt of the Victorian government’s Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a subsidy for school expenses paid to low-income parents (paid to schools directly from 2015).

The social mix of schools is an “enduring problem” (Thrupp 2006) in educational research, policy and practice, and fully exploring its complexities and tensions within a consumer-drive education market is beyond the scope of this paper (for further discussion see Posey-Maddox et al. 2014; Camina & Iannone 2013; West 2006). We know there is a positive correlation between levels of social equity and educational
achieved (OECD 2013b). The social composition of schools significantly impacts on the character of school-parent partnerships, and on the resources contributed by the surrounding community to the school. Intermediary organizations are playing an increasing role in brokering school-community relationships in socially disadvantaged areas, particularly those with culturally diverse populations (Chrispeels 2012). This trend is reflected in the on-campus presence of The Smith Family at Hume Central Secondary College. The Smith Family provides parental workshops and programs in addition to mentoring and personal development for students. The evidence of the mutual benefits of family-school collaboration is strong (Chrispeels 2012:152), and our conception of the urban school fosters such institutional links by facilitating shared physical and/or program relationships.

5.3 Developing school-based responses to climate change

Climate change is one of the key challenges to urban sustainability in the twenty first century (Hall and Pfeiffer 2000). Recent Melbourne-based research under the banner of the Smart Green Schools (SGS) project has given us a better understanding of relationships between space, pedagogy and environmental sustainability, or “effective green learning environments” (Hes 2013). Such research is finding its way into specifications for the design and construction of new schools, along with the environmental objectives of whole-of-government procurement policies. For example, the Victorian government’s contract with Axiom Education to build eleven new schools through a public-private partnership (PPP) includes ecological sustainability and responsibility as a project objective, to be realized through a range of design and management strategies. State educational jurisdictions have indicated an interest in formally benchmarking school environmental performance against international standards such as ISO140011. The detailed specification of environmental performance criteria and reporting mechanisms in the Victorian PPP contract provides a good opportunity to gather further data on the environmental impact of schools, and inform or adjust future policy in this area.

The PPP contract’s attention to the resource consumption of school facilities is one side of the environmental ledger. Another side is the contribution that schools can make as environmental assets. As Hes (2013:169) comments

[a] sustainable school is one that adds energy to the electricity grid, collects more water than it needs, is an effective and healthy learning space for its teachers and students, and is a learning tool.

Indeed, there are some notable examples of schools taking direct action on human-induced climate change, such as South Fremantle Senior High School achieving an Australia-first status as a carbon-neutral school.2

Looking beyond the school fence, though, local environmental partnerships are an important interface between schools, LGAs and communities. SGS’ concept of the school as a learning tool is usefully extended to encompass the local eco-region. Environmental partnerships have been sponsored by formal programs such as the

2 http://southfremantleshs.wa.edu.au/about/carbon-neutral/
Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative\textsuperscript{3}, or more locally directed opportunities or concerns \textsuperscript{4}. This record of cooperation bodes well for future demands on schools around environmental sustainability, and for their participation in measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation. As the intensity of urban development increases, placing increasing pressure on environmental resources, there is likely to be increasing pressure on schools to act as good environmental citizens. In this scenario, school environmental policies and practices will be increasingly formalized and accountable, and also harmonized with other local institutions. There is, for example, growing policy interest amongst local jurisdictions – in Australia and internationally – in issues of climate change and community resilience in response to extreme weather events, for planning and pragmatic reasons (local authorities are significant actors in emergency recovery). Urban governments are playing an increasingly important and evolving role in what is now broadly conceptualized as climate change governance (McGuirk et al. 2014). The extent to which the educational role and institutional assets of schools (for example, using their physical assets for shelter, or using their communication assets) contribute to climate change governance is an area that would benefit from further empirical investigation and policy development.

\textbf{5.4 Connecting schools with urban digital networks}

In recent years, many Australian schools have been transformed by wireless technologies, through broad technological developments and specific program decisions, such as the Digital Education Revolution program’s provision of Wi-Fi enabled notebooks. The uptake of mobile phones and other devices by young people - 87\% of Australians aged 14-15 years have a mobile phone (Australian Communications and Media Authority 2013) - has placed pressure on education authorities to develop new responses on device use and content provision (Watkins et al. 2014).

Beyond the school fence, Australia is seeing unprecedented city government development of public Wi-Fi networks as a basic form of urban infrastructure. The increasing use of wireless connectivity and the internet across domains of governance, education, leisure and commerce is placing pressure on all public institutions to provide internet access as part of their core business. Libraries, of course, have long been active in this area, and more than 70\% of Australian local public libraries provide free public Wi-Fi (Australian Library and Information Association 2013). Across Australia there are several models of shared digital infrastructure between schools and other local institutions (for example, municipal libraries, on-line access centres), although there is no aggregated data in this area. Jungnickel’s (2014:40-44) description of community Wi-Fi activities at a South Australian primary school suggests, there is also a level of informal shared use of school IT infrastructure or technical expertise.

ALIA (2013:8) contends that in some shared-use arrangements library Wi-Fi availability is restricted by schools, suggesting that in some cases existing cooperation needs to be sorted out before grander plans are hatched. Institutional approaches to information seeking differ. Libraries are generally resistant to internet filtering (approximately one-third of libraries use some filter technologies - ALIA 2013), whereas the internet gatekeeping by schools is more stringent.

\textsuperscript{3} http://www.environment.gov.au/sustainability/education/aussi
Should schools make available their digital assets for wider community use, perhaps through partnerships with LGAs or community organisations specializing in digital access, in a similar way to sharing their physical assets? Watkins et al. (2014) suggest a range of benefits for schools, parents and surrounding communities:

- Wi-Fi network provision supports the increasing trend towards BYOD (bring your own device), and the integration of low-/no-cost content and apps into learning activities, rather than relying on more expensive and less flexible wired infrastructure.
- Wi-Fi and school digital resources can transform suitable school spaces (for example, libraries funded under the Building the Education Revolution) into inviting shared-use spaces similar to cybercafés or public libraries.
- Investment in shared digital assets can strengthen parent engagement and establish new or broaden existing partnerships with local governments and community organisations.

We have noted elsewhere that The Smith Family operates school-based “dual learning” programs in digital literacy, in which both students and parents participate (McShane et al. 2013). In addition to such contributions to community ICT literacy and capability, schools can make contributions to digital infrastructure by boosting the range and capability of local Wi-Fi networks, and leveraging partnership resources to acquire and operate high-value items, such as 3D printers.

The development of initiatives in this area requires financial resources and IT expertise. The emergence of secure bandwidth sharing technologies, as used by Telstra and other major telecommunication providers, suggests there are ways to minimise potential risks to network security, costs and user welfare. With regard to costs, it should be noted that there are potential cost offsets, through the emergence of a new market in which major telcos subsidize public Wi-Fi networks as a way of easing congestion of premium 3G and 4G mobile phone networks.

*The City as Text*

Extending mobile connectivity may also facilitate learning and student engagement with urban environments. Hall and Pfeiffer’s discussion of voice and participation alert us that students have been largely missing from the discussion to this point, underscoring the point that policy is customarily done to, rather than done with, students and their schools (Ball et al. 2012). Mobile connectivity enhances the capacity to engage with physical and material environments as texts. There are good examples of how to involve students in urban research and urban governance, such as the long-established Y-Plan program directed by the Center for Cities and Schools, Berkeley. The location of schools in urban environments presents considerable learning opportunities to integrate the city as a text in curricula. The rapid uptake of mobile internet-enabled devices and increasingly ubiquitous access to public Wi-Fi enhances the viability of such initiatives.

---

6 http://y-plan.berkeley.edu

Recent policy and institutional developments around shared, extended use and co-located educational facilities build on a substantial record of formal and informal school-sharing arrangements. Our earlier work has documented some historical developments, as well as recent contexts and causal factors that have generated new policy interest in the extended use of schools (McShane et al. 2013; McShane 2012).

In a scenario of urban growth, shaped by spatial, fiscal and resource constraints, it is likely that school sharing will intensify, activated through place-based interventions, local service partnerships and networking arrangements of schools. An initial concern in framing the Opportunity Spaces research project was to understand the dynamics of community ‘buy-in’ for educational regeneration projects and investment in shared facilities.

Our fieldwork and wider research in this area suggest that community sensitivities can have a significant impact on project planning and decision-making, requiring formal democratic institutions such as local councils to negotiate sectional interests and provide project endorsement. However, our fieldwork has produced evidence where community goodwill, if initially fragile, can be quickly mobilised once the facilities are operational and their value demonstrated. These findings will be documented and discussed in other project outputs.

In this section of the paper we turn to some specific issues of policy implementation, by reflecting upon aspects of our fieldwork at Broadmeadows, viewing the Hume Central Secondary College Town Campus through an urban school lens.

The difficulty of successful policy implementation in complex governance environments has been noted by many writers, including educationists (Honig 2006). Our work suggests that resourcing and agreement making are key implementation issues for achieving sustainable shared-use scenarios. Despite the goodwill of contracting parties in the planning and construction phase, policy and resource settings may not be optimised to sustain such ventures. This situation raises a scenario where institutional ‘buy in’ – particularly by schools and local government authorities – is not assured.

At Broadmeadows both the local authority and the school have concerns over funding formulae that underpin shared use scenarios. On both sides there is a perception that cost saving was a fundamental policy driver for the state government. On the local authority side, this perception was framed as “cost-shifting”, or concerns that the state-local funding agreement was increasingly disadvantaging local authorities at a time when those authorities were asked to do more in the educational arena, traditionally a state-level responsibility. On the school side, the perception was framed as “penny-pinching”, or concerns that the provision and accessibility of off-campus community facilities could directly translate into capital savings in the school project.

A second pressure point is the development of formal agreements over the terms of shared use. The range of policy and contractual approaches, in this area reflects diverse
jurisdictions, sites and programs. There are many available agreement templates or models for use or adaptation. Typically, though, agreement-making also requires specialist knowledge, dedicated resources and prioritisation by institutions. Interviewees have voiced concern that implementation issues, such as agreement making and monitoring, receive insufficient attention in shared-use investment projects. This contrasts with the attention given to contracts in PPP arrangements. In shared-use settings, operational details can be too reliant on informal mechanisms, and vulnerable to changes of personnel or service models (for example, a move from in-house to contracted out service provision).

A minor adjustment to policy and resource settings could produce valuable results in this area. For example, the remit of jointly funded (DTPLI-LGA) infrastructure brokers, currently directed to new growth areas, could be expanded to encompass redevelopment in established areas. International evidence suggests that demographic change in established urban areas is making decision-making about the use of school facilities increasingly complex and contested (Hyra 2014). Dedicated resources in this area may be effective in building sustainable cross-jurisdictional partnerships.

7 http://oppspaces.wordpress.com/jua/
7. Conclusion: Beyond the collaborative moment?

The urban studies scholar Patsy Healey (1997) proposed a model of government-led strategic planning that, while dated, has retained considerable relevance. Healy identifies four sequential policy modes over the past half-century:

1. a ‘provider state’ period in which the focus was on the need for a comprehensive “blueprint” approach;
2. the ‘negotiative state’, which facilitated planning as a process of bargaining and mediation;
3. the neo-liberal perspective that effectively diminished the role and status of strategic planning in relation to urban development, with ideological commitment to market facilitation;
4. a collaborative moment, with renewed interest in strategic planning and integrated and cohesive frameworks.

Urban schooling, as we have outlined it in this paper, regards collaboration not as a single ‘moment’, but as a sustained engagement with the surrounding community and urban region. We argue that school provision in inner city areas experiencing demographic change brings particular challenges and may require experimental approaches with physical settings and institutional links. Such an approach would be consistent with the long tradition of innovation in teaching, curricula and learning technologies. However, we have argued for a wider application of the urban school context, to emphasise the engagement of schools, wherever located, with their local urban public realm.

The paper has identified four challenges for the provision of schools and schooling in the context of urban growth and intensification. In working paper style, the choice and discussion of these challenges represents work-in-progress thinking. Drawing on the academic and policy literature, as well as our field data, the paper has identified some knowledge, policy and implementation gaps in the areas under discussion. In reframing the concept of an urban school, though, we reinforce the concept’s original concern with educational disadvantage and its association with uneven patterns of urban development.

State and local government investment in social infrastructure, particularly in disadvantaged regions, has promoted the ‘sharing economy’ of local community and educational partnerships. To entrench this cooperative model, mundane but vital work of striking and sustaining these partnerships needs greater attention, particularly where projects are post-construction. The goodwill and informal mechanisms established in the planning and construction phase can evaporate with changes to staff and service models. Without this, there is a risk that this phase will indeed be seen as a ‘collaborative moment’. Looking to the future, a record of successful partnerships will help in framing policy and operational responses to the challenges and opportunities of urban schooling.
8. Acknowledgements and Project Details

*Opportunity Spaces* is a three-year research project undertaken by researchers at RMIT University and University of Western Sydney. It examines community engagement in the planning, use and governance of shared school and community facilities. The project runs from 2012-2015 and is jointly funded by the Australian Research Council and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).

The project has three phases: 1) a strategic review of relevant policies, programs and literature in the broad field of shared school facilities; 2) fieldwork at three Victorian school sites where public school facilities are shared or co-located with local government and/or not-for-profit organisations, and 3) an evaluation and project write-up phase.

The author thanks staff of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria – especially the Regional Support branch – for assistance in preparing this working paper.
9. References

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012: 3222.0 Population Projections 2012-2101

Australian Library and Information Association 2013 ALIA Internet Access in Public Libraries Survey 2013

Australian Communications and Media Authority 2013 Like, Post, Share – Young Australians’ Experience of Social Media, Melbourne: ACMA.


Department of Transport, Planning, and Local Infrastructure 2014: Victoria in Future


Fox, L. Jasinski, L., Madaro, A. & Moson-Matra, A. 2012 The Old Everett High School – A Catalyst to Revitalize the City, Massachusetts: Tufts University Department of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy and Planning.


Growth Areas Planning Tool Reference Group 2014 Community Building in Growth Areas – the Case for a Coordinated Approach: Growth Areas Planning Tool


Sustainability in a Complex World, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, pp. 139-166.


OECD Centre for Effective Learning Environments 2011 Designing for Education – Compendium of Exemplary Educational Facilities, Paris, OECD.


Victorian Government 2008: Melbourne @ 5 Million, Melbourne: Victorian Government.


