

Collaborating at the researcher-practitioner interface: Te Ara Mua - Future Streets



Transport Knowledge Conference
Wellington 14th November 2018

Karen Witten and the Future Streets team

Project partners



Te Ara Mua – Future Streets

a street redesign intervention study



- to slow traffic and change driver behaviour
- make streets safer and easier for walking and cycling
- to quantify the safety, health and economic benefits of redesigning streets

A partnership



Research team



Māngere Community
& Local Board



Auckland Transport
& NZTA





to



Professional norms & organisational cultures

‘When you employ consultants and professionals to design something, they’ve been trained to a standard and so their instinct and what all their training tells them is you’re supposed to put something that’s tried and true and tested versus using people as guinea pigs’ (T)

‘.....If you step outside of that boundary, you're exposed to those legal elements... and it can be a personal prosecution’. (T)



Ways of working

‘...there’s definitely a tension where AT are pushing to just move on to the next phase, get it done, deliver, deliver, deliver, while the research group are trying to redesign, or do quality assurance or things like that’. (R)

‘AT go through a reasonably clear, multi-faceted or phased planning cycle, quite traditional...whereas the research team was...a little bit more innovative on the process and potential solutions that are going to pop out in the end.’ (T)

Stakes in the project

Was Te Ara Mua – Future Streets unique or one of many?



Funding uncertainty

‘They seem to perhaps not appreciate how constrained funding is and maybe they take for granted that we will deliver this project for them without compromising on some of the deliverables.’ (T)

‘We’re sort of pushing hard deliberately and that’s given us all sorts of benefits’ (R)

Timeline conflicts

‘They [the research team] spent a lot of time on gathering the data, doing consultation, doing scheme designs which is more than a year and a half and they thought in six months we could do the design and construction, which is really disappointing.’ (T)

‘My sense is that AT works in a different world... their work is contingent on so many factors that are not directly under their control ... they are accustomed to working to a sort of deadline plus X kind of world where the X is difficult to pin down until you get closer to the deadline.’ (R)

Community participation

‘I’m hoping that one of the things we’ve established is that the first thing is to actually go to the community with the issues, not with the solution.’ (R)

‘...[it’s] interesting when you get feedback from people who are not sort of traffic engineers...[they] just throw all sorts of ideas at you, lots of them being ‘well hell no we’d never do that type of thing’ to some really good ideas.’ (T)

‘Getting that understanding of the community’s future desires has really strengthened [the project] and that’s something that we don’t do on the scale that the research team has undertaken.’ (T)

Unlocking innovation

<http://www.buildingbetter.nz/resources/publications>



Conclusions

- All parties believed in the concept, accepted the health rationale for change, valued contributing to improved streetscapes in Māngere and are proud of the outcome
- But the logics underpinning the partners respective ways of working were in conflict
- Sources of conflict were not discernible to partners from within the collaboration
- Regulatory frameworks and standard professional practices were actively at work maintaining BAU
- Tension between consistency vs innovation
- Managing individual and organisation risk

Conclusions

What would help future researcher – practitioner collaborations:

- A mechanism and funding stream to support non-BAU community trials and managing risk
- MOUs that sets out expectations, timelines, roles and responsibilities and budget
- Time spent up front to understand each other's constraints and ways of working
- Staff turnover frustrates establishing relationships of trust



Project partners



Thank you