Alternative discourse and narratives for institutional change in transport planning

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Abstract: Mega transport infrastructure is increasingly resisted by local communities throughout the world. Community resistance becomes successful if alternative discourses and narratives have been developed and linked with a wide range of like-minded actors and are advanced during the transport planning process. This paper explores discourses argued and presented by various stakeholders to advance and resist the Basin Reserve Bridge (BRB) proposal in Wellington, New Zealand as a part of the Roads of National Significance (RoNS). This paper critically reviews planning and policy documents, media reports and submissions to uncover distinctive arguments and narratives within five main storylines: economic storylines, safety storylines, environmental storylines, traffic and access storylines, and heritage storylines. The influence of discourses is discussed at political, institutional and social levels to provide a greater understanding of community resistance. This paper concludes that alternative discourse has the potential to break a path dependency in transport planning and create a foundation for a new policy path.

Keywords: Alternative discourse, transport planning, Basin Reserve Bridge, Wellington

Introduction: Mega transport projects, community resistance and discourses

Transport planning literature documents high-density urban development as an indicator for providing a high quality sustainable urban transport system. Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, relatively fulfils the requirements of this indicator. However, Wellington's transport planning over the last fifty years has been focused on private vehicles and building-wide and better roads, motorways and tunnels. Main stream politicians, as well as transport professionals, present these projects as urban transport achievements. These projects were based on the narrative that traffic congestion, occurred due to increasing population and economic growth, would be relieved, and Wellington's quality of life would be improved. However, these narratives were resisted in the case of Basin Reserve Bridge (BRB) in Wellington CBD. The purpose of this paper is to critically review BRB proposal, and alternative discourse communities have developed and advanced to resist this road project.

A statutory document, the Government Policy Statements (GPS) on Transport under the National (conservative) party led government (2008-2017) have aimed at promoting economic growth and productivity by building high-quality roads known as the Roads of National Significance (RoNS). There is political recognition of the scale and number of RoNS necessary to accelerate economic growth and the creation of jobs. Politically, there is a firm belief that a strong economy and consequent prosperity is linked with road infrastructure investment which relieves congestion and promotes business. This belief is especially appealing in a country where over 85 per cent of people drives to work by car.

The Basin Reserve Bridge (BRB) proposal is part of the Wellington Northern Corridor RoNS project that aims to construct, operate and maintain a one-way two-lane bridge on the north side of the Basin Reserve Cricket Ground in Wellington. The Basin Reserve is a cricket ground located 2 km south of the Wellington CBD. The ground has officially been used for test, first-class and one-day cricket since 1866 make it the oldest test cricket ground in New Zealand. Currently, the Basin Reserve is used as a large roundabout with signals. It is estimated that over 25,000 vehicles enter into the Basin Reserve roundabout each day, 20,000 of which head towards Mount Victoria Tunnel (NZTA, 2015). These levels of traffic are producing congestion through high traffic volumes, which are affecting the State Highway one (SH1), local and freight traffic, pedestrians and buses. Without intervention, these congestion levels are projected to continue to rise by approximately 75% by 2021 due to Wellington's increasing population.

Unlike other RoNS projects, local communities resisted the BRB which is due to the gap between perceived benefits and personal and local cost such as decreased values of residential properties, personal safety and neighbourhood changes, related to the project. One way of addressing this issue is to involve the public in a meaningful way in the planning process, which reduces uncertainty and improves acceptance of such projects (Booth and Richardson 2001). In New Zealand, the Land Transport Management Act (2003) and the Resource Management Act (1991) provide a clear mechanism for public involvement in various stages of the planning process for roading projects. The consultation process includes information provision, consultation meetings, submissions, social media dissemination, and workshopping. In general, the number of people actively participating in this process seems to be limited, and any mild opposition to roading projects is dealt with during this process. Moreover, this process broadens people's understanding of the project and improves their satisfaction.

According to Dear (1992), the intensity of public resistance depends on the type of project, location of the project and community characteristics, along with other factors. For example, new roading projects are perceived as increasing car use and have safety and environmental impacts (North 1998). The location of the project is important because people relate the type, size and appearance of the project with the surrounding site. Several studies show that resistance to roading projects is higher in cities and suburbs where high-income and educated professional people to live and use an alternative mode of transport and have an interest in the environment (Dear 1992). They are more likely to receive information from multiple sources and attend consultation meetings and make submissions. Therefore, road infrastructure project advances based on economic growth and a car superiority agenda are contested beyond NIMBY in different cities around the world, including recently in Melbourne (Legacy 2016). Schwanenetal (2012) argues that contesting roads projects are more likely to become successful by developing alternative discourses, focusing broaden the criteria for road infrastructure investment. In recent years, decision makers recognise border social and environmental agenda and promote roading project with social and environmental discourses. Therefore, it is important to develop alternative discourses that encompass contextual details and focuses on promoting smarter choices that appeal to people and mobilise the community. Moreover, alternative discourses should be advanced and propagated them during the planning process.

This paper explores the Basin Reserve Bridge project's history, decision-making process, and the discourses argued and presented by NZTA, GWRC, WCCC and local communities and stakeholders. The paper addresses two broad questions. First is the question of whether there is community resistance of mega roading projects of BRB in Wellington. Second, if there is such resistance, what alternative discourse has been developed to make that resistance successful?

This paper applies the concept of path dependence on the development of the BRB proposal in Wellington. Path dependence explains the process of how a particular policy and solution becomes stable over time in an institutional context (Arthur, 1988; North, 1990). Transport policies and projects emerge from the norms, values, perceptions, mental-models and beliefs that decision-makers

use to discuss, interpret and solve problems (Denzau and North, 1994; Hajer, 1995). These soft dimensions of transport policy can be named 'discourse' directly contributing to how problems are perceived and approached, creating coordination and coalitions of like-minded organisations (ibid). It is, therefore, important to question beliefs and explore alternative discourse in urban transport planning. A theoretical framework based on the discursive form of path dependence examines soft factors or discourses that justify and advanced resistance of BRB. In terms of method, the paper critically reviews planning and policy documents, media reports and submissions to uncover distinctive arguments and narratives which tried to break path dependency.

2. Wellington Basin Reserve Bridge (BRB) – History and decision-making process

New Zealand is a small country. According to the 2013 census, 4.3 million people reside in New Zealand. Despite a rural heritage and economy, approximately 87 per cent of NZ's population resides in urban areas. Collectively, three metropolitan cities Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch account for one-half of the country's population. Wellington is capital of New Zealand and divided four distinct geographic parts: 1) high rise CBD and inner suburbs 2) post-war suburbs in Hutt City and Upper Hutt City 3) regional centres of Porirua and 4) rural towns, coastline and hills. The steep hilly topography and coastline of Wellington dictate the urban form and transport infrastructure in the city. The population of the Wellington region is approx. 500,000 in 2019. The city has a highly developed and compact Central Business District (CBD) due to constrained by the physical space available for development (see Figure 1). According to the 2013 census, professionals and managers comprised nearly half of the total workforce in the region mainly employed in the CBD.

Transport planning in Wellington is the responsibility of the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) who is managing state highways, Greater Wellington Regional Council (GW) who look after public transport services and eight territorial (city or district/rural) councils who managed local roads and public transport infrastructure. Land Transport Management Act (LTMA) 2003, Local Government Act (LGA) 2002 and the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991 provide the frameworks enabling authorities at different levels to undertake transport planning activities.

The Basin Reserve Bridge (BRB) proposal can be traced back to the 1963 De Leuw Cather Transport Plan, followed by the debate carried on in the 1970s when an extension to the Wellington Urban Motorway was considered. However, it was not until the early 2000s that the idea of the Basin Bridge was properly explored. In 2000 a study of transport options around the Basin Reserve, prepared by Transit NZ and titled the Meritec Interim Scheme Assessment Report, was completed. This study identified ten options to relieve congestion at the Basin Reserve. The preferred option was a bridge at the northern boundary of the Basin.

In 2008 and 2009, the Basin Reserve Inquiry by Design was conducted. The aim of these design workshops was to assess and recommend transport interchange scenarios for the Basin Reserve. As a result, preferred scenarios were shortlisted and recommended for technical assessment (Urbanismplus Ltd, 2009).

The Feasible Options Report in 2011 listed five possible options which would aim to solve the traffic issue. An option evaluation workshop was held with relevant technical specialists in order to compare these five options. This report outlines the key drivers of each option, as well as descriptions, cost estimates and BCR figures, transportation benefits, artists' sketches and walking and cycling routes (NZTA, 2011). The five options were compared against several evaluation criteria and effects. This report concluded by recommending options A and B as preferred options. However, option A was preferred by the majority of the technical specialists and the public.

Figure 1 Map of GW and compact CBD (photograph by Muhammad Imran)

The main purpose of the Basin Reserve Bridge (BRB) was to partially separate SH1 westbound traffic from the local road network to improve congestion (see Figure 2 & 3). The proposal aspires to overcome the existing congestion, which is currently affecting SH1 traffic as well as local traffic, freight, buses, cyclists and pedestrians. The proposal also aims to (i) resolve the conflict between the two key transport arterial corridors of Wellington City, (ii) reduce traffic flows around the Basin Reserve, (iii) improve journey times and reliability, (iv) improve safety for all travel modes and (v) provide more reliable emergency service access to and from Wellington Hospital (NZTA, 2015).

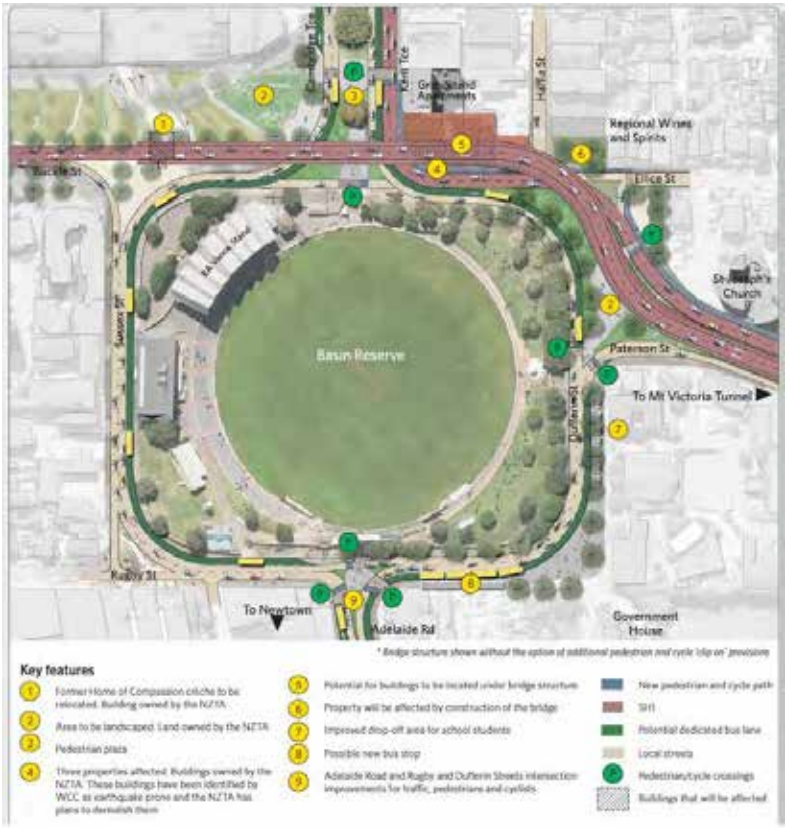

Figure 2 Project area showing the proposed road layout

NZTA lodged one notice of requirement and five resource consents for the consenting and designation of the proposal on 17 June 2013. The notice of requirement was lodged under section 145(3) of the RMA. The five resource consent applications were lodged under section 145(1)(a) of the RMA and sought to enable the construction, operation and maintenance of the project.

On 10 August 2013, the proposal was publically notified under section 95A of the RMA (1991), and public submission was open until 6 September. The EPA also identified 700 owners and occupiers of properties around the proposal area who each received a direct notification of the proposal. The total number of submissions received was 215 (three of which were late submissions that the Board decided to accept), and the NZTA filed further evidence in support of the consent applications. The submitters were largely made up of individuals (81.4%) and an overwhelming number of them either opposed the proposal in full or part. Key actors opposing the proposal in full or part include Save the Basin Campaign Inc., Action for Environment Inc., Mt Victoria Residents Association and Grandstand Apartments Body Corporate. On the other hand, main actors supporting the proposal in full or part were the GWRC, WCC, Cricket Wellington Inc., New Zealand Automobile Association, Basin Reserve Trust and Wellington International Airport.

On 22 July 2014 the EPA board of inquiry released its draft decision regarding resource consent applications; they were declined. They then released their final decision on 5 September 2014, which also declined consent. Consent was declined on many grounds, including: the adverse effects the project would have on heritage, landscape, visual amenity, overall amenity, that the transport benefits were less than originally thought and the proposed mitigation measures would do little to reduce the adverse effects on the local area (Board of Inquiry, 2014).

On 25 September 2014 NZTA decided to appeal the Board of inquiry's decision to decline the resource consents and the notice of requirement on the grounds of points of law. On 21 August 2015, the High Court delivered its judgement, which upheld the Board of Inquiry's decision to decline the consents and notice of requirement. Justice Brown determined that the NZTA was unable to establish that the Board of inquiry made an error of law in making the decision they came to. It was then announced on 4 September 2015 that NZTA had decided not to appeal the High Court's decision.

Figure 3 Before and after views of what the Basin Reserve project would look like.
Source: http://transportblog.co.nz/2013/11/27/photo-of-the-day-basin-bridge/

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The media played an eventful and influential role in the Basin Bridge proposal process. Printed articles in the *Dominion Post* (a Wellington-based newspaper), online articles on stuff.co.nz and presentations on *One News* and *3 News* were among the most popular media outlets. There were also several social media sites, such as a Facebook page, Twitter and website created by the group Save the Basin (savethebasin.org.nz). The media, as in all stories of significance, were very vocal in sharing political and the public's views on the proposal. The following section identifies conventional and alternative discourses presented during this project.

3. Traditional and alternative discourses for the Basin Reserve Bridge (BRB)

This section critically reviews planning and policy documents, media reports and submissions to uncover distinctive arguments and narratives within five main headings: economic effects, safety effects, traffic effects, environmental effects and effects on people and their amenities.

a) Economic storylines

Several economic benefits were argued in favour of the proposal. However, these arguments were continually challenged by opponents. They include:

Improved road efficiency through decreasing travel times. The Copeland Report (2013) states that the Basin Reserve Bridge (BRB) reduces travel times by approximately 90 seconds would improve vehicle operating costs[1] by $696 per annum, reducing accidents and improving trip time and reliability. Another report by Dunlop (2013) provides evidence on the significantly improved journey times the Bridge would allow for motorists. Wellington International Airport Limited (submission 103557) believes the BRB will improve their route capacity, reduce congestion on routes to the airport and improve travel times. They believe all these effects will have a direct positive benefit to the airport. However, these arguments are challenged on the ground that the BRB would reduce property values and lead to loss of income in rental properties. For example, Grandstand Apartments and Graham Wigley (submissions 103450 and 103505 respectively) noted such concerns with loss of income due to the potential decrease in amenity values of the apartments as a result of visual impacts and noise and the adverse effects these would cause. Copeland (2013) agrees that there will be some negative property effects from the proposal as a consequence of visual effects and noise (an increase of approximately 1dB and severance effects). The article by Sirmans, Sirmans and Benjamin (1989) supports the idea of rental property value and income declining when such a project affects amenity values such as views, noise and general disturbances. Julie Anne Genter (2013) from Bennion Law also believes that the 'negative economic, social and environmental impacts have not been fully assessed … and these negative effects are likely to be significant' (p. 2).

Improve industry and freight movement and overall economic productivity. Figliozzi (2011) argued that the BRB improves freight transport movement due to less congestion and quicker travel time, which would eventually improve economic productivity in the region. Mitchell Partnerships (2013), Copeland (2013) and submission (103557) argue that improved freight movement would increase the reliability of this key route, contributing to making the Wellington economy more efficient and competitive. Throughout the construction phase, there would be an increase in jobs in the Wellington region and some increase in jobs due to ongoing maintenance of the bridge. Once the construction of the bridge is completed, there would be a generation of better economic opportunities for businesses, which would allow them to grow. However, St Marks Church School Board raised concerns that construction works would reduce their enrolment abilities, which would generate risk to the financial viability of the school (submission 103516).

[1] Based on 90 second saving, twice a day, 5 times a week, for 52 weeks of the year and petrol at $2 a litre.

Positive Benefit-Cost-Ratio (BCR). The evidence presented by Copeland (2013) states that the benefit-cost ratio of the Basin Reserve Bridge has been estimated at 1.3 benefit-cost ratio[2] , which shows that the project's economic benefits exceed the economic costs. They also estimated the whole Wellington Northern Corridor Road of National Significance investment package to have a benefit-cost ratio of 1.1, which would contribute to the long-term productivity and competitiveness of the Wellington region. However, 49 submitters to the proposal questioned the benefits. It is argued that the BRB would generate few benefits at all and that the adverse effects outweigh any claimed benefits. Many of the benefits are unknown and are reliant on the completion of unconsented future projects which may not eventuate (i.e. the other proposals in the Wellington Northern Corridor project). The majority of opposition submitters were also concerned that there had not been sufficient consideration of alternatives, such as options B and X. Politicians such as Julie Anne Genter (Green Party) also believed the proposal had a 'poor cost-benefit analysis and is more costly than other options' (3 News, 2014). Genter also states that the majority of popular and expert opinion also opposed the project due to its questionable benefits.

b) Safety storylines

There are several safety effects argued in favour of and against the proposal. These include:

Improved safety for all users. The Basin Reserve Bridge is strongly justified on safety grounds for all users in formal documents produced by Wendy Turvey (2013) on behalf of the NZTA. Turvey states that a reduction in traffic congestion will improve safety, especially for students who are being dropped off at nearby schools. Moreover, 1.4-metre barrier along the cycle and pedestrian lane of the bridge was proposed to improve safety. In spite of safety claims, there were 67 submitters (including the Basin Reserve Trust, Cycle Aware Wellington and Save the Basin Campaign Incorporated) out of the total 215, who opposed the proposal due to safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists. As Ron Beernink (submitter number 103510) states, the current 3-metre-wide path proposed 'is not sufficient to allow for the likely traffic volumes and the likely scenario where pedestrians will walk side by side with cyclists'. Safety concerns were also raised for pedestrians and cyclists during strong winds, due to high exposure and little protection (for example, see Save the Basin Campaign Incorporated's submission 103493). These arguments are valid, as the NZTA report itself stated that winds on the Basin Bridge could be strong enough to 'knock over a high-sided vehicle or deter cyclists from using the road' (Johnstone, 2013). Moreover, a number of submitters raised safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists during the construction phase of the project.

Improve security in the area. NZTA also produced a 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design' (CPED) report, which lists methods such as well-designed lighting and surveillance to mitigate crimes and chances of vandalism area under the bridge (Stoks, 2013). To further improve safety and security, NZTA proposed placing a new commercial building under the bridge, which would activate the road edge (NZTA, n.d.; Turvey, 2013).

c) Environmental storylines

The Basin Reserve Bridge was strongly opposed on the grounds of air, noise and visual pollution and vibration, regardless of mitigation proposals. The details are:

Air pollution. A report prepared on behalf of NZTA (by Gavin Fisher, 2013), models the worst-case scenario effects of the project on carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), particulate matter (PM_{10}) and benzene increases by 2021 and 2031. The evidence shows that the appropriate standards

[2] The benefit-cost ratio (BCR) was calculated using a national perspective. If a narrower Wellington City or Wellington region perspective were applied, the BCR would likely be much higher due to residents and businesses receiving the majority of the benefits, but paying a smaller proportion of the costs.

and regulations for CO, NO_2, PM_{10} and benzene would not be exceeded in the selected years. Therefore, it was assumed that the project would not result in unacceptable adverse effects on air quality. However, the report does believe local dust levels would increase during the construction phase but could be mitigated through measures outlined in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Construction Air Quality Management Plan. The proposal is argued to contribute to combatting climate change via lower emissions from vehicles using the flyover.

However, 52 submitters raise their concern about negative air quality effects, especially dust and particulates, during the construction phase and potentially increasing carbon emissions during the operational phase. These negative effects on air quality were linked with the possibility of adverse health effects on the community, potentially affecting food hygiene and ventilation systems. For example, 24 submitters raised health issues such as asthma and lung cancer they expected from dust and other forms of air pollution in the surrounding environment. A submitter suggested NZTA establish and maintain a long-term air quality monitoring station at the proposed site to address these issues (Mitchell Partnerships, 2013).

Noise pollution. The project proposal addressed noise reduction measures in advance that include building roads with quieter surfaces and introducing noise reduction barriers (Dravitzki, 2013). Evidence produced by Vincent Dravitzki on behalf of NZTA states the operation of the Basin Bridge would increase noise levels by an average of the only 1dB, which is considered to be less than minor. It was argued that the project area had historically high noise levels, and after noise mitigation measures, noise effects would be very small. Moreover, it was promised all possible measures would be taken to ensure minimum noise during the construction phase.

There were 77 submitters, including the residents of the neighbouring Grandstand Apartments (103450), who were concerned with noise effects. Evidence from Constantin Wassilieff on behalf of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Wellington states the noise level is expected to increase between 1-2.8dB; this is a small yet noticeable increase for near-by buildings. These adverse noise effects have the potential to affect the amenity value in the area, during both the construction and operational phases. Therefore, the submitters rejected NZTA's measures and called them 'inadequate'.

Visual pollution. The Basin Bridge proposed an integrated design approach and landscape design aiming to 'soften' the concrete structure and blending it into the surrounding environment. Deyana Popova, on behalf of NZTA, explains in her statement of evidence that the Basin Bridge would have significant adverse visual effects only within a 500-metre radius of the bridge. However, these effects could be mitigated with an integrated design approach. Popova does admit that there are some adverse visual effects that are not able to mitigated, especially when outside of the Basin Bridge site boundaries.

One hundred and fourteen submitters (out of 215) show their concern about the visual effects of the project (Mitchell Partnerships, 2013). A submitter referred to the Basin Bridge as being 'ugly', 'an eyesore' and an 'ugly wall of concrete' (Mitchell Partnerships, 2013). Grandstand Apartments Body Corporate (submission 103450) noted the 'significant interruption to the views from apartments in the building' and 'the south facing apartments will have cranes, drilling rigs etc., positioned and operating outside their windows'. Other submitters made reference to the loss of pleasant views across the Basin Reserve itself. Concerns were also expressed about the visual effects of the Basin Bridge from within the Basin Reserve. The Basin Reserve Trust (submission 103585) mentions how the proposed bridge will 'distract from events occurring on the field and detracts from the amenity value of the Basin as a peaceful and enclosed sporting venue'.

Vibration effects. NZTA proposed a Vibration Management Plan during the day and night time construction activities (Dravitzki & Cenek, 2013). According to Cenek (2013), vibration effects after the operation of the BRB are no different than those currently experienced. He also states that while

construction would increase vibration levels, this would be only temporary, of limited duration and could be mitigated through the Vibration Management Plan.

The majority of submitters were worried about construction-related vibrations (73%) (Mitchell Partnerships, 2013) and the potential effects this would have on amenity values around the Basin Reserve. One submitter, Tasman Garden Body Corporate (submission 103441), even suggested that NZTA should prepare a structural assessment of their property before and after construction and be responsible for any damage caused by the vibration effects of construction.

d) Traffic and access storylines

Access effects: The Basin Bridge proposal was strongly justified on the grounds of the traffic and access benefits. For example, the proposal would allow increased access around the Basin Reserve area, and in particular, would improve access from the eastern suburbs of Wellington. Due to the new bridge, a more reliable emergency service access to and from Wellington Hospital is expected (Mitchell Partnerships, 2013). It would also improve access to and from schools and their facilities (NZTA, 2015). It was stated that cycling and walking facilities in the project area would be improved, bus travel time would be reduced and the overall congestion level would be improved (Coulombel, and de Palma, 2014). Buses would get the main benefit by increasing their reliability (Dunlop, 2013). It is also proposed to encourage freight traffic to use the SH1 route after the building of the bridge, which would free up the local roads (Dunlop, 2013). There were 13 submitters who were generally supportive of the implications of the proposal on traffic (Mitchells Partnerships, 2013).

There were 63 submitters who were generally opposed to the project with respect to potential construction and operational effects on traffic. Most concerns related to the construction phase include access problems for emergency services, and an unsafe environment for cyclists and pedestrians. Even the Greater Wellington Regional Council (103546), who supports the proposal, has concerns with respect to the management of construction traffic effects. They advise that further information should be sought for the Construction Traffic Management Plan to ensure adverse effects are appropriately managed.

Congestion management and consideration of alternatives. 48 submitters consider that the Basin Bridge would not appropriately manage congestion and that there are other more suitable options that would better manage traffic congestion. Ninety-two submitters specifically argue that NZTA had not given sufficient consideration to alternatives required under sections 171 (1) (b) and section 32 (1) (a)-(c) of the Resource Management Act (1991) (Mitchell Partnerships, 2013). Mr Young, on behalf of Save the Basin and Mt Victoria Residents Association, says 'NZTA did not adequately assess cost-benefits of the flyover compared to other options' (Chapman, 2014). It was noted that the desired traffic improvements could be obtained from other solutions. For example, the construction of a second Mount Victoria Tunnel would be more appropriate, or a Sussex Street Tunnel, which Mark Ashby describes in his submission (103501).

In response to this criticism, NZTA argued that they produced multiple reports and documents assessing the possible options to solve the traffic issue. For example, the Scheme Assessment Report 2001, the Basin Reserve Inquiry by Design Workshop 2009 and the Feasible Options Report 2011, identified five possible options that aim to solve congestion. In 2010, NZTA organised an option evaluation workshop with relevant technical specialists and ran a series of public engagement meetings seeking further feedback on the preferred options A and B. After a process over many years, option A has been selected after more than enough consideration of alternatives for this proposal (Wayne Stewart, 2013). However, Justice Brown, the judge for the Basin Bridge case, agreed with the board of inquiry that 'other congestion-relief solutions could be applied to the Basin roundabout in order to pave the way for a second Mt Victoria Tunnel' (Forbes, 2015).

e) Heritage and amenity storylines

The Basin Bridge is strongly opposed on heritage and amenities grounds. The details are:

Heritage effects. In the Basin Bridge project area, there are three structures that have statutory recognition, one historic area, one residential character area and nine buildings with evident heritage values that are not protected by statutory recognition. There are also several listed and/or registered heritage buildings outside the project site but in very close proximity to it. Therefore, NZTA prepared a Heritage Management Plan and the Urban and Landscape Design Plan to support the BRB proposal. Salmond (2013) believes that the overall effect of the project on heritage effects is significant but that the effects will be minor after the proposed mitigation is implemented. Mitigation methods include relocating the former Home of Compassion Crèche, and reducing the visual impacts of the bridge and new structures being built.

The opponents of the proposal believe that the Bridge will generate adverse heritage effects that are irreplaceable for the historical suburb. For example, the project will damage the architectural heritage of the inner Wellington area, as well as affecting the historically significant Basin Reserve. Historic views and the surrounding historic environment will also be affected. Forty submitters opposed the project based on the potential heritage and archaeological effects. A notable submission in this area was from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (103577) which agreed that the proposal would generate adverse heritage effects and disturb archaeological sites.

Amenity effects. There were 75 submitters who were concerned with the negative amenity effects the proposal would have on the surrounding environment. Many of these submitters believe the Basin Bridge would affect the uniqueness and character of the Basin Reserve as an iconic cricket venue and one submitter called it 'official vandalism' (Action for Environment Inc., 103573). There are also worries regarding the effects the project would have on the topography, character and landscape of the surrounding environment. The proposal does have some methods in place to mitigate the adverse amenity effects on the surrounding environment, but they are seen as being insufficient to screen the bulk and height of the flyover (Mitchell Partnerships, 2013). Nearby residents complain the amenity effects will affect their wellbeing and their house values. This argument is supported by Sirmans, Sirmans and Benjamin (1989), who agree that amenity effects, such as noise and congestion, surrounding apartments reduce their rental value.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The paper aims to identify the main discourses of, and the arguments in favour and against, the Basin Bridge proposal. The main discourses are grouped into five themes: economic effects, safety effects, environmental effects, traffic and access effects and heritage and amenities effects. The analysis shows that the Basin Reserve Bridge proposal was very controversial, with high levels of resistance in the form of alternative discourses appearing from the public. However, most government organisations and businesses supported the NZTA on various grounds, especially for the project's contribution to the local economy.

However, the Board of Inquiry concluded that the benefits did not outweigh the costs and the application for five resource consents and a notice of requirement was declined. NZTA decided to appeal this decision to the High Court on points of law, but the appeal was unsuccessful. The High Court believed the Board of Inquiry was correct in declining the resource consents and a notice of requirement on the grounds of the adverse effects the project would have on heritage, the landscape, visual amenity and overall amenity, as well as the fact that transport benefits were less than originally thought. The Board of Inquiry also believed the proposed mitigation measures would do little to reduce the adverse effects on the local area. NZTA has decided not to appeal the decision again, so the Basin Bridge seems very unlikely and its defeat is a major achievement of community resistance for a high-profile project.

Cities are increasingly recognized as an ideal place to contest transport infrastructure projects on environmental and social grounds. To what extent the community struggle has been successful depends on the specific social, institutional and political contexts and alternative discourses advanced during the process.

Social: The BRB provides an excellent example of community struggle and commitment to resist a highway project in the middle of a city. It shows that local social/community movements have the ability to stop a transport infrastructure project and shape and reshape public attitudes towards a future project. This happened because the current form of transport governance failed to recognise community actors who intervened in the purposive steering of society. These actors have been considered as time wasters and a hurdle to achieving efficiency in the implementation of the project. Although this paper analyses local actors' alternative discourses in resisting the BRB, resistance may vary from city to city and from project to project even within one city. Therefore, we should avoid generalisation that similar types of resistance and discourses can be found in Auckland or any other city.

Institutional: The resistance to the BRB shows that a deep level of change is required in transport planning in New Zealand. This may include a leadership role for local government in sharing and reshaping the debate rather than being a passive recipient of central government projects. At present, the alternative discourse that emerged during the BRB may not be powerful enough to reshape transport planning policies immediately, but it should be used as a seed for discussion.

Planning is regarded as a process of knowledge co-production between actors with different kinds of technical or contextual expertise. Therefore a collaborative planning approach can become more effective to broaden objectives and find alternative solutions to BRB. In collaborative planning, meaningful participation, on-going dialogue and an open-ended transparent process may deliver transformative outcomes by facilitating social learning, overcoming institutional challenges in a practical way and fostering innovation. This process may bring new discursive narratives that will be acceptable to all actors.

The BRB example in Wellington should be taken as a first step to redefining problems and generating creative solutions. The BRB debate can become a driver of transport innovation, where Wellington can be showcased to the rest of the world. At a minimum level, the BRB decision offers grounds for hope about possible transformations toward low-carbon transport policies as a priority agenda, at least for urban areas.

Political: The BRB example shows that grassroots initiatives help to generate valuable political and professional discussion and media coverage. It also shows that cities are very complex spaces, where diverse people and businesses, contested discourses and multiple infrastructures locate together in historical and futurist contexts. Cities are so different, even within New Zealand, that it does not make sense to use a similar objective of travel-time saving and economic growth for transport infrastructure investment. It is important to recognise the history of the place, the value of people, and the social, economic and political trajectories that shape people's lives. Therefore, cities provide opportunities to co-produce transport planning knowledge based on contextual realities empowered by visionary political and professional leadership.

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