

Spatial Planning & Urban Design – Implementation Challenges

Lee Beattie

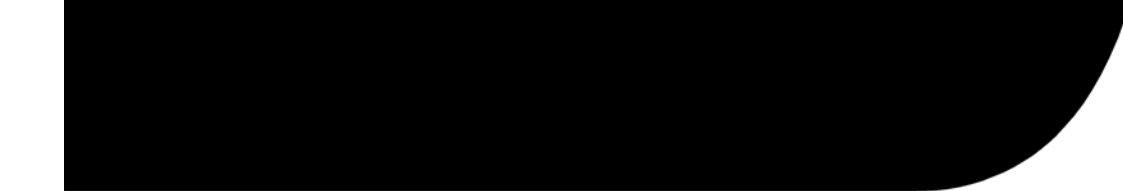
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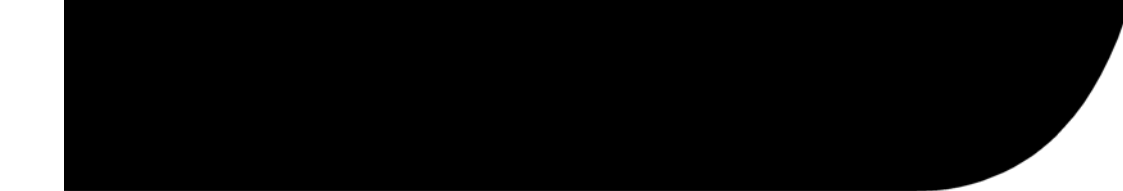
The University of Auckland

September 2010

Introduction

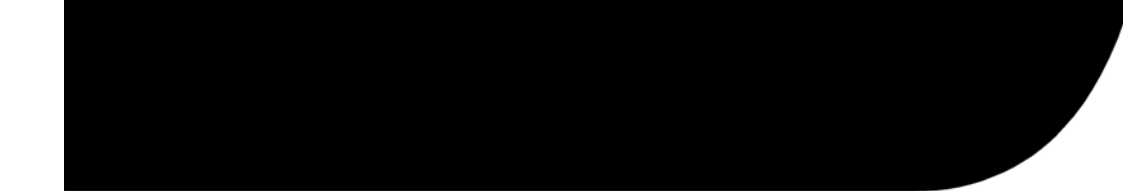
- Let's take a step back and consider a few issues before we begin the new 'spatial plan' journey
- Firstly, let's not forget, that the new Auckland Council is going to be the largest single local government reorganisation process ever undertaken in New Zealand's History

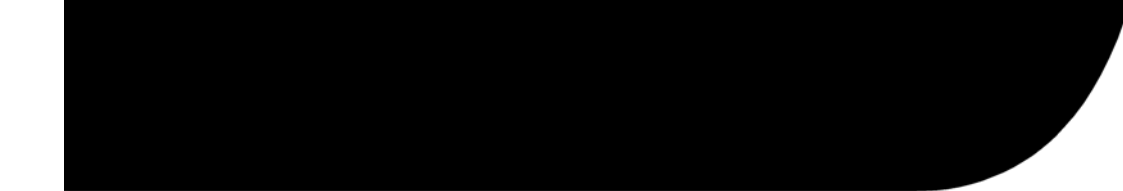
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- So It's part of a much bigger picture
 - Through this reorganisation and 'bedding in' period the new Auckland Council will be required to develop a new spatial plan for Auckland
 - All within a year?

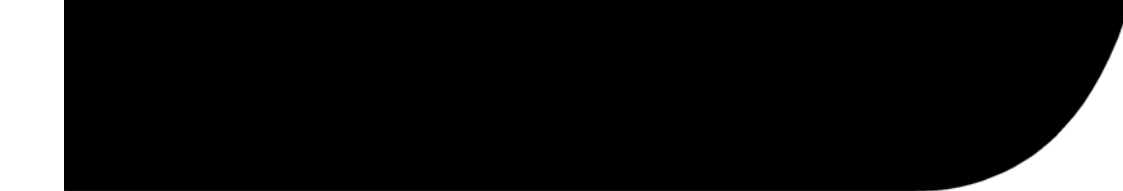
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- Where did this idea of a spatial plan come from and why?
 - What is wrong with the RPS and the district plans, why couldn't they do the job?
 - Are we just 'caught up' with making ever newer plans, without thinking about implementation and evaluation?

Royal Commission

- The Royal Commission found that Auckland's governance was weak and fragmented; as a result failing to address growth and infrastructure problems
- We should note: RC basically concurred with urban limits and 'densification' around nodes and corridors 'ala' the RGS; criticism was more about making it happen.

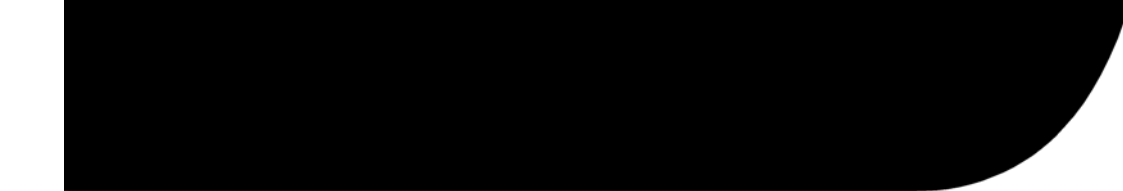
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- The commission noted there was no strategic vision to coordinate implementation, so suggested a strategic spatial plan and a single statutory plan (unitary plan) to address this concern
 - Does this mean that one plan would solve all our problems?

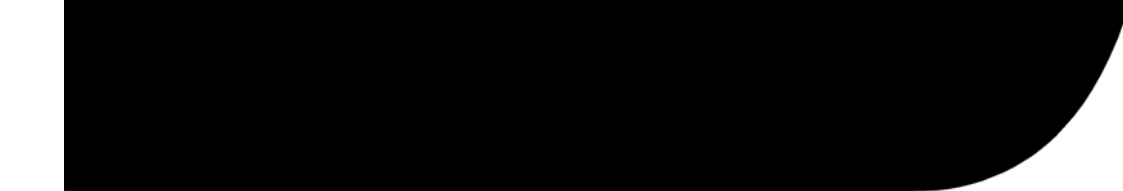
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- They noted a need for strong regional overview, through a single council with strong local engagement to meet the needs of their local communities
 - So was the Royal Commission suggesting that the existing urban planning approaches were not working?

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- If so, why? and what does that say about the current state of urban planning practice in Auckland?
 - I shall return to this point later on, including considering the issues of implementation and evaluation
 - So what is a spatial plan?

The Spatial Plan

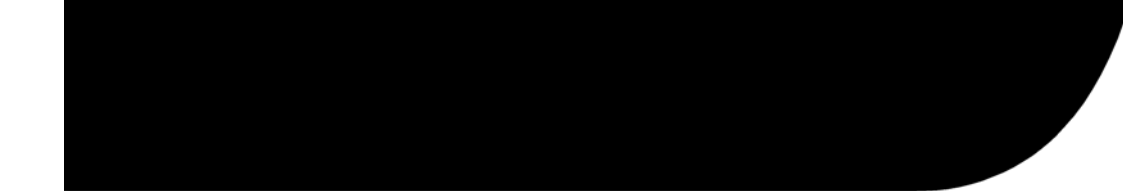
- Does anyone know what a spatial plan is in the NZ context?
- I know there are a number of ideas,
- What do the communities of Auckland think, and what will it provide for them?
- Can we look to overseas examples for some guidance?

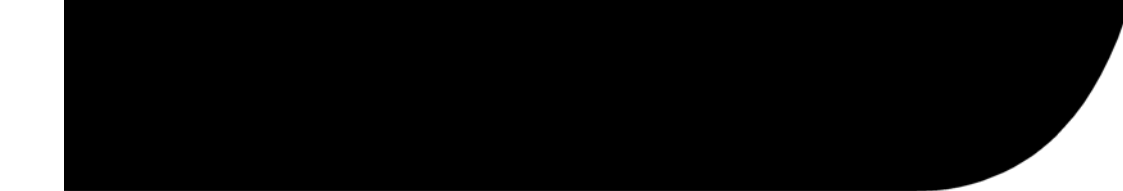
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- Yes, but we must be careful. Do they have the same planning mandate and funding mechanisms?
 - If not, how relevant are they to the NZ context, especially in terms of funding and implementation?
 - Section 79 (LG(AC)AA 2010) provides a detailed level of guidance (maybe too detailed?)

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- Consequently, are the Act's goals too ambitious and can they actually be met in such a short timeframe (one year)
 - While the idea of creating a spatial plan is laudable, I worry about implementation and commitment
 - There's a real risk that the plan becomes another failure where everybody is promised everything

New wine in old bottles

- Potentially, few practitioners in NZ have any real understanding of, experience in undertaking spatial planning
- While the enthusiasm seems high, we may risk re-branding old approaches given the time pressures
- Spatial planning should be about integrating and prioritising decision making

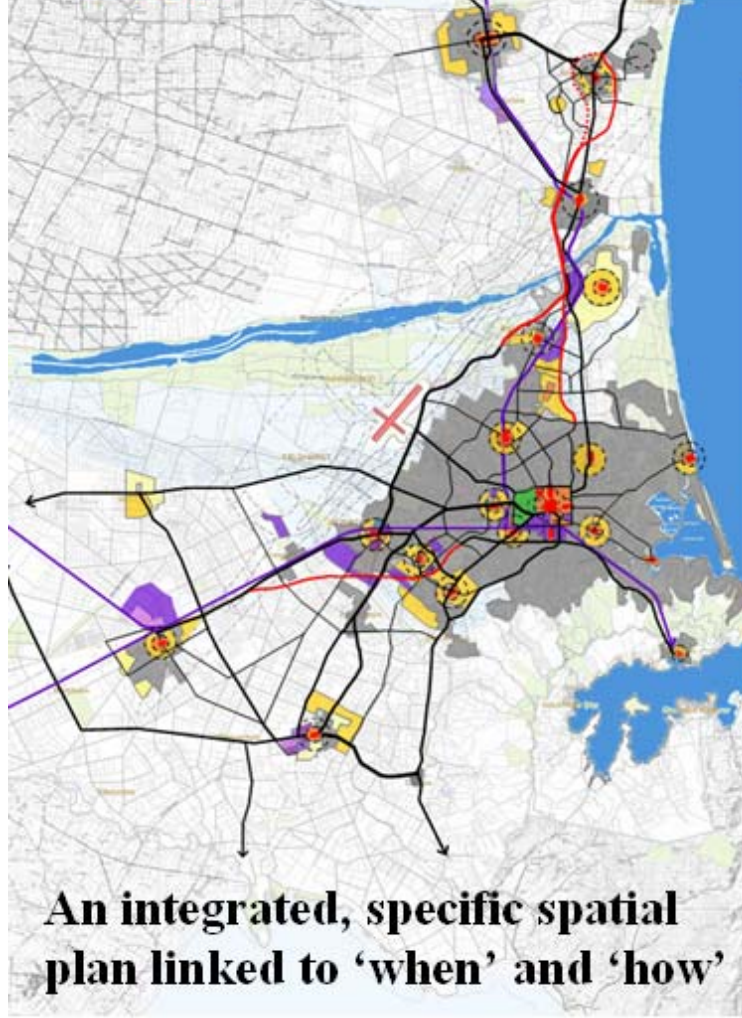
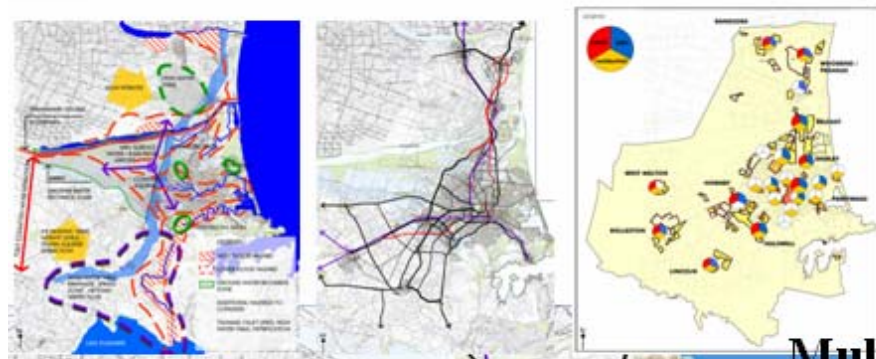
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- Needs to provide a clear long term vision linked to real shorter-term action.
 - Needs to understand the bigger picture, but also engage with the detail
 - Is as much a social process as a technical one

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- It is not simply everybody's ideal sector-based outcomes all jumbled together.
 - Needs to explain how, in different circumstances, competing objectives can be resolved and prioritised
 - How do we hold CCOs' to account and serve appropriate objectives wider than just their own financial imperatives?

Detail tests where greatest change proposed...

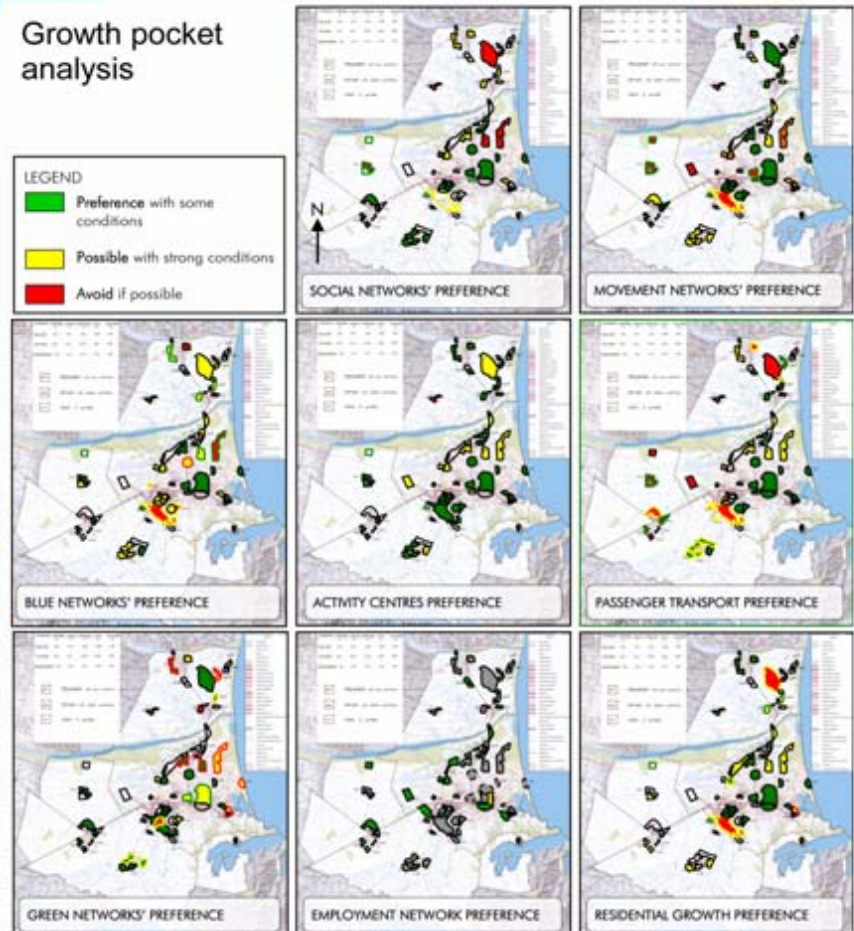


Multi-disciplinary analysis and goal setting...



Growth pocket analysis

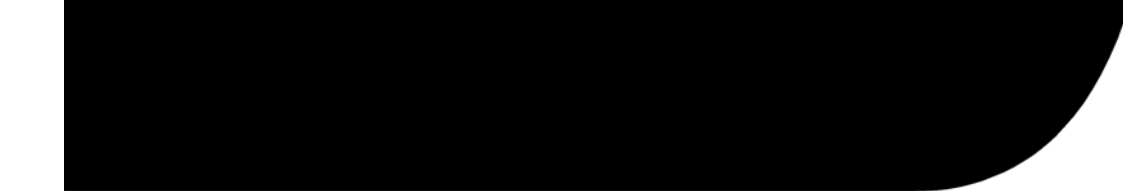
- LEGEND
- Preference with some conditions
 - Possible with strong conditions
 - Avoid if possible



An integrated, specific spatial plan linked to 'when' and 'how'

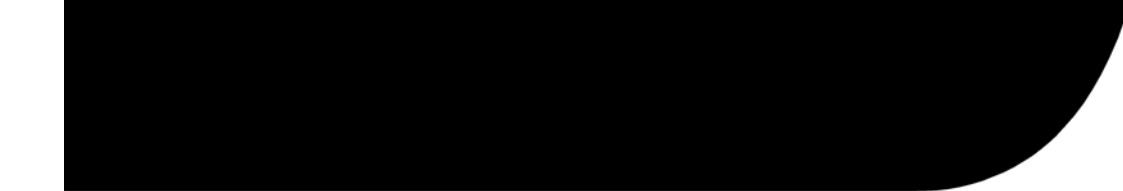
GCUDS Spatial Planning component – Winner
 2008 NZPI Nancy Northcroft Planning Practice Award

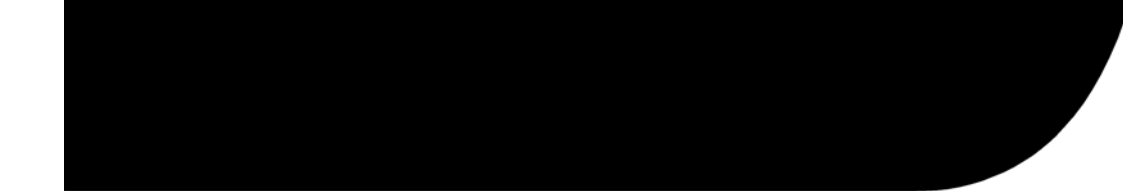
Urbanismplus Ltd.,
 Auckland

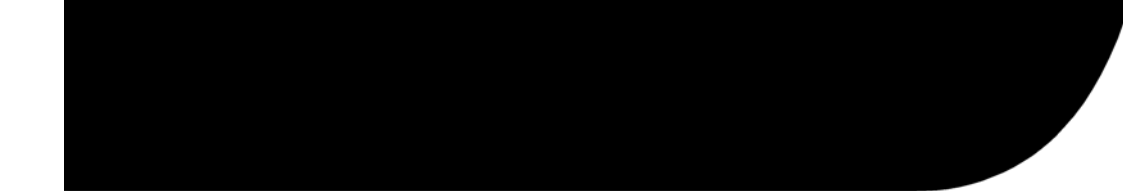
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- In doing so, the spatial plan should seek to bring together all of the Council's functions under the LGA, RMA & LTMA
 - Need integrated decision making, which is deliverable and will actually be implemented in practice
 - We need to move well beyond the rhetoric of integration; it has to become a way of working to solve problems across the organisations

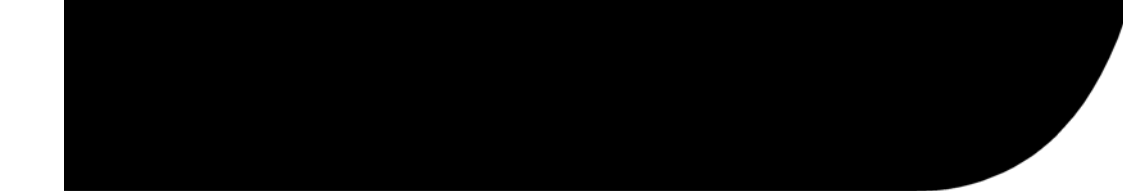
Issues

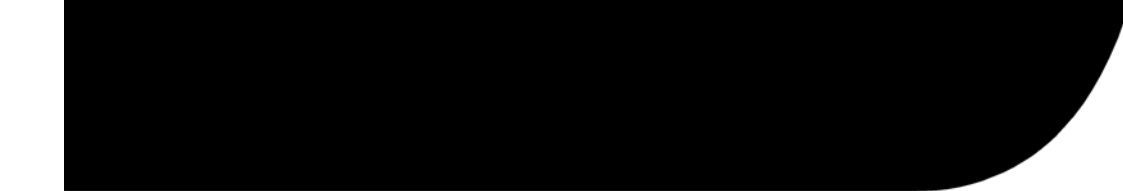
- I would argue (supported by current research) that we have a poor track record of implementing and evaluating plans in NZ
- Who knows whether their policy approaches actually worked on the ground?

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- Who actively undertakes policy effectiveness monitoring?
 - Even then, how can we separate what was good policy, and what was just lucky circumstance of the right people in the right place with the right financial backing?
 - The question of attribution

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- So, we appear to be more interested in constructing plans than implementing them.
 - Is making them happen some else's problem?
 - Catkins (1979) – Plan fatigue is not new

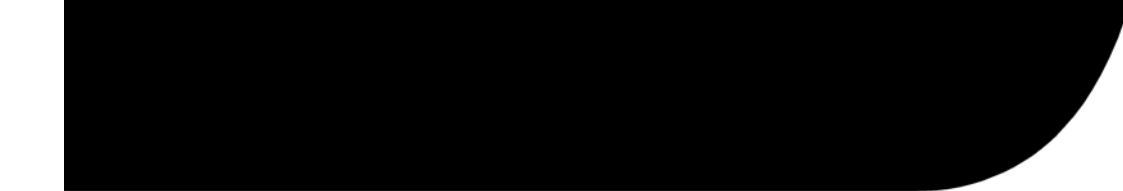
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- I would call this the 'implementation gap', linked to the 'knowledge disconnection' between policy formation and implementation
 - Are we just creating another layer of bureaucracy, or worse, false expectations?
 - Will the spatial plan fall into this category?

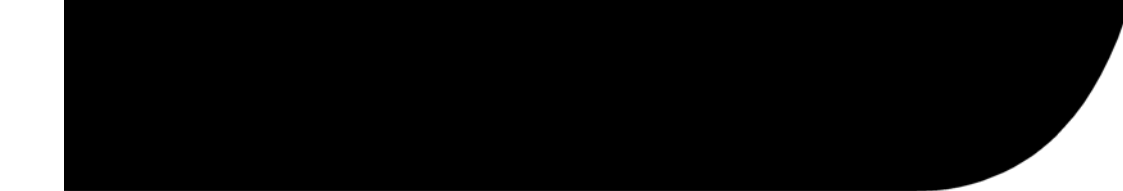
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- In addition, what is the relationship between the RPS and the district plan with the spatial plan?
 - This is especially relevant in the period between the delivery of the spatial plan and new unitary plan (I think three years maybe optimistic)

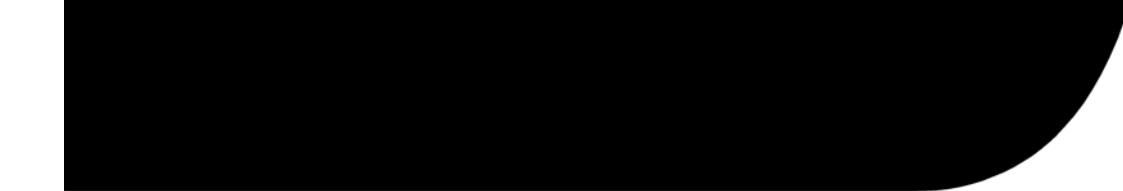
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- More importantly how can a non-statutory plan with limited community engagement which has not faced the statutory process effectively influence a statutory plan?
 - E.g., in terms of resources consents, is this going to be a s104(3)(c) issue?
 - If so, how does this lead to integrated decision making?

Issues – Commitment

- Do we have the commitment to give effect to the spatial plan?
- Internationally you find higher levels of either state or central government; or other funding mechanisms (sales taxes) to fund their spatial plan outcomes

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- The spatial plan will not work without serious commitment from all levels of government, especially central government
 - So I ask the question, is central government serious about the spatial plan?

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- Where is the money going to come from?
What happens if regional preferences are different to central (infrastructure preferences?)
 - There is a risk that the spatial plan becomes simply an infrastructure programme.
Australian spatial plans have been criticised for morphing from spatial planning into spatial engineering

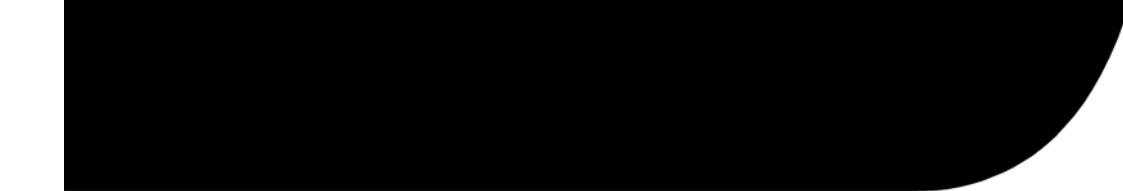
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- Do we have the right tools to deliver a spatial plan?
 - What about the role of practice, including the roles of all the professionals involved in the built environment?

Issues – Commitment

- We need to combine the best from each profession – and understand what each professional can bring to the table
- Will this require a culture change, are we ready and do we have the skill sets required to deliver?

Conclusions

- Its unclear what a spatial plan is in the NZ context
- Will the spatial plan be any better, or just a plan 'on a shelf'? Is it just another box we tick to remain in the 'globally important city' club?
- Are the time frames too tight, should the first spatial plan be like a draft, a test run to get it right?

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- There are many challenges ahead in delivering this plan
 - Are we up to it?
 - Is there sufficient capacity & commitment to deliver a meaningful plan capable of effective implementation that will make a real difference in the medium term?

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