

Managing Change and Innovation

Assignment 1: Urban Change and the role of the Change Agent

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ASSIGNMENT

The assignment brief is as follows:

PART A

- What are the determinants of urban change, addressing both change generated by evolving pressures and change being pursued by policy objectives? Discuss how urban change may affect physical and nonphysical aspects of the urban environment.
- Discuss why it is important to manage the process of urban change.
- What are the various roles of a 'change agent' or 'place manager' in delivering successful outcomes for a place? Briefly discuss the characteristics and skills a change agent should possess, and consider the organisational structures and relationships that can influence their effectiveness.

PART B

- Identify a current or recent example of urban change (preferably in the area you reside or are familiar with) that has prompted - or been prompted by – a physical or policy change and discuss this. How was the change managed? Briefly outline which organisations, and/or government departments are involved and how the management program is being undertaken.

SCOPE

For this essay, PART B - the identification of a current or recent example of urban change will focus on the renewal plans for the City of Wyndham and the areas of growth within its municipality.

NB: The author resides within the City of Wyndham.

PART A

The Determinants of urban change are quite extensive and also unique to various scenarios but for the purpose of this essay these have been limited to a few. There are three predominant elements that determine the necessity of urban change and these elements are socially, economically and politically motivated.

Socially speaking, the evolving influx in western culture of large groups of various religions throughout the later parts of the twentieth century and 2000s adds a new cultural aspect that contains its own built form and traditional architecture appearing as new places of worship not indigenous the existing population's religious practices. This warrants a seamless integration of these places of worship into the existing urban environment.

Another social element is conflict. Any civil or continental war, civil unrest and political exile create refugees and/or immigrants who migrate from their places of origin to settle in a more appealing location. An example of this is given by Spirou (2011), who explains that, the post World War II influx of war refugees and soldiers looking to settle forced cities around the world to restructure their urban fabric to allow for the seemingly instantaneous population boom¹.

Financial collapse and economic booms have lasting effects on the urban environment and with every change in economy there is an urban change.

The financial collapse due to America's housing market has drastically changed the urban landscape of Detroit and Las Vegas². An article in the Huffington Post illustrates the degradation from thriving communities to foreclosed ghost towns within months of the economic collapse³.

Additionally, if we take the Australian mining boom in Western Australia as an example, it is evident that it has had a lasting effect on the urban environment of Perth and its surrounding suburbs with new residential developments springing up seemingly overnight⁴.

Global and local politics play a major role in changes to the urban fabric of a place. If a city wishes to be known as a global city its urban environment must be to a certain standard. This is increasingly evident in the emerging nations of South East Asia and how they are putting into practise innovative Urban Design Frameworks that once completed will signify their involvement on a global scale.

In terms of local politics and policy it is often difficult to succeed in implementing large long-term improvements to the urban environment as majority of governments have a finite period of governance. This can have adverse effects on the urban fabric of any given location. Take Paris as an example, throughout its history its urban fabric has been changed numerous times with every major change in government⁵.

The two principle aspects of the urban environment that can be impacted on by urban change are often referred to as character and space⁶. In this case, space denotes the three dimensional physical environment and character implies a more meta-physical esoteric function through what can be described as atmosphere⁷.

According to Lambert, 2011, there are five physical aspects of place that are affected by urban change; the community that lives, works and visits the place.⁸ The three dimensional elements that make up the place.⁹ The land use mix down to what retail mix is present in the

¹ Spirou, 2011, pp. 2

² Harry Bradford, 2011

³ Harry Bradford, 2011

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1999

⁵ Bracken, 2012, pp. 10-14

⁶ Norberg-Schulz, 1980, pp. 119

⁷ Norberg-Schulz, 1980, pp. 119

⁸ Lambert, 2011

⁹ Lambert, 2011

place¹⁰. The activation areas within a place. And finally, the interaction with the natural environment.¹¹

On another note, it is important to manage the process of urban change as without proper management it could have detrimental effects on the above mentioned aspects of place. It is important to know when to stop the changes to the urban environment of a specific place and prevent it from becoming over-urbanised, where the concrete environment conquers the natural one.

Some of the most important roles in relation to successful urban change are the change agent and the place manager.

A change agent is first and foremost the catalyst for change and is tasked with the principle role within an organisation to optimise the outcomes for the organisation and its members. Schabracq (2007) continues by stating that 'being a change agent has a heavy ethical load'¹² as they must be able to guide people involved in order to prevent harm befalling the organisations outcomes.¹³

Place managers are part of the mechanism that manages a wide range of issues, challenges and opportunities that are present in activity areas of town centres. It is there management approach that enables issues to be consolidated and resolved achieving the economic, social and environmental potential of the activity centre¹⁴.

According to Schabracq (2007) the virtues associated needed to become a successful change agent consist of, courage, moderation, prudence, honesty and humility just to name a few.¹⁵ Schabracq (2007) later identifies that change agents need to be adaptive to be effective. He points out a general rule of thumb:

- *Know the organisation's stakeholders well*
- *Make the organisation a self-evident, respected and reliable partner for all stakeholders...*
- *Determine how the organisation can better attune its information system and production process to the needs of its stake holder, and make this the guideline for forming new alliances.*
- *Try to broaden the organisation's scope: there are many more possible stakeholders out there*
- *Monitor relevant change and respond to it appropriately.*¹⁶

Finally, a change agent must ask questions. These questions enable the change agent to focus their attention on unknown problems that may arise in the future. Therefore, the change agent can then resolve the problem prior to an damage befalling the organisations outcomes

¹⁰ Lambert, 2011

¹¹ Lambert, 2011

¹² Schabracq ,2007, pp. 1

¹³ Schabracq ,2007, pp. 1

¹⁴ State Government Victoria, 2012

¹⁵ Schabracq ,2007, pp. 1

¹⁶ Schabracq ,2007, pp. 13

PART B

A great example of urban change that is currently being implemented is that of the City of Wyndham's Werribee west, Wyndham North and Point cook growth areas. These three similar urban environments have been changing since 2003 and have seen tremendous growth over the last 10 years¹⁷. These urban changes were predominantly initiated when it was projected that the city of Wyndham would have a population increase of 160 000 persons by the year 2021¹⁸. The Wyndham city council then began to implement a policy in 2006, it entailed:

- *Concept plans that provide a guide to future development within Wyndham's major growth fronts.*
- *Other than with the consent of the Planning Authority, planning scheme amendments, development plans and subdivision plans be in conformity with concept plans.*
- *The preparation and assessment of development proposals, development plans and subdivision plans have regard to the concept plans, as well as:*
 - *The need for future activity centres*
 - *Access to community facilities*
 - *Provision for open space and sporting facilities*
 - *Location of future school sites*
 - *Provision for major roads and road reservations*
- *Concept plans provide a basis for assessment of infrastructure needs*
- *Concept plans provide a basis upon which further population projections and needs can be monitored and varied as required.*¹⁹

There are many more policies and plans for the three growth areas which have been put forward by the Wyndham city council strategic planning office. These plans consist of infrastructure, housing, employment and eco tourism:

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| • <i>Draft growth corridor plans</i> | • <i>Werribee south green wedge policy and management plan</i> |
| • <i>Municipal strategic statement</i> | • <i>Werribee river shared trail strategy</i> |
| • <i>Point cook concept plan</i> | • <i>Wyndham coastal scoping study and development of a new coastal strategy</i> |
| • <i>Truganina employment precinct</i> | • <i>Wyndham north growth front</i> |
| • <i>Truganina south precinct structure plan and development contributions plan</i> | • <i>Wyndham waterways strategy</i> |
| • <i>Urban Growth boundary review</i> | • <i>Regional rail link</i> ²⁰ |

¹⁷ Wyndham City Council, 2000, pp. 1-4

¹⁸ Wyndham City Council, 2000, pp. 1-4

¹⁹ Wyndham City Council, 2000, pp. 1-4

²⁰ Wyndham City Council Strategic planning office, 2007

The implementation of these policies and urban development frameworks has led to the urban changes occurring gradually over a long period of time. The urban change occurring in the City of Wyndham has only been evident in the last 2 year. New activity centres in Tarneit, Point Cook, Truganina, Werribee south and central Werribee have become more apparent with new retail districts, housing estates, sporting and educational facilities, a new coastal mix zoned development including apartments and a large marina; and in particular central Werribee with a massive publically displayed plan to reinvigorate and celebrate its surrounding parklands and river system, which has previously been lacking in attention and direction.

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