

Transportation Group New Zealand Conference
9 – 12 June 2024 Whakatū Nelson

Politics Matters

Why is it important for transport professionals?

Session 11: Plenary

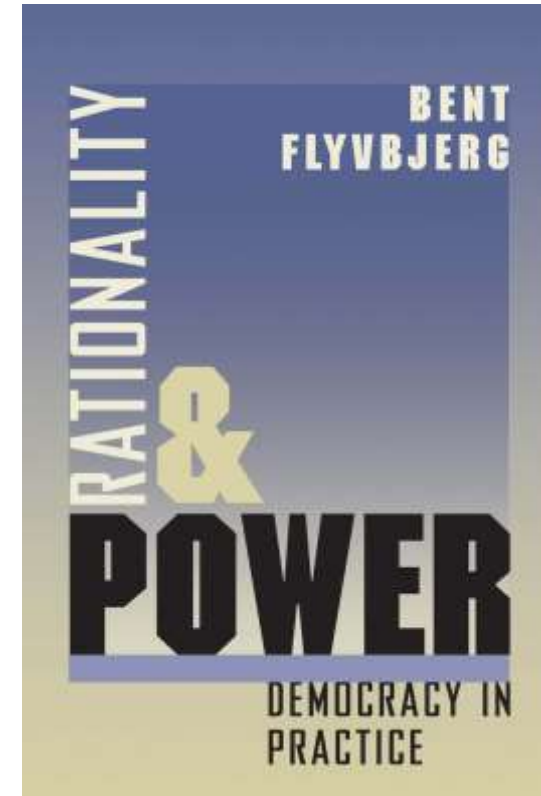
Professor Imran Muhammad
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1. Technical knowledge vs Power

- Technical knowledge is not enough in making or unmaking transport mega projects
- Develop contextual understanding (phronēsis) and explore power relations in a society
- Power might be good or bad 😊😊. Power might be enabling or disabling transport projects
- Political rationalities are as important as transport and economic realities

Key Takeaway

- Power matters, so understand power relationship.
- Understand political conditions in which power is exercised
- Establish link of your transport knowledge with power

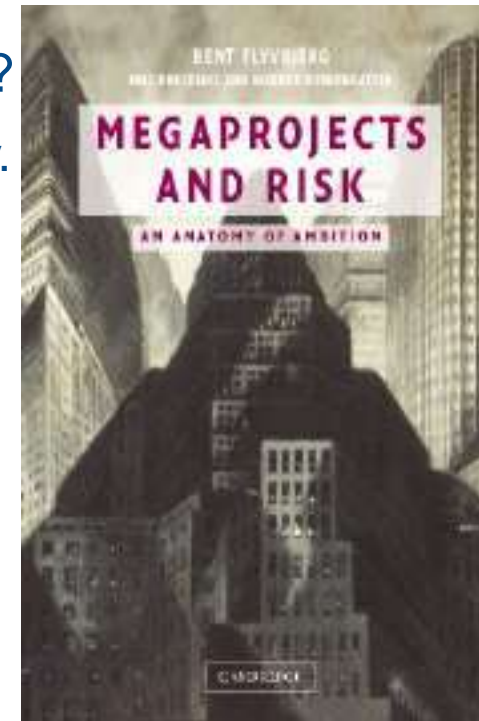


2. Understand uncertainty & complexity

- Most transport projects go over budget, over schedule and deliver less benefits they initially promised. But question is why?
 - Large-scale projects contain increased uncertainty and complexity.
- All transport project are truly unique
- Follow the Lego principle
- A ball rolling is the best strategy to implement transport projects

Key Takeaway

- Understanding complexity, uncertainty and making realistic expectations
- Create knowledge of country/city specific success stories

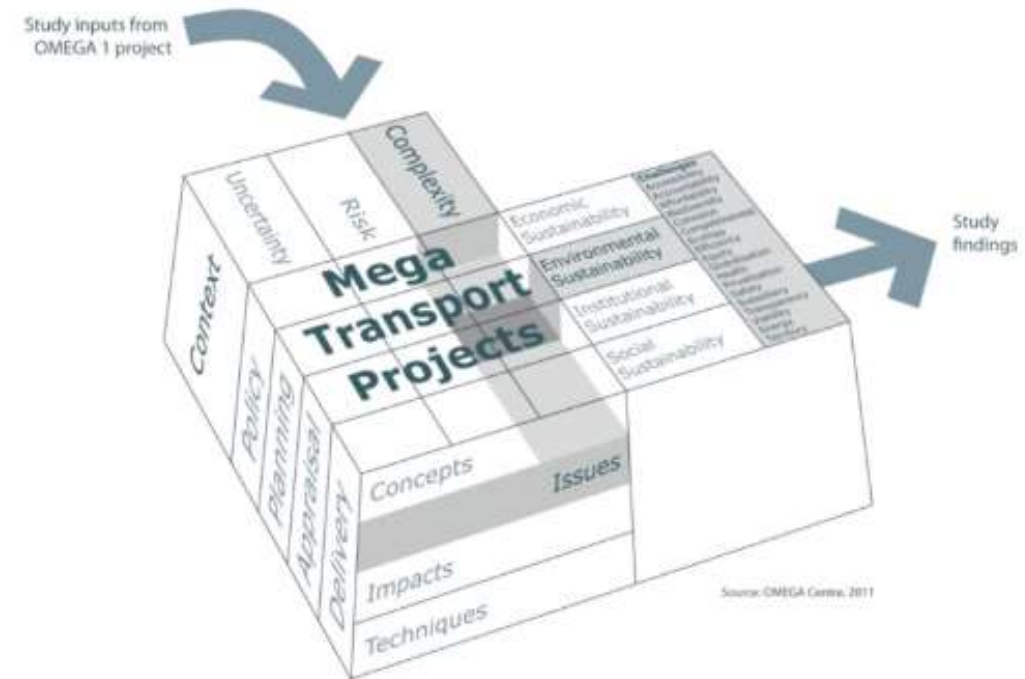


3. What constitute a “successful” mega transport project?

- Traditional criteria relating to cost overruns, completion dates, generation of travel time savings for users and rates of returns to investors are inadequate measures of success
- Multi-dimensional criteria including environment, economic, social and institutional sustainability
- Make transport project as an “organic and ‘open systems’ that will evolve over time

Key Takeaway

- Power of context
- Meet the needs of intra and inter-generational equity and global concerns



4. Creating a “window of opportunity”

- Understand how politics is performed, and how new politics of future transport can be developed by creating a “window of opportunity” or a “coalition building”.
- Establish continuous interactions between transport professionals and community groups/stakeholders
 - Building coalitions draw attention from political parties
 - Continuous debate about transport projects
- Frame transport problems and its solutions and develop “a central common goal”

Take aways

- Building meaningful relations between transport professionals and wider public and stakeholders

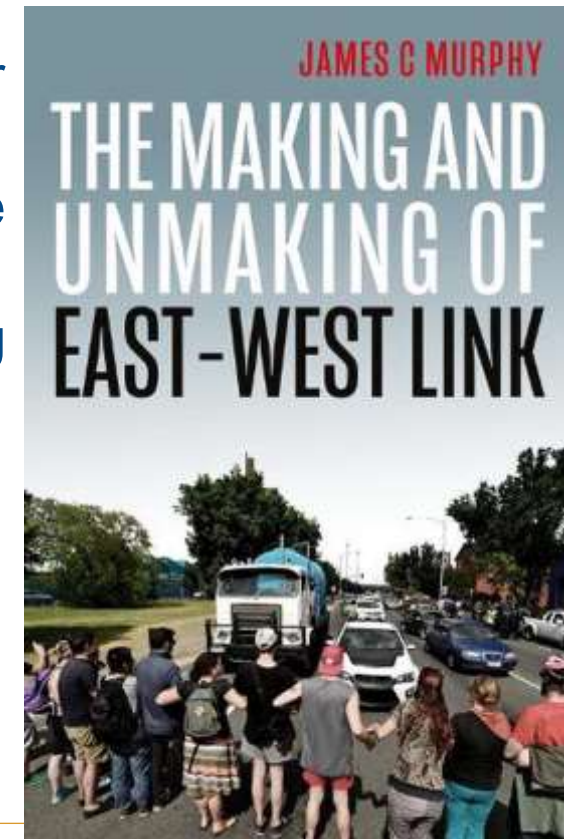
5. Working with political leadership

The East-West Link

- Who has a power? Political leaders or technocrats and bureaucrats or communities
- History and technical leg work is important before political leaders prioritise and fast-tracked transport projects
- Transport professionals get power in an institutional structure by controlling the procedures, technical analysis and knowing histories of the project

Key Takeaway

- Transport project process is politically messy, unpredictable and contested
- Transport professionals can make dead project live again if they develop skills on how to win political support



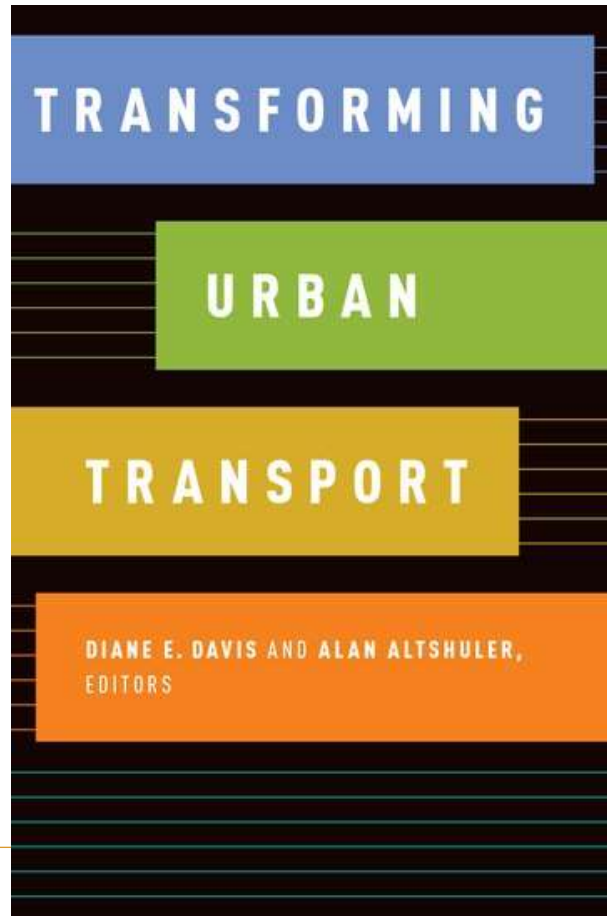
6. Understanding political strategies

Political strategies for making influence

- Identify appropriate timing
- Strategically frame the issue
- Assess and enable stakeholders
- Integrate technical expertise
- Work across multiple levels of government

Key Takeaway

- Initiating objectives are not always about transportation
- Both conflict and collaboration can generate forward movement
- Both “disruptive” and incremental policies can lead to change

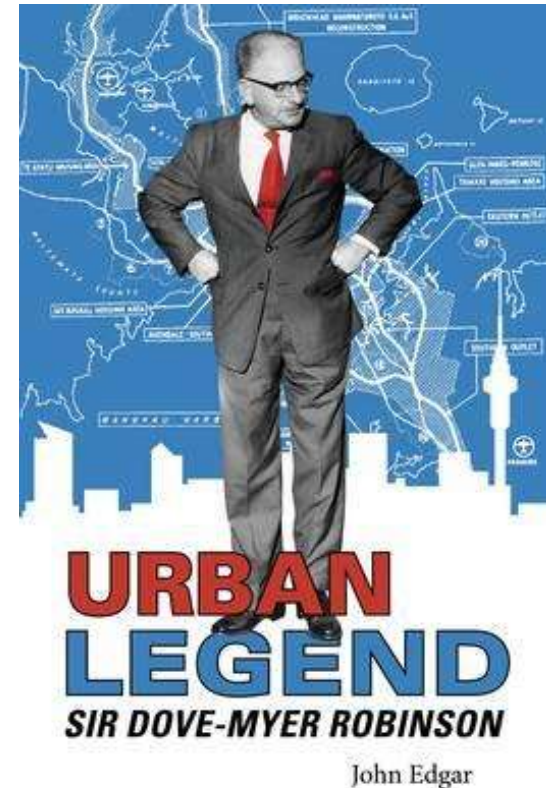


a) City Rail Link (CRL), Auckland

- **History** - 1929 - Half of Auckland City Rail Loop (CRL) was completed. ROW identified; 1946 (Labour Govt. plan); 1950 (Halcrow Thomas report); 1965 (De Leuw Cather Auckland Transit Plan)
- CRL was used in local election campaign in 1960s and then 2010
 - Robbie Rapid Rail Scheme / Len Brown Mayoral election campaign
- Labour and the National-led governments support for CRL?

Key Takeaway

- 1960s - Council lack ability to influence the central government to fund CRL on transport patronage ground
- 2013 – United voice and broader justification of CRL made the Council influenced successfully
- ~~Transport professionals should broaden their support and analysis~~



b) Autonomous Vehicles (AVs)

“In my experience, it is not typically the politicians who could come with the grand vision or idea because they are not typically experts in their field (...) I ultimately charged one of my senior managers with picking this up [AVs] and then **convinced the Minister** that we should actually turn our minds to what we could do, because I could see how we could all benefit from just embracing emerging technologies and innovations in the world”

Transport Minister Simon Bridges keen on self-driving cars in NZ by end of the year

HENRY COOKE
Last updated 13:09, August 23 2016



Uber's self-driving Volvo, being tested in Pittsburgh this month.

Self-driving cars are popping up all over the world, but not really in New Zealand - yet. Minister of Transport Simon Bridges says they'll be here sooner than you think, and might completely transform society.



c) Auckland Light Rail

- Cancellation of light rail in Auckland is a political choice but why and how?
 - Contested narrative
 - Real vs perceived benefits and cost of the project
 - Positive and negative image in media
- Dragged into the 2023 General Election
- Light Rail is a good example where politics can kill mega transport projects even at advanced stages

Key Takeaway

- Media skills and political sensitivities



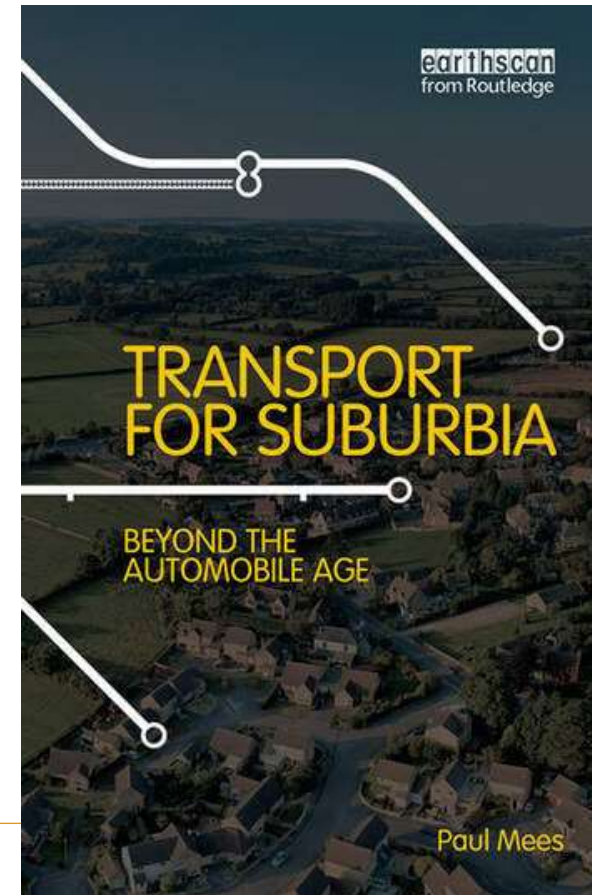
Tiriti-led transport professionals

- Transport planning as a techno-rational profession
- Future of transport planning as a decolonising profession, but how?
- Making a Tiriti-led transport professional
- Key principles:
 - Understand the limitation of current professional practices
 - Co-production of transport knowledge
 - Bring ethics and justice (social and environmental justice) in transportation
 - Acknowledge informal way of knowing
- Decolonisation is a continuous journey in transportation
- We have to design transport system where our grandchildren can live in harmony with people and nature.



Conclusion

‘The automobile age did not come about by accident, or because the car is an irresistible force ... **political decisions** ... played a major part in the process, ... [and,] just as politics helped create the automobile age, it has also been critical in those cities that have led the way to a less car-dependent future’ (Mees 2010, p. 197).



Conclusion

1. **Transportation professionals** require more rather than less political understanding 😊😊
2. **Transportation Group** should challenge negative politics around transport projects
3. **Transportation Group** should help to close the gap between politics, policy and projects related to transport
4. **Transportation Group** should be an active participants in the policy and political process by building capacity of its members

Thank you for listening

Politics Matters

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