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CONTEXT AND PSEUDO-CONTEXT: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN EXTRACTION, NEGOTIABILITY, AND RESISTANCE IN NEW ZEALAND'S MACKAYS TO PEKA PEKA EXPRESSWAY

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Introduction

In 2009 the national government of New Zealand announced the first seven of what it calls “roads of national significance” (RONS). The main objective was to enhance New Zealand’s economic growth and productivity (NZ Government, 2009). One of the RONS is the Wellington Northern Corridor (WNC), which is divided into eight sections, one of which is the MacKays to Peka Peka (M2PP) Expressway (NZTA, 2011b, p. 2). The M2PP is sixteen kilometres long, stretching from north of MacKays Crossing to Peka Peka Road (NZTA, 2013).

The planning process adopted to advance the M2PP project was based on a legal framework in which the Resource Management Act (RMA) of 1991, the Land Transport Management Act (LTMA) of 2003, and the Local Government Act (LGA) of 2002 were central. Based on the planning documents, the

process appears to have been transparent, with extensive consultation having taken place, which resulted in the framing of several urban themes on the basis of the community feedback (NZTA, 2009, 2011b). However, the way in which the project was presented, with its projected economic growth and productivity, through the legal and administrative framework, met stiff resistance at the hands of the local population, experts, and politicians.

They argued that the decision-making process had actually not been inclusive because their voices were not adequately heard and because the Kapiti community's land and resources were exploited by the government (Pickford, 2012). In order to justify the advancement of the M2PP, the government reports show the benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of the roads to be high, meaning that they bring in more money than they cost to build (SAHA, 2010). A counter discourse, gathered through semi-structured interviews, was presented by some of the Kapiti residents, arguing that the government manipulated the BCR figures to justify the advancement of massive roads infrastructure in New Zealand. They observed that the BCR of the Wellington Northern Corridor, including the M2PP, was originally estimated at less than 1 (SAHA, 2009) and that the government had sent the report back to be reworked; the result of the new calculations was a more favourable BCR (SAHA, 2010). One local resident also endorsed this argument, suspecting some "behind the scene" power advancing the RONS' significance:

They [government] are still arguing that these roads will create economic growth . . . it seems to become an article of faith, this is what they believe. . . . To me there is something else going on behind the scene to justify these very large expenses, something, 10 or 11 billion dollars to be spent on several roads, benefits are less than costs (Resident 2).

A politician argued that the economic growth argument has been advanced to justify the construction of M2PP through policy assertions:

I think, in general, the RONS is a political project. . . . And it was the policy of National led government in 2008 to prioritise seven new state highway projects, one of which is the Wellington Northern Corridor. . . . And this is being justified from the beginning by the assertion that building of state highways will stimulate economic growth (Politician 1).

This suggests that the M2PP planning process is extractive because

deterritorialisation was advanced and local resources were exploited by the government without meaningfully engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process. The resisters argued that the M2PP Expressway planning process extracted people's land, time, values, and mental peace. They cited four main components of that extraction: displacement of people, community severance, changed landscape and deterritorialisation, and the advancement of the M2PP project despite a lower BCR. The M2PP Expressway was justified based on the argument that it would advance economic growth and productivity for the Kapiti people, an indigenous group in the region. Those who resisted the project, such as politicians, argued that, although the benefits to the Kapiti people were viable, they were too meagre to justify such a large public project:

I believe that many of the motorways have been identified, correct[ly] or incorrect[ly], as Roads of National Significance. . . . They should preferably be deferred or delayed indefinitely because they will not achieve the government's aim of lifting economic productivity, and in fact they will be counterproductive (Politician 2).

The literature suggests that the relationship between building roads and achieving economic growth is an unsettled question. In this regard, Mohring's (1961, 1976) classical argument suggests that economic benefits of transport projects are a result of increased travel demand and help individuals and firms perform their activities. However, the experience of London's orbital road (M25) shows that expected benefits of roads investment are eroded by additional traffic, which increases congestion (Williams & Lam, 1991). The reason is that every location has its own overt and covert dynamics called location externalities (Martinez & Araya, 2000) that positively or negatively affect economic growth. These arguments suggest that every road project has to be treated differently because various planning and economic conditions in all locations will not remain *ceteris paribus*. However, the policy makers may get seduced into initiating mega projects for economic, technological, political, and aesthetic reasons (Flyvbjerg, 2014). These projects may be advanced not because they are actually needed but because of policy makers' ambitions. In this regard, the interplay between rationality and power defines the boundaries of extraction and the resulting resistance that stems from limited public consultations in urban planning processes (Flyvbjerg, 1998b). The rationality–power interplay defines the underlying power dynamics that create extraction and resistance in urban planning and the decision-making process. This is because “power defines reality,” through different strategies and tactics, in relation to rationality (Flyvbjerg, 1998a,

p.227). Therefore, power exerts itself by defining rationality, which is itself a form of power (ibid). The arguments advanced by power, therefore, create extraction by defining an urban reality. Such extraction is usually confronted by resistance offered by rationality. Therefore, the relationship between “extraction” and “resistance” is similar to the relationship between “power” and “rationality.” It is because rationality is a form of power, whereas resistance is usually an outcome of extraction. This suggests that the boundaries of extraction, in relation to resistance, are similar to the boundaries of power in relation to rationality (Flyvbjerg, 1998a, pp. 225-236). This also suggests that the boundaries of extraction are very deeply rooted in urban planning, in which (in democratically advanced countries) it is crucial to understand the processes that transform policy perceptions into policy beliefs. Such processes actually promote the agenda of the powerful actors, within the prevailing rules and regulations, by advancing certain ideologies through which extractive actions may be justified. One such ideology is the economic-growth argument for advancing M2PP Expressway, despite a lower BCR. Pickford (2013), for example, analyses the factors that lead to such advancement of arguments in building highways through the use of such tools as “strategic fit” and “effectiveness.” Through these fast-track processes, many road projects in New Zealand were advanced despite having lower BCRs.

The rationality of promoting certain ideologies for achieving certain goals may follow the cycle of “value creation and destruction” (Weber, 2002), in which agents may extract values and land and revalorise devalued landscapes through rules and regulations (Bryson, 1997; Harvey, 1989; Smith, 1996). This approach is similar to what Schumpeter (1942) calls “creative destruction.” When big projects, such as roads, are advanced, they have a tendency to extract people’s lands and properties, making real estate sensitive to devalorisation, as compared with other forms of fixed capital (Harvey, 1982). Therefore, the mechanics of extraction may depend on the ability of a built structure to generate rents depending on the revalorisation of land and its location (Weber, 2002).

Because the value of a physical structure is context dependent (Weber, 2002), the powerful actors may apply arguments of “modernization” (Berman, 1983) or “obsolescence” (Bryson, 1997) to the built environment to justify an extractive agenda. This suggests that states develop ways and means to justify the extractive nature of large-scale planning projects and their impacts on people’s lands, values, time, and energies and continue to advance their agenda on the basis of their power (Weber (2002). This suggests that extraction is very much the agenda of “the powerful actors,” making it an

externality of road development and other capital projects on economic, social, environmental, political, aesthetic and spatial fronts. Power, then, becomes a central means in the extraction–resistance interplay in urban planning processes, following rules and regulations, particularly in democratically advanced countries (Flyvbjerg 1998a). Such extractive practices are often deemed legal because they involve people through formal public consultations. However, these public consultations are often extremely limited in scope. In the seemingly transparent planning process for this new national roadway, public consultation was limited to operational-level decision making and carried out through the prevailing legal and administrative framework, whereas strategic-level urban planning decision making was kept out of the public purview. As such, this paper describes how the M2PP Expressway planners used their access to power and the existing regulatory frameworks to devise extractive planning processes.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Aristotle, in Book VI of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, advocated the division of knowledge into three virtues, *episteme*, *techne*, and *phronēsis* (Aristotle, ca. 350 BCE). Aristotle referred to *virtue* as a positive quality or trait necessary for moral excellence (ca. 350 BCE). *Episteme*, related to epistemology, is referred to as true and certain knowledge (Eisner, 2002). *Episteme* is a universal, invariable, and context-independent virtue (Flyvbjerg, 2004). *Techne*, or technology, is usually treated as an art or craft that is pragmatic, variable, and context dependent (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Poulakos, 1983). *Phronēsis*, or “practical wisdom,” is an intellectual virtue “reasoned and capable of action with regard to things that are good or bad for man” (Aristotle, ca. 350 BCE). It is a pragmatic, variable, and context-dependent virtue (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

In line with these philosophical considerations, the roots of the concepts of extraction, negotiability, and resistance may be linked with Aristotle’s notion of *phronēsis*. In this regard, Flyvbjerg’s (2004) *phronetic planning research* (PPR) approach provides a necessary theoretical and methodological base. Theoretically, the PPR approach puts forward four questions that are relevant to urban planning: (1) Where are we going? (2) Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power? (3) Is this development desirable? And (4) What, if anything, should we do about it? (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

Flyvbjerg terms Question 2, the question about “who gains and who loses” and “how”, the “power question” (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 290). This paper focuses on Flyvbjerg’s power question and seeks to understand the M2PP Expressway transport policy process. This paper will examine the views of government

officials, politicians, relevant experts, and affected residents that have been gathered through document analysis and semistructured interviews.

In this paper, the power question operates as an analytical tool and is used to examine the M2PP Expressway planning project through the lens of power. In placing power at the core of the analysis, I argue that extraction is an outcome of the interplay between rationality and power in the urban planning decision-making process. The agents and institutions with power benefit from policy processes wherein negotiations only serve to advance the agents' or institutions' own strategic objectives, thus resulting in extractive planning and policy processes. This makes strategic-level decision making very much a prerogative of power. In this way, through the existing rules and regulatory frameworks, the planning processes reify the power of the agents and institutions. On the flip side, the so-called *powerless* are those stakeholders who are, accordingly, subjected to limited consultations. Their argument is that the government never consulted them meaningfully about whether or not to build a motorway through the serene environment of Kapiti. Therefore, they perceived the government's policy of building RONS as a threat to their lands and residences that would adversely affect the area's natural beauty, divide the community, damage local fauna and flora, increase pollution, and violate their legal right to be part of the consultative process. Against this backdrop, the government's policy of building the M2PP Expressway through a fast-track program added to their concern, resulting in resistance on all these fronts.

The terms "gain" and "loss" usually depend on the perspective from which they are considered (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 290). In zero-sum games, for example, one player's gain could be another player's loss (ibid). In this case, the affected local people, for example, considered the national government's speedy advancement of the M2PP Expressway as a loss for themselves. This suggests that when extraction overpowers resistance, through limited negotiation, the "losers" are those affected stakeholders who do not hold enough power to counter the policy and planning processes going against their interests. In contrast, the interpretations advanced by the government, or the powerful, through the prevailing rules and regulations, further strengthens their power, making them "winners." The resistance offered by the powerless is then interpreted under these rules and the regulatory framework that makes the powerless even more powerless by reifying the agenda of the powerful (Flyvbjerg, 1998a). The negotiable and nonnegotiable areas represent how state institutions' power defines the legitimacy of extractive actions under prevailing legal and administrative setup.

The Land Transport Policy and Planning Process

The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) adopted a formal resource-consent process while planning M2PP. This process is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 explains the resource-consent process only. Figure 2 provides a microlevel picture of the overall process, including the preconstruction stages. The M2PP resource-consent process involves ten stages, as shown in Figure 1. NZTA first investigated different M2PP route options and consulted with members of the public in 2009 (Alliance, 2011; NZG, 2013, p. 8). The NZTA Board later recommended proceeding with the RMA applications for the planned M2PP. That stage was followed by technical studies and assessment of environmental impacts in 2010–2011 (Alliance, 2010, 2011). At the next stage, NZTA lodged its regulatory-consents application for M2PP with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in April 2012 (NZ Government, 2012). In July 2012, the minister for the environment referred the regulatory-consents application for M2PP to a board of inquiry (BOI) for determination (NZ Government, 2012). The BOI hearing for the M2PP regulatory-consents application took place between November 2012 and January 2013 (ibid). In April 2013, the BOI announced its decision and issued its final report on the NZTA application. The BOI decision was challenged in High Court. The High Court heard two appeals in July 2013, but they were dismissed in August 2013. After the dismissal of appeals, the M2PP construction started in late 2013 and is expected to be completed by 2017 (NZ Government, 2012).

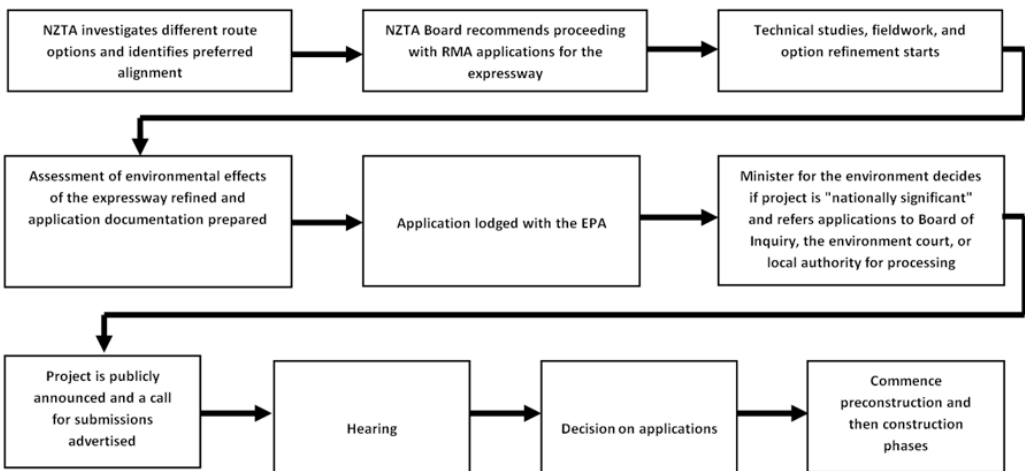


Figure 1: The steps involved in the consenting process for RONS under the RMA requirements (Based on NZTA, 2011a, p. 10).

The affected people and stakeholders submitted their complaints on the M2PP; the EPA then produced a summary. In 2012, a prehearing conference was held in Wellington (BOI, 2012a, 2012b). The M2PP consultation took place in three phases (NZTA, 2011b). These were a preimplementation consultation stage in 2009–2010 (NZTA, 2009), consultation on alignment and interchange options in 2010–2011 (NZTA, 2011b, p. 2), and consultation on M2PP design development (NZTA, 2011b, p. 3). The main objective of these consultation exercises was to provide information about the route options and other



Figure 2: The preconstruction decision-making process in M2PP (NZTA, 2011a, p. 14).

factors, such as the project's connection to local roads and the number and location of interchanges NZTA was considering (NZTA, 2011b, p. 5).

To minimise local resistance, the consultation exercises also included information for the public about possible mitigating measures to address embankments, landscape, noise, air quality, vibration, storm water, and visual effects as required by the RMA. In this regard, NZTA used different methods to involve local communities in these consultation phases. The agency prepared brochures and postcards, conducted individual meetings and expos; set up an information centre, a website, and a project phone line; provided a feedback form; and placed newspaper and radio ads (NZTA, 2011b). The consultation process and its public arm were centred on strengthening the purported rationale for building the M2PP, achieving economic growth and productivity, that emerged as a theme in the 2009 Government Policy Statement on Land Transport. Nobody, in principle, can be against increasing the local community's per capita income. Therefore, the idea of achieving economic growth and productivity, coupled with extensive public consultations, became a central vehicle to advance the M2PP Expressway project. Furthermore, the national government argued for the building of improved and modern roadways in New Zealand instead of fixing the existing obsolete highway infrastructure (Pickford, 2013; SAHA, 2009, 2010). The stakeholders were, accordingly, presented with three route-alignment and interchange options. They were also engaged in the M2PP design-development consultation phase.

The M2PP alignment, interchange, and design options were finalized on the basis of these consultations and NZTA criteria. Because there was a consultation process, some stakeholders seem satisfied, as is shown by comments such as “Just do it! Thanks for the consultation,” “It is obvious much thought and many hours went into planning. Thank you,” and “Looks good; well-presented considerations, explanations are very good” (NZTA, 2011a Appendix J). The formal rules instituted for stakeholder consultation were followed in the M2PP Expressway planning project, and the stakeholders were consulted regarding operational-level decision making. However, all stakeholders were not consulted at the strategic level stage—that is, on whether the RONS Expressway project ought to be initiated or not. This approach created a sense of insecurity among the local people who considered the entire public consultation process wanting because there was so little meaningful and honest public consultation.

Four Extractive Phases of the M2PP Consultation

The rationalizations given for building a modern road infrastructure and the obsolescence of existing roadways, as advanced by the Government of New Zealand, were met with stiff resistance by local politicians, relevant experts, and community stakeholders. One resident argued that the government was “selective” about which stakeholder voices to listen to (and how much feedback to receive) so that it could manipulate the public consultation process and make it “more acceptable” (Resident 1). He suggested that the government has devised ways and means to impose its decisions on the Kapiti community. Similarly, a Labour Party politician argued that “[the government] had not really investigated [RONS] but they made a decision and their approach to consultation is very much getting people on board in building support for the solution that they already decided on . . . and not actually the communities’ output to incorporating that into the solutions” (Politician 1). His argument suggested that the actual strategic decisions were already taken by the central government closely in line with Flyvbjerg’s observation that “the agenda is set not by a will to knowledge but by the will to power” (Flyvbjerg, 1998b, p. 68). It was, therefore, “the will to power” that extracted people’s lands, time, values, confidence in the planning processes, and natural resources. These arguments were further strengthened by a Green Party politician who held the government responsible for not taking all stakeholders on board “meaningfully at strategic level” in the RONS decision-making process (Politician 2). As she stated,

[the] government’s policy is to elevate these RONS above the normal resource allocation processes. . . . They decided to impose it on

the community. . . . They didn't say all right, let's have a discussion involving the public and the community involving good data and good advice and let's make a decision together what is the best option. . . . When [the central government] started making high-level political decisions, they try to impose [them] on the interest groups like Kapiti District Council and local communities. That's what happened (Politician 2).

Based on the arguments of the affected stakeholders, the struggle between extraction and resistance in the M2PP planning processes may be analysed in four phases: initiation, preparation, participation, and continuation (as shown in Figure 3). The noninvolvement of stakeholders at the initiation (strategic) phase resulted in blaming, distrust, and even conflict at the local levels, which ultimately rendered the public consultation process an extractive one.

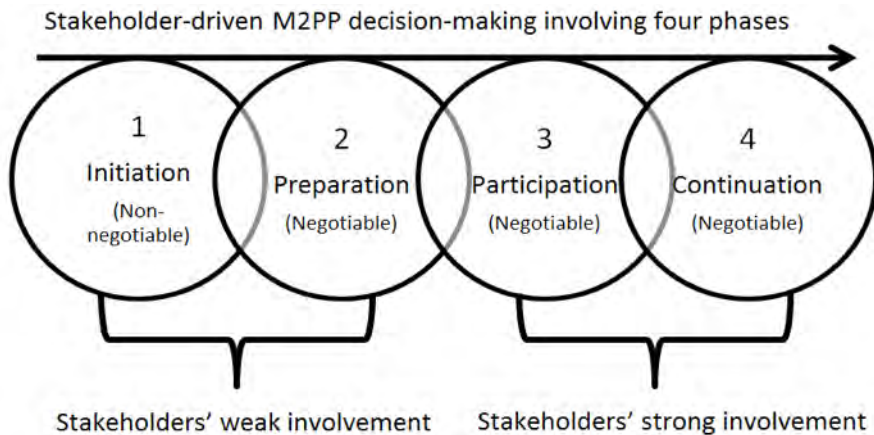


Figure 3: The four phases of planning in the M2PP (Based on Wilcox (1994, p. 16)).

A Kapiti resident suspiciously looked the Road Transport Forum indicating this blame game and distrust: “Many people point [a] finger at the Road Transport Forum [for building RONS] but I don't think this is the case because they offered their submission in 2009” (Resident 1). A Road Transport Forum official, also a Kapiti resident, neutralized the resistance by arguing that they have justifications for promoting roads infrastructure: “Yes, we [the forum] are lobbyists. . . . Our members are in [the] business of road transport. . . . We need infrastructure to do the job and we pay for it” (Resident 2). The Kapiti resident then pointed fingers at the New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development (NCZID): “One group may have been involved

[in building RONS]—the NZCID. . . . The NZCID report 2006–07 is almost a blueprint [of] where the things have gone” (Resident 1).

The head of NZCID, however, justified the group’s position on technical grounds, stating that, “NZCID is a very strong proponent of the RONS largely because of two reasons: one is obviously the economic stimulus in terms of productivity of NZ’s leading cities but also the road safety improvements that RONS would create in the long run” (Expert 1). This resistance and conflict suggest that the government adopted a bidirectional strategy of advancing an economic growth argument based upon future capital accumulation and managing the resulting political and local resistance by limiting public consultation (see, for example, O’Connor 1973, p. 6). In effect, this bidirectional strategy strengthened the economic-growth argument—namely, future capital accumulation for the Kapiti people. Therefore, starting from the project’s inception, the planners’ disproportionate focus on the potential future economic gains for the Kapiti people and the extractive costs gradually faded into the background, rendering the question of whether to even develop the M2PP Expressway purely strategic and nonnegotiable. Next came the preparation phase; moving to that phase implied that the decision to build the M2PP had been confirmed and that it was now time to prepare for consultation and negotiate. In the preparation phase, the obsolescence of the existing roads infrastructure and the potential for capital accumulation for the Kapiti people were presented as justifications for the M2PP Expressway (Beauregard, 2003).

Both the initiation and preparation phases were relatively weak in terms of public involvement; they were not engaged in a meaningful and empowering manner. However, public involvement grew stronger during the next two phases of consultation: participation and continuation. In these two final phases, the main thrust of the NZTA-led alliance was to consult stakeholders on design and route issues (Figure 3) as against the initiation stage where no consultation was made. The Labour Party’s response, for example, is reflective of resistance against the National Party–led central government’s extractive policies: “None of the expressway options would meet the needs of either the local community or the travelling public” (NZTA, 2010). The Greater Wellington Regional Council suggested that the government was extracting natural resources: “the expressway options would affect local rivers/streams, access to rivers, floodplains, flood flow paths and land that it manages” (NZTA, 2010). The Department of Conservation’s resistance was reflected in its concerns about local fauna and flora arguing that the effect is undoubtedly nationally significant that, in some cases, threatened plant communities

along M2PP (NZTA, 2010). Other interest groups also resisted the extractive policies of the government, according to summaries of their opinions in *MacKays Crossing to Peka Peka Community Engagement Report* from the NZTA (NZTA, 2010):

- Nature Coast Enterprise “did not endorse any of the three expressway options.”
- The Paekakariki Community Board believed “that the expressway proposals could have serious impacts on the Paekakariki community.”
- The Paraparaumu-Raumati Community Board wondered “why an expressway needs to be built at all.” (The board suggested that “the two-lane Western Link Road [WLR] is the only options as it provides east–west and north–south connectivity.”)
- The Waikanae Community Board’s opinion was that “[w]hatever expressway option is chosen would have substantial detrimental effects on the Waikanae residents and the business community.”
- The NZ Historic Places Trust opposed “the Western and WLR Expressway options.”

The transportation-industry stakeholders, however, supported the three options, possibly because of their business interests. According to the report:

- The Automobile Association believed that the M2PP was necessary because “[b]usy highways with ten percent heavy vehicle traffic are incompatible with residential low speed environments with older drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.”
- The Wellington Regional Transport Committee supported the options because it [recognizes] the need to provide for the efficient and safe movement of people and goods throughout the region.”

Some business groups expressed reservations, which implied resistance. According to the report,

- The Kapiti Coast Chamber of Commerce said that “[t]he preferred expressway option must provide local connectivity between residential areas, good access between State Highway 1 and Paraparaumu.”
- The Wellington Regional Chamber of Commerce cautioned that “a detailed cost benefit analysis was not provided...it is important that over-capitalisation does not occur on the preferred expressway”

Many local Maori stakeholders also resisted the three options fearing extraction of their tribal values, historical practices, and culture. The Board

of Muaūpoko Tribal Authority said it would strongly oppose any road development “along the coastline or the western route.” Similarly, Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira, Inc., argued that “It is undesirable for the expressway to go through [the] QE2 [Queen Elizabeth] Park. The historic importance of Whareroa Farm should be taken into account.”

In this way, despite extensive consultation, most stakeholders resisted the extraction of land, natural resources, local values, historical and cultural practices, and environmental resources. Stakeholders were not consulted on the central issues of whether potential future financial gains for the Kapiti people would outweigh the near-term extractive costs to society and, therefore, whether the M2PP Expressway could be justified, even on economic terms. This kind of public action is in alignment with the National Party’s prevailing “Think Big” political philosophy of achieving big goals (New Zealand Herald, 2011) with a view toward catching up more quickly—through massive infrastructure investment—to more advanced countries, as has been argued by the hosts of the popular television news programme in New Zealand, *Campbell Live* (2012). This overly optimistic approach has resulted in extraction in terms of divestment, natural resources depletion, and unwanted built environment. This is evident from the fact that the 2009 Saha International report showing a lower BCR for RONS was returned by the government to be reworked, later yielding a higher BCR (SAHA, 2009; 2010).

Understanding the Extraction–Negotiation–Resistance Interplay

The preceding data suggest a few ways in which extraction, negotiation, and resistance interact in the M2PP Expressway planning process. The rationality of initiating RONS was based on the political power of the central government, which was possibly seduced by the “political sublime” romanticism of a project of this magnitude (see, for example, Flyvbjerg 2014). Furthermore, an element of “illegitimate rationalization” (Flyvbjerg, 2004) permitted the government to avoid detailed consultation with stakeholders and opposing political parties in order to initiate one of the most massive urban infrastructure projects in New Zealand.

The existing resource-consent process provides strong institutional checks and balances to protect New Zealand’s natural resources. However, the central government pursued extractive means to pursue RONS on the basis of economic gains argument, and the support of business and interest groups further strengthened the government’s interest in developing RONS. The data in this paper indicate that public consultation was confined to the operational level, where the initiation of RONS was nonnegotiable. The public was

consulted only in the preparation, participation, and continuation phases. Practically speaking, this kept the core decision making with the central government, while devolving “powerless power” to the stakeholders, particularly the affected residents (Alliance, 2010; 2011). As a result, as the planning process related to the expressway project was advanced through a national, regional, and local levels, the extractive elements of this planning process were invisible. In other words, many of the stakeholders were exploited without knowing it. They were consulted without realizing that they hadn’t been consulted during key phases of decision making. The removal of natural resources and the ensuing deterritorialisation were justified within the legal and administrative framework. As a result, the affected local communities and concerned institutions strongly resisted the speedy advancement of the M2PP project. Their voices, though, heard under the planning process framework, were unheeded because their decision-making input remained strictly at the operational levels, such as where to build and how to improve the project, and not at the strategic, predevelopment levels. As a consequence, a pseudo-context was generated in which the M2PP Expressway was justified as a means to future economic growth and productivity for the Kapiti people, disregarding the already existing extractive measures in place that would affect their everyday lives. Based on this extraction–negotiation–resistance interplay, this paper argues that urban transport planning processes must take actual contexts into account when stakeholders are presented with estimates of future economic growth.

As this case study shows, when context is ignored in urban planning processes, it is often replaced with a deterministic and fixed instrumental rationality, which perceives the existing context of people’s existing lives and habitats as threats to the project’s political and economic power. As a consequence, planning agencies and governments tend to launch projects that are visible to the public and media, which through focused messaging related to a pseudo-context, or an abstract context, can strengthen those entities’ political and economic power. Flyvbjergian “illegitimate rationalisation” strengthens extractive planning processes through the advancement of certain ideologies and instrumental incentives such as potential economic growth and productivity. In democratically advanced countries, when democratic institutions are very strong, it is difficult to exploit people; extractive policies, therefore, are dependent on the legal and administrative framework in which they are practiced, as was seen in the M2PP planning process. Extractive policymaking is also considered legally justified if affected stakeholders believe that the planning process has been transparent. However, such “transparency” in the absence of actual context and meaningful negotiations becomes

meaningless. In the case of the M2PP Expressway, it can be said that the central government's vision gained and the affected stakeholders (individuals and institutions) lost. The rationality–power interplay reveals that unless the contextual challenges associated with the M2PP are not taken into account, it is hard to see a positive relationship between building the M2PP and achieving economic growth for the Kapiti people.

Conclusion

The absence of meaningful negotiations with the stakeholders at the strategic level in the planning of RONS in New Zealand has made the planning process largely an extractive one whereby the stakeholders without strategic-level decision-making power have been exploited within the existing legal and administrative framework. This case study illuminates how transport-planning around infrastructure projects that involve extractive elements must incorporate contextual issues, such as the significant removal of natural resources and extensive federal investments. Resistance to such a large-scale transport policy is seldom based on legal or administrative concerns and often stems from actual contextual problems that the rules and regulations are otherwise unable to address. This suggests rethinking a value-based monitoring of the planning processes in which multiple issues, ranging from initiation and preparation to participation and continuation, can be meaningfully and honestly addressed, allowing for real participation of all stakeholders. It also suggests adopting different construction techniques, with the aim of ensuring that contextual challenges do not pose threats to the planning of a project. Therefore, the contextual challenges of road projects require complete focus, otherwise, a pseudo-context will be created as a result of political and economic overoptimism on the part of policy makers. This will, then, make the entire planning process extractive, even when there is a strong and efficient legal and administrative policy framework.

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