

2nd State of the Cities Conference, Brisbane 2005

Infrastructure Rapporteurs report

Papers presented within the Infrastructure stream of the conference covered a range of topics and interest areas. The quality and depth of analysis and research that was covered in the papers reflects a strong interest in the sector. The papers generated healthy debate in all sessions.

A number of the papers reflected contemporary perspectives on the city, particularly in terms of infrastructure planning and delivery. While we live in an era where there is serious disconnection and frustration at times with metropolitan plans, and yet massive funds are available for infrastructure through public private partnerships, GST dividends, superannuation funds and new financial instruments (some of which are being led by Australian based companies).

The range of topics covered in papers included:

- Transit oriented development in various guises
- Papers about the links between transport infrastructure, land use and sustainability
- Critical thinking about transport capacity questions, including an instructive (if counter-intuitive) examination of Melbourne's rail network
- A session covering water provision from three differing perspectives
- An account of infrastructure provision in metropolitan planning
- New patterns of transport and mobility disadvantage.

Reflections from the Infrastructure Workshop during Session 6 identified areas for possible future research. The summary below brings these ideas into five core areas that seek to identify possible research areas that serve to bridge the gap between academic endeavours and practice.

1. There appears to be an emphasis on transit-oriented development in the current generation of research. However, this is poorly reflected in the policy context in many of our major cities and may represent an opportunity for further work to reduce the "policy perspective" gap.
2. The implications of freight movements within the city were not well represented at the conference. While it might be covered in other forums participants felt that freight movements are an important area for research because they require significant investment (often public money) and have the potential to substantially impact on urban structure.
3. There is a need for better understanding of changing technologies, particularly in terms of what they mean for infrastructure and flow-on effects for city structure.

For example, what are the possible implications and opportunities arising from new technologies to achieve future sustainable (green) city structures.

4. There is a need for studies into how the public interest is faring in our current approaches to infrastructure provision.

What structures or conditions are critical to ensure transparency of process and protection of the public interest where private sector funds are involved.

5. There is a need to think about inter-generational questions. Are the assumptions about Generation X and Y valid, and how might the attitudes of the coming generations impact on city structure or built form, particularly in terms of component elements like transport infrastructure. Are these considerations adequately reflected in current research and policy?

Have cars, for example, become so cheap and desirable that the current generation should be called "Generation V8"? What would be the implications to city structure?

In conclusion, the Infrastructure stream confirmed that there are many areas for interesting and practically driven future research. The area will remain a key contributor to future city debates and should be given a high priority for research and study.

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