



GTA consultants



Movement and Place: Making Human-Centred Transport Planning a Reality

At GTA we spend considerable time looking at different approaches to planning our cities and understanding the impact of urban form, operation and amenity on citizens.

For too long the primary imperative has been to improve and maintain throughput of motor vehicles, minimise congestion and keep journey times low. This is the idea of roads. As Australian cities grow and people transition from private cars to a variety of other modes, we need to rethink this attitude.

Movement and Place is an alternative approach to transport planning that is gaining momentum and being implemented across Australian cities. It looks at land use, human activity and the idea of streets as opposed to roads; recognising the dual function of streets as both through corridors ('links') and destinations in their own right ('places').

Balanced outcomes

As a network management philosophy based on broader objectives, **Movement and Place creates opportunities for more nuanced, equitable and balanced outcomes** than the 'predict and provide' approach that underpins most road planning. It enables networks to be managed more coherently and for improvements to be planned more strategically.

Similarly, it moves away from reactive responses to transport planning that do not take wider network impacts into consideration. For example, expanding roads to allow more throughput rather than reappropriating existing infrastructure to meet local needs. It is as applicable to congestion management as it is to giving greater priority to non-car modes, and it is increasingly important in inner metro areas where it is impractical or inappropriate to build additional capacity.

It also acknowledges the role of streets where the emphasis between movement and place is equally balanced. This facilitates a more rational approach to planning that accepts the dual functionality of streets.

As the concept and application of Movement and Place gains traction in Australia, it is worth considering how this approach could take us where we want to go.



The theory

The Movement (or Link) classification allows an understanding of the importance of movement and relates to the use of a route for through movement or access. More recently the importance of public transport corridors and bike corridors has been acknowledged in Movement classifications. The Movement aspect is generally easily understood at a conceptual level by most practitioners. For example, the idea that a high-movement corridor can be solely for public transport acknowledges the need to look at people movement as opposed to vehicle movement alone. It can also consider the movement of freight and goods. For example VicRoads' SmartRoads is a good framework for identifying modal priorities on a network basis.

The Place classification is where there are challenges.

The idea of place is qualitative, esoteric and sits more in the discipline of social sciences. A key issue is that we don't have 60 years' experience measuring the positive or negative characteristics of Places. As a result it can be difficult to build robust, replicable classifications for Places. This means whilst it is relatively easy to qualify an area as a Place, the issue lies in assessing the performance of Places, and the relative "gap" between the current and potential states.

In the initial application of Movement and Place in London, a complex evaluation framework was established to audit and measure a wide range of Places and associated indicators. This task required significant time and resources to complete, which stood as a significant challenge to the project. While not a problem in itself, there is a danger that the classification process becomes so complex and quantitative that it is no longer manageable or realistic for every project. **This complexity can result in an approach which is likely to fail to achieve any outcome, let alone the desired one.**

“ An over reliance on numbers and data acquisition can make the process too exhaustive and is in danger of leading to a tick box exercise. ”

Further considerations

Movement and Place can be an important tool, but it needs to consider the following:

- The value of undertaking a complex gap analysis beyond the actual classification of a Movement and Place categorisation. The need to demonstrate value and priorities is important but ultimately Places need to be simple and compelling.
- The pre-existing data sources are biased towards traditional planning. Data needs to be fit-for-purpose and relatable to the scale of the study.
- The focus on community engagement and consultation is essential. If more time is spent on collecting data than talking to the community, something is wrong.
- The importance of being user-focused. The perceptions and satisfaction levels of users are fundamental. Many of our 'favourite' city streets are in fact congested.
- The focus on Movement, and consideration of Place in largely pedestrian terms, misses the element of kerbside activity. On-street parking and loading provision is a major issue in any road space reallocation exercise. Clarity around the compatibility of different kerbside activities and associated modal priority is critical for a truly integrated approach.

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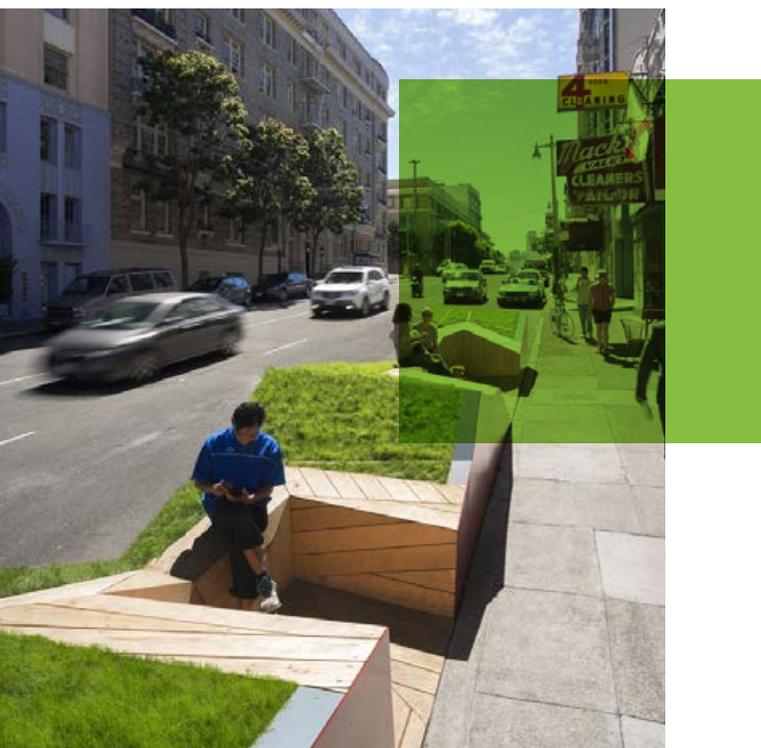
Movement and place a panacea?

So, is Movement and Place a panacea for proactively managing and planning our networks? There is an assumption in some quarters that without a Movement and Place framework we cannot change our road networks to be more equitable and balanced. This is not so.

Programs that have delivered network transformations such as the London Bus Initiatives corridor projects, subsequent Cycle Superhighways and Cardiff's Sustainable Travel City programme all delivered outcomes that reshaped the road networks prioritising non-car modes and enhanced the Place aspects of streets. New York and Copenhagen have achieved a startling renaissance of their urban realms in the same way. The case studies on the following page show the effects that such projects had in their cities.

As described, all of these were achieved without a Movement and Place framework. However, like the Movement and Place theory, **each approach sought to change roads back to streets and redress a balance that focused purely on car movement rather than other types of activities.**

They all had a simple and clear vision that compelled people and politicians to foster change — political support being a key ingredient in delivering that vision. Officer-level support is also important as well as having agency structure and processes that give power to the change-makers to challenge the status quo. Of course, the proposed changes were tested and measured but not simply for the process, rather to improve the outcome itself.



case studies

Complete Streets New York City, USA

New York provides an interesting case study of the transition from road to street management over the last 20 years. Until the late 1990s, New York's streets were managed as roads, with satisfaction of drivers' needs trumping those of all other street users. However, two seminal projects, the Downtown Brooklyn Traffic Calming project and the Lower Manhattan Street Management Strategy, signalled a progressive shift in the way New York City Department of Transportation looked to manage its streets. This culminated in the release in 2008 of Sustainable Streets, the agency's first strategic plan.

By applying a Complete Streets framework throughout the city, large areas of previously hostile road space have been reclaimed for other purposes. The result is a renaissance of New York's public realm, most visible around Times Square, but also in the creation of a variety of Places throughout the city.

New York's strategic framework is not based on Movement and Place, but it shares with Movement and Place a focus on all road users and on managing the various parts of the city's street network to cater for its differing functions.



Sustainable Travel City Cardiff, Wales

The Sustainable Travel City project for Cardiff, capital city of Wales, was the result of a selection by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2009 where £28.5 million was allocated to develop and introduce a range of improvements. The project included new pedestrian and cycle routes, enhancements to public transport, including bus priority and a new one-way bus loop, as well as additional support around behaviour change and journey planning.

This resulted in a transformation of the centre of Cardiff with several streets being pedestrianised and enhanced pedestrian facilities across the central area as well as improvements for buses. Renovating St Mary Street, which was previously characterised by heavy traffic and narrow footpaths, to a prioritised pedestrian area with flexible uses and links with the Castle and Market transformed the activity and use of the area and the associated retail activity outcome itself.



What are the lessons for Movement and Place?

As per the case studies, Movement and Place is not the only approach to deliver effective planning at a street level. However, when it comes to Movement and Place, an over reliance on numbers and data acquisition can make the process too exhaustive and in danger of leading to a tick box exercise. It loses the human element and can also become cost prohibitive.

Clarity in vision and future objectives for the place in question is clearly important. When correctly applied, the vision component is a core strength of the Movement and Place approach. However, it needs to be simple and accessible.

The concept of "Vision and Validate", as stated by Professor Peter Jones, one of the architects of Movement and Place, is that the approach needs to ensure distinction from "Predict and Provide" which is all about numbers without any qualitative assessment.

We need professionals to think and talk to people. Streets are often based on a unique set of characteristics requiring a tailored response. Movement and Place can support the establishment of that vision. It provides a framework that considers land use and the activities within a street and as such it moves away from the pure quantitative focus on journey time, delay and Level of Service that dominates too much of transport engineering and planning.

If a Place is somewhere where people dwell, where there are activities, and friction, those numbers are secondary issues. It's about acknowledging that the traditional indicators should come second to the safe and flexible movement of people to engage in various activities. Congestion and friction can be a reflection of a vibrant street in a positive way.

Movement and Place, at the vision level, provides a basis for establishing what we want to achieve. Once there is a vision — a better place or more sustainable travel options — **let planners and engineers be creative without implementing a complex numbers-driven evaluation tool that goes contrary to the approach itself.**



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