

The Exigency of Making Auckland the World's Most Liveable City and its Detrimental Consequences

Abstract: This paper critically investigates the Auckland Council's primary objective to shape Auckland as the world's most liveable city. Following the agglomeration of eight councils, Auckland Council became the largest council in New Zealand in 2010. Transforming Auckland into the most liveable city in the world is the main objective of this new organisation and has significantly informed Auckland Council's policies and plans. This ambitious objective has generated social, economic and political consequences both locally and internationally.

Nonetheless, scholars, including planning theorists, have rightly oppugned the Auckland Council for its aim. This paper elucidates that the Council's objective is vital to reinforce the position of Auckland in the global market. According to Deleuze and Guattari's works, the constant flow of money and human capital are imperative for the existence of the contemporary city, such as Auckland. In this context, making Auckland the world's most liveable city is considered as part of the Auckland Council's city-marketing strategy that aims to lure international investors, creative class immigrants and tourists. Nevertheless, transforming Auckland into the most liveable city in the world amplifies pre-existing urban problems such as housing inflation and uneven development in New Zealand.

This paper suggests that the implementation of a supplementary spatial planning – a national spatial plan – may assist to evenly distribute wealth, services and subsequently population around the country. By directing the flows of capital and population, this supplementary plan will not eliminate, but it will mitigate the detrimental consequences of uneven development such as housing inflation in Auckland.

Introduction:

Local governments, including their planning organisations, are generally considered as the producers of urban development plans, policies and projects, as well as the evaluator of their own implementation. This paper considers local government as generators of not only plans, policies and projects; but, also as creators of new visions. "These are also visions that may initially and subsequently guide and shape the agency of the organisation itself" (Gunder, 2014, p. 2), regulate its operations, and inform plans, policies and urban projects.

The paper will take a psychoanalytical approach to the production of desires where the visions help to generate new desires for decision-makers, planners, citizens, investors and also visitors. Based on Massumi's interpretations of Deleuze and Guattari's works, this paper will reveal that the visions subsequently generate new desires through promising two types of (non)capital surplus values – subjective and objective (Massumi, 1992). Various actors actively struggle to attain one of or both types of promised surplus values. In other words, the visions are used as desiring-machine. Furthermore, this paper will explain that how the visions are used as part of the city-marketing policy in order to attract flows of capital, finance and human capital (particularly creative class) from the global market. Based on Deleuze and Guattari's works, it will show that the constant flows of different capital are indispensable for the operation of the contemporary city and its economic growth in late capitalism.

The deployment of the visions does not only attract the flows to the cities, but creates some problems subsequently for the cities as well. This paper will argue that the constant flows of capital may partially cause, or at least enforce, some urban problems such as housing inflation. These adverse consequences of the visions should be recognised and addressed through the constant monitoring of global, national, local environmental, socio-economic and even political mechanisms.

The multiple dimensions of the implementation of visions as desire creators will be considered: how the vision provides new desires to the subject, why this vision is obligatory to attain economic growth, and what are the adverse consequences on the city. Drawing on the Auckland Council's vision to make Auckland as the world's most liveable city as announced by the Auckland Mayor – Len Brown – in 2010, outlined in the Auckland Plan (Auckland Council, 2012), the paper will show how this vision has informed the local government's plans and policies, produced new desires for decision-makers,

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planners, residents, investors and visitors, used as part of marketing Auckland around the world as brand. To address the adverse consequences, this paper will consider the Auckland Council's vision to make Auckland the world's most liveable city in relation to the current Auckland's housing inflation. Particularly, this paper investigates the impacts of the flow of money from overseas into the Auckland housing market as one of the reasons for the existing housing crisis that make Auckland as one of the most unaffordable cities in the world.

Auckland as the most liveable city in the world:

First this paper introduces Auckland and, then, how the Auckland Council has been shaped as the largest local government authority in Australasia. Historically, Auckland has been the primate city, the city of migrants, and the dominant business and finance hub in New Zealand. Auckland is New Zealand's largest city-region, home to more than 1.5 million people, a third of New Zealand's total population, and contributes more than 37 per cent of New Zealand's GDP (Auckland Council, 2012). Since 2010, Auckland Council has been shaped to resolve Auckland's problems such as providing affordable housing for Aucklanders.

In 2007, the central government assigned a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Auckland Governance to address ongoing problems in the region, to identify the issues facing Auckland in future, and to resolve them. The Royal Commission identified the lack of an integrated decision-making mechanism, including planning, as one of the main reasons for on-going problems in the Auckland region (McKinlay, 2011). The report suggested a fundamental governance reform to shape a unitary authority for the region with a mandate to develop an integrated planning mechanism. The first bill, the Local Government (Tamaki Makaurau Reorganisation) Act 2009, which provided for the merger of the eight pre-existing councils into a single unitary council and the establishment of the Auckland Transition Agency, was passed through all stages under urgency in 2009. The legislative reform termed the new Auckland region as the 'super-city'. The term of 'super city' reflected the scale of the integrated authority (1.5 million people) compared with the scale of New Zealand's other large local authorities such as Christchurch City with a population of approximately 350,000. In 2010, the Auckland Council was shaped an inclusive and united organisation to take over the functions of the Auckland Regional Council and the region's seven city and district councils, including Auckland City Council, Manukau City Council, Waitakere City Council, North Shore City Council, Papakura District Council, Rodney District Council and most of Franklin District Council (Rowan, 2011). Forming "Auckland [Council] was/is by global standards a staggering experiment and has provided governance reformers, planners and strategists enormous challenges" (Lewis & Murphy, 2015). According to the legislation, this new organisation has aimed to provide map of actions, plans, strategies and policies for the future of the Auckland region.

"The Auckland case shows an emerging logic of super amalgamation in which the re-bordering and reconstitution of urban governance as a 'super-sized' metropolitan authority is designed to deliver coordinated efficiency" (Mouat & Dodson, 2013). Shaping Auckland Council as a unitary authority has significantly reformed the pre-existing planning mechanism and increased its capacity that, as an integrated planning system, should manage Auckland's recent 'super city' amalgamation as the metropolitan scale.

The Royal Commission suggested Auckland Council should provide integrated services to support all local authority activities across Auckland, provide plans, policies and strategies to resolve the existing and future problems of the Auckland region, focus on regional level plans, policies and projects, and undertake much of its activity through seven CCOs (its Arms-Length Entities) (McKinlay, 2011).

Following the amalgamation of Auckland Council in 2010, the first elected Mayor of Auckland, Len Brown outlined his vision to transform Auckland into the world's most liveable city. The vision guides and shapes the agency of Auckland Council as a new organisation (Gunder, 2014). Thus, the Mayor's vision has significantly informed Auckland Council's strategies, plans and policies such as the Auckland Plan and the Auckland Unitary Plan. However, Auckland has been one of the most liveable cities in the world. For example, The Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Liveability Ranking ranked Auckland as the 10th most liveable city in the world in 2014 (The Economics, 2014). The new integrated Council aims to improve the liveability of Auckland and, subsequently, to increase its ranks among other competitor cities such as Melbourne and Vancouver.

The Exigency of Making Auckland the World's Most Liveable City:

This section considers the exigency of the implementation of the Mayer's vision for sustaining the position of Auckland among other competitor cities in the global market. Based on the Deleuze and Guattari's works, particularly desiring-machine, and Masumi's interpretations, this paper explains how the implementation of a vision in a local government has inherently produced new desires for decision-makers, planners, residents, investors and visitors.

Cities as the desiring-machines:

A number of scholars, thinkers and philosophers such as Lacan (2007), Deleuze and Guattari (2009) Jameson (2005) and Žižek (2011) argued that desire is the key driver in global mechanism. This paper mainly uses Deleuze and Guattari's works, particularly desiring-machine. According to Deleuze and Guattari (2009), the desire is the sine qua non of a city's operations in capitalism: first and foremost, cities are desiring-machines. Geographers such as Amin and Thrifts (2002), planning theorists such as Sandercock (2003) and urban design theorists such as Dovey (2011) have deployed the idea of desire to explain the contemporary city's operations in late capitalism.

Based on Deleuze and Guattari's works, Dovey (2005, p. 20) stated that "the city is an immanent flow of desires". The existence of a contemporary city is reliant on the generation of new desires, imperative for attracting capital and labour flows. To explain psychological impacts of desires on people, he (2005, p. 20) postulated that "[t]he world is not a collection of subjects who have desires, rather desires construct the subject" that inform their behaviour, visions and decisions. The type of desires that are produced for profit, investment, privilege, consumption and power generally promise increasing enjoyment for various actors such as decision-makers, planners, residents, investors and visitors.

Furthermore, Wood (2009, p. 204) argued from this account of desire, flows of capital must, of necessity, be parasitic upon flows of desire; the basic argument which follows is 'before' the market can play a determining role in urban development, flows of desire must be made tantamount to, and seemingly derivative from, flows of capital. The implementation of visions such as making the world's most liveable city is representative examples of the flow of desires that attract flows of capital in its forms, finance and human capital, to the city by promising further enjoyment to all actors.

Sandercock's (2003) notion of 'the city of desire', recognises desire as a resource of city vitality. "For Deleuze and Guattari, the key determinant of a society's structure is given by the way in which it produces desire rather than the way in which it produces goods and services" (Wood, 2009, p. 204). The transformation of cities as the product of local government and its planning requires the new desires. Based on global values, local socio-cultural, economic and political institutions such as local governments endeavour to generate new desires in order to conduct urban changes. For Dovey (2005, p. 22), "capitalism legitimates new flows of desires". The capitalist city such as Auckland is a machine in which desires are constantly decoded and recoded based on global market values. Colebrook (2002, p. 127) argued that "capitalism is a surplus of flows; anything is allowable and permissible if it can be translated into a capital flow" including new desires. The contemporary cities are places in which regulated desires erupt into the production of flows of material, capital and human (Ong, 2007).

The most liveable city ranking is an illustrative example of how an avant-garde vision generates new desires for both domestic and international actors that inherently functions as an economic driver for a city in the global market. The vision is promoted globally as a lucrative model for city development in media. Thus, several cities across the world have followed in an effort to materialise this globally accepted vision.

Local governments generally manage a city based on decoding the flows of desire, where only financial values are permitted to play a determining role (Gunder, 2011). The decoding process creates viable images of the visions, plans, and projects based on money as the universal equivalent, promising financial investors a secure profit, which is the familiar surplus of capital. Secondly, the promised profit is actualised through consumption by generating a set of new regulated desires based on new qualitative values (Wood, 2009). The visions such as "the world's most liveable city", cultural events such as festivals and mega-events like the Olympic Games (Hiller, 2000; Pløger, 2010) and cultural diversity policies such as multiculturalism (Florida, 2002; Ong, 2008) can be interpreted within the process of re-territorialisation, conveying the generation of new qualitative values. The new qualitative values generate new desires for greater enjoyment. In this context, Pløger (2010, p. 848) stated "all cities believe that, if they have the best socio-cultural amenities and creative milieus, architectural

heritage, and cultural events, they have a reliable strategy to get the maximum in return, in consumption and image turnover”.

“Deleuze and Guattari argue that capitalism functions by simultaneously producing two different kinds of surplus values: a quantitative (objectifying surplus value), and a qualitative (subjectifying surplus value)” (Wood, 2009, p. 204). Both of these surplus values seem indispensable in the analysis of local governments’ policies, including their visions for a city. Scholars of planning and urban studies, urban designers, geographers and even architects deploy various approaches to address the regeneration of capitalistic surplus value as the primary production of cities. Yet, most planners, urban designers and others have largely ignored, or at least misinterpreted, the subjectifying surplus value in analysing urban transformation. By deploying a Deleuze and Guattarian notion, Dovey (2005) and then Wood (2009) revealed that the production of subjectifying surplus value in the process of the development of the Melbourne waterfront. They explained that neither type of surplus value was detachable, “[a]lthough these two types of surplus values are based in different flows of capital, they are co-dependent for their realisation” (Dovey, 2005, p. 211).

For Deleuze and Guattari, subjectifying surplus value has a non-capital form. It is more on the ‘other’ of prestige, an ‘aura’ – style, ‘cool,’ the glow of self-worth, personality. Thus, the visions are produced and consumed to increase capital accumulation in the city. Simultaneously, non-capitalist surpluses are created, such as those of ‘political kudos’ for the local government, ‘prestige’ for planners, ‘civic pride’ for residents, and the ‘aura’ or ‘hipness’ for its consumers, including tourists (Dovey, 2005; Wood, 2009).

Both capital surplus value and subjectifying surplus value are produced in cities through the process of the implementation of the visions. First, decision makers fantasise the desirable images for their cities, such as being the most liveable city in the world. At length, these fantasies are used to attract a greater share of the global flows of finance and immigration, in competition with other cities. Second, the visions have transformed cities by informing policies and plans, synchronously generate subjective forms of surplus value such as political praise for local government, civic prestige for residents and acclaim for visitors (Dovey, 2005).

City-marketing and the global market:

Decision-makers continue to ponder the arrangements and the visions to secure desired competitiveness among ongoing processes of urban transformation at national and international levels (Hambleton 2009; Mouat & Dodson, 2013). The local government functions are significantly adjusted by global flows in the post-industrial era. Due to globalisation’s blurring of nation state borders and the increasing global integration, the functions of local governments, such as their controlling role, have been changed dramatically. Market rationality increasingly determines local governments’ visions to generate greater financial opportunities and facilitate the movement of flows of products, expertise, money and new desires (Sager, 2011).

Capital and subjectifying surplus value are simultaneously produced through the operation of the city. The contemporary city should regenerate new desires to sustain and, more importantly, increase its attraction of global capital flows (Lloyd & Clark, 2001). This is achieved through the implementation of the new visions in the contemporary city. In this way, new desires are generated, embedded in ‘city-marketing’ and ‘place-branding’. Sager (2011) argued that city-marketing has traditionally been seen as a marketing practice with three objectives and target audiences: to attract new inhabitants of the city, to attract business investments and new companies, and to attract tourists. For Deleuze and Guattari, this categorisation can be converted into two main types of flows: attracting new inhabitants as flows of labour, and absorbing businesses and tourists as flows of capital.

The contemporary city should continually produce new desires; one of the new functions of local government is the facilitation and legitimation of the production of new desires, as well as promotion of the image of the city within global market. To reveal the way in which the local government operates to maximise international investment flows and lure the creative class, urban scholars have proposed a variety of concepts, including ‘urban-entrepreneurialism’ (Brenner & Theodore, 2005; Jessop et al., 1998), ‘city-marketing’ (Doel & Hubbard, 2002; Kavaratzis, 2007) and ‘place-branding’ (Govers & Go, 2009; Nicolas, 2004). These concepts emphasise the competition between globalised cities for luring a greater share of global capital flows that imperative for their economic growth.

Outside judgment and international perceptions are important for raising the profile of cities in the market (Ong, 2007, p. 89). Thus, decision-makers as the leaders of the apparatus, constantly deploy the new visions. Gotham (2002, p. 1735) states that “[m]arketing is the use of sophisticated advertising techniques aimed at promoting fantasy, manipulating consumer needs, producing desirable tourist experiences and simulating images of place to attract capital and consumers”.

“The reputation of a city, its image, is perhaps the most visible sign of promotional efforts” (Short et al., 2000). Thus, one of the primary objectives of local decision-makers and planners is to construct favourable new images of their city in terms of investment, living and visiting. The production and promotion of desirable images are imperative for the operation of the city, and these images are produced through the process of city operations, including planning mechanism. “The best of cities have always been a curious mix of economic engine and seductive surface; places of work and play; producing wealth and desire in abundance” (Dovey, 2005, p. 1). The entrepreneurial images of cities are not generated based only on urban projects such as waterfront development projects, iconic architectural buildings and emporia; rather, cities also create allure through their rhetorical policies, such as liveability. Through the process of planning, interests are produced (Wood, 2009). Desiring-production generates a fantasy that persuades non-residents to invest, live in or visit a city. The connection of the city to the global networks within the capitalist mechanism is central in shaping this fantasy. In this context, the Auckland Council’s vision has been used as a tool for reinforcing the economic power and competitiveness of New Zealand’s primate city.

Detrimental consequences of the implementation of the Auckland Council’s vision:

This section reveals that how the implementation of the Auckland Council’s vision, by boosting the flows of finance and human capital, has exacerbated the pre-existing urban problems, particularly housing inflation in Auckland. As explained in the previous section, the local government largely deploy the visions and slogans as part of city-marketing and place-branding to attract the flows of capital and human capital from the global market. These flows are vital for the economic growth of the contemporary city in late capitalism. Nevertheless, the flows may partially cause new problems, or worsen pre-existing urban issues, and uneven-development.

Auckland historically has been the primary city of New Zealand (Shirley and Neill, 2013). Following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, Auckland was established in 1840, selected as the seat of the British government in New Zealand. However, the establishment of Auckland took place concurrently with other major towns and cities in New Zealand. Auckland’s strategic position, availability of land, and access water resources from the both sheltered harbours on both coastlines, attracting flows of new settlers and capital, set it apart from the start (Hamer, 1995). However, the capital of New Zealand relocated from Auckland to Wellington in 1856, caused an economic slump in the town. Auckland has remained as the primary commercial, industrial and even political hub of the country.

In the 1980s, the economic liberalisation and reform significantly influenced on Auckland as the main commercial and industrial hub of New Zealand. The New Zealand economy was opened up to competition from imports and foreign investors. The liberalisation facilitated flows of foreign investment in commercial, property retail and private real estate. The flows of foreign investment boosted property development in Auckland, particularly in its CBD (Moricz and Murphy, 1997). “The city’s role as a major hub for the inward and outward flow of goods, services and people continued to expand as did its designation as the dominant centre for the retail and service industry sectors as well as the portal for overseas companies in New Zealand” (Shirley and Neill, 2013). Following the facilitation of flow of capital through liberalisation of economy, the government changed immigration policies in the late of 1980s to attract individuals who could contribute business expertise, or make capital investment in New Zealand (flows of human capital) (Simon-Kumar, 2015). “Between 1981 and 2006, the number of overseas-born people usually resident in New Zealand rose from approximately 450,000 to 920,000, an increase of more than 100 per cent” (Law et al, 2013). Auckland has attracted the large number of the new arrivals (Spoonley et al, 2014). Flow of people increased the demand for real estate that subsequently fuelled pre-existing housing inflation. Housing inflation among other factors made the cost of living in Auckland higher than other places in New Zealand (Shirley and Neill, 2013).

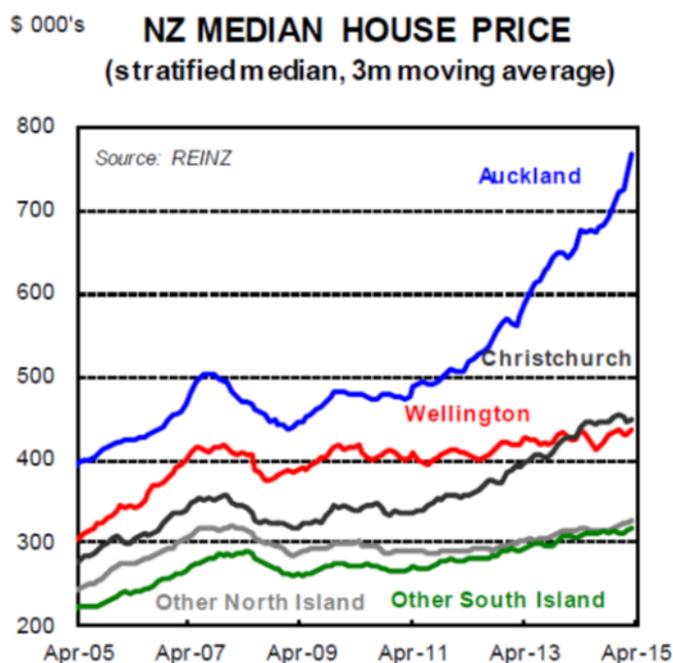
The amalgamation of Auckland Council and, then, implementation of the new vision for making Auckland as the world’s most liveable city endeavoured to reinforce the flows of capital and people required for economic growth. Concurrently, the central government changed the immigration policies to attract individuals to the country in 2009. However, several occupations were removed from the long-

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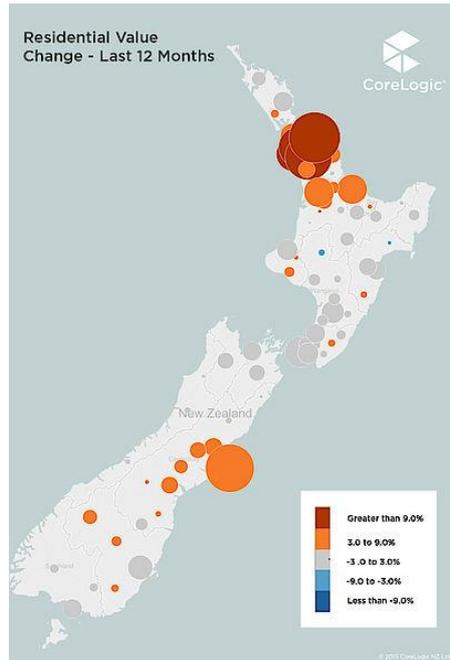
term skills shortage list and rules around sponsorship were tightened. New investor and entrepreneur categories, including Investor/Entrepreneur and Investor/Entrepreneur Plus, were introduced to attract business migrants. According to the Immigration Minister, Jonathan Coleman, these schemes has facilitated entry criteria and fast-track applications for large investors (Coleman 2011). In 2013, the new immigration policy let students to work full time in New Zealand, this policy increased the number of foreign students in Auckland as the primarily education hub of the country.

The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) has adversely influenced the Auckland's housing market since 2008. Murphy argued (2011), following the GFC; there has been a rapid decrease in new building activity. According to New Zealand Stats, building consents for new dwellings (excluding apartments) declined by 30 per cent from 2007 to 2008 and consents for all residential developments in 2009 were down 54 per cent on the peak of 2004. The shortage of supply in the market alongside the increasing the flows of capital and people have rocketed up the price of housing in Auckland.

The 11th annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey (2015) classified Auckland as the 8th least affordable major city in the world. The current housing inflation is one of the causes for the Auckland's unaffordability. The latest monthly house price index published by QV shows that Auckland values are quickly increasing. In the three months to January 2015, housing price increased 5.1 per cent which equates to over 20 per cent annually (QV, 2015). The growth is considerably higher than the 1 per cent to 2.5 per cent rate of increase per three months during 2014. It is the highest since 2003 at the start of the previous boom. The following graph illustrates the housing price changes in Auckland compared with other major cities of New Zealand.

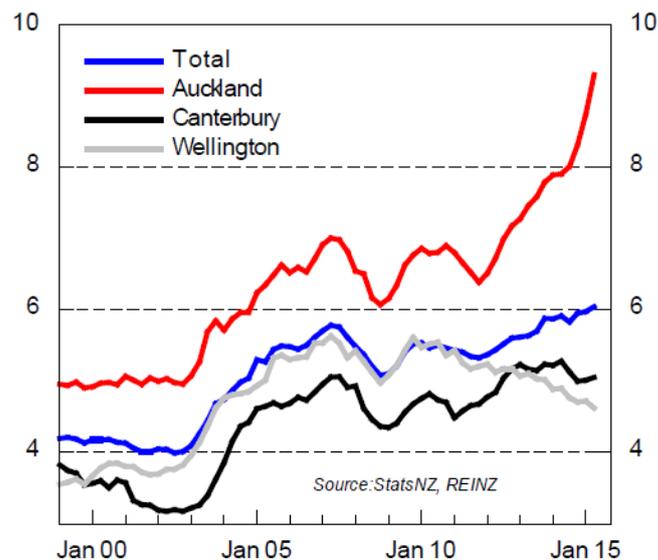


According to the CoreLogic NZ (2015), there are unique things about Auckland that set it apart from the rest of the country. Strong net migration, consumer confidence and low-interest rates are fuelling demand, while a shortage of housing stock and a relatively low percentage of properties for sale are holding back supply. The following map reveals residential value change in New Zealand between July 2014 and July 2015.



Housing price in Auckland has increased rapidly following the amalgamation of Auckland Council, but it has not occurred in the rest of the country. By widening the difference of housing price in Auckland compared with other cities in New Zealand. Investment in Auckland real-estate market seems so promising for both domestic and international investors (objectifying surplus value). In addition, Auckland as one the world’s most liveable cities offers, or at least promises, the high quality life-style to its residents (subjectifying surplus value), if they can afford it. Thus, affluent people who can afford to pay the cost of living in Auckland are attracted to the city. The flows of investors and affluent migrants have remarkably exacerbated urban problems such as unaffordability, gentrification and social inequality in Auckland. The following graph demonstrates how the ratio of median house price to household income has changed in three major cities and New Zealand.

HOUSE PRICE TO INCOME



This graph reveals that housing inflation in Auckland plays an important role in making Auckland unaffordable for its residents. This trend also widens the pre-existing uneven development in New Zealand, which may cause other socio-economic and environmental problems and threatens the future of Auckland as one of the most liveable cities in the world. This section showed that Auckland Council

as the local government has been successful in attracting flows of capital and people, required for the city's economic growth. The amalgamation of Auckland Council and implementation of appropriate vision has assisted the council to compete effectively with other cities in the global market. Nonetheless, the fluxes also generated some side effects such as housing inflation and unaffordability.

National Spatial Planning and Strategy (NSPS) as a possible solution

The current unbalanced development is affecting the quality of life and affordability in New Zealand. From the authors' perspective, New Zealand requires a national spatial plan and strategy to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between cities and regions in New Zealand. The National Spatial Plan and Strategy (NSPS) should regulate the flows of capital and people to be distributed evenly around the country.

To redirect the fluxes, the NSPS should generate new desires to offer both types of surplus values (subjectifying and objectifying surplus values) to immigrants and investors to attract them not only to Auckland, but other cities as well. In other words, the whole New Zealand should be advertised as an ideal country for living and low-risk place for the investment. In this context, beside Auckland, the potential of other cities should be identified and advertised in the global market. The amalgamation of councils and the implementation of these visions will assist to generate subjectifying surplus value such as new desires that associate with capital. Nonetheless, the production of new desires will not be enough to fill up the existing gaps between Auckland and other cities. Particularly, capital gain (objectifying surplus value) is promised by investing the Auckland's housing market. The central government should intervene in the current regulations to redirect the flows to other places in the New Zealand. By restricting the access of the foreign investors to the Auckland housing market, the foreign investors should be encouraged to involve in developing residential projects instead of fuelling up the current housing inflation through purchasing the existing houses in Auckland. Meanwhile, the investment in other cities should be promoted through incentives. The implementation of these policies will balance the promised capital gain (objectifying surplus value) around the country.

Since 2013, the central government has changed to New Zealand's program awards bonus points to applicants intending to stay outside of the Auckland region (Akbari and McDonald, 2014). Yet, there is no regulative policy to redirect the flow of capital to be distributed around country. The regulative policies can include both incentives for investors in other places in New Zealand and restrictions for investments in the Auckland region, particularly its housing market. To address housing inflation, several restrictions are deployed by some governments to control foreign investment (flow of capital) in their housing market, as follows.

Australia (significant restrictions):

- Controlled by the Foreign Investment Review Board.
- Restricts foreign buyers to new developments of house and land, home units, townhouses.

Britain (significant restrictions):

- Capital gains tax on non-residents selling property (Tax can be 18 to 28 per cent of the property's value).

Hong Kong (significant restrictions):

- 15 per cent surcharge on purchases by non-residents.

Singapore (significant restrictions):

- Foreigners must apply to buy many different types of properties.
- Regulates purchases of vacant residential land, terrace housing, semi-detached housing.

These policies are generally implemented in the national level. The NSPS will assist to particularise these regulation for different cities and towns in New Zealand based on their inherent characteristics.

Conclusion

The authors identified a lack of a national planning level in the New Zealand's planning system to regulate and balance development around the country. In the absence of a national plan and strategy to regulate and redistribute the flows of capital and people evenly, the pre-existing uneven development has been exacerbated. Auckland as the dominant city attracts a large portion of flows of both types of capitals that subsequently makes Auckland an unaffordable city. By identifying the capacities of other cities and towns around the country, this paper suggested the NSPS to provide opportunities for balance and even development around New Zealand.

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