



TAP-SWOT

in a BOX

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The **Strengths**, Weaknesses,
Opportunities and Threats of
Triple Access Planning

Strengths

Acts as a complement	<i>The new approach can enhance existing mobility planning</i>	Triple Access Planning and its handling of uncertainty are not a wholesale substitute for conventional mobility planning. The new approach encourages a rethinking and broadening of planning perspective and promotes the need to stress-test a plan against uncertainty. This helps reframe the mobility planning process at its outset and adds new means of engaging in and applying that process.
Future proof	<i>Realising a vision involves being able to accommodate uncertainty</i>	Exposing uncertainty about the future involves developing different possible future contexts – explorative scenarios - to which a plan’s implementation may be exposed. Scenario planning allows the plan itself to be devised in a way that its creators can ask “is this part of the plan going to work regardless of what the future has to throw at us?”. A policy or measure that in any scenario helps progress towards a vision for a better future is more robust or ‘future proof’.
Conceptually appealing	<i>The new approach resonates with what professionals feel they need</i>	Many planning professionals would recognise the merit of being vision-led rather than forecast-led, of looking beyond road traffic, and of confronting uncertainty. The portrayal of the Triple Access System within which transport finds its place and role in access is simple and compelling. As such the new approach is conceptually appealing which encourages challenge to conventional mobility planning.
Encourages ambition	<i>Stronger planning can result from inviting us to dream</i>	While conventional mobility planning does not prohibit ‘thinking big’, it can tend towards conservatism and preserving the established form and function of mobility. The new approach more explicitly invites us to explore new possibilities both in terms of what could change and what could be encouraged to change. By better engaging with understanding how the world is changing, could change and needs to change, ambitious vision-led planning is possible.
Better reflects the world we live in	<i>People live their lives in a triple access system, not (only) a transport system</i>	How people fulfil their access needs and desires is influenced by the supply of access opportunity across transport, land-use and telecommunications systems. A planning approach that recognises this is better able to understand and shape overall access and the place of mobility within this.
Access at the core	<i>Society thrives on access, with mobility being only one means to that end</i>	The functioning of society and the wellbeing of individuals relies upon being able to access people, employment, goods, services and opportunities. Motorised mobility is not synonymous with access. It is a means to an end. Spatial proximity and especially digital connectivity represent other important (complementary) means to that end. Triple Access Planning helps ensure all means are drawn upon to help achieve the end in the most appropriate way.
Helps us to unthink	<i>By stepping back and helping open our minds new perspective can emerge</i>	It is easy for conventional thinking in transport planning and analysis to blinker how we perceive the present and how best to take steps to shape the future. By developing new mental models of the present and future of our triple access world it becomes possible to question prior assumptions. It becomes possible to unthink and then rethink the scope of urban mobility planning and reimagine what steps could be taken on a pathway ahead.
Inspires a new generation	<i>Earlier career planning professionals are motivated and empowered</i>	As the transport and wider planning profession evolves, new blood and new perspectives come into play. There is substantial recognition of the need to plan differently, not least given the imperatives of addressing climate change. The underlying philosophy of this new approach and the support it provides to reimagine the future creates a flexible and empowering environment within which professionals with new ideas and priorities can flourish.
Considers the art of the possible	<i>Being encouraged to imagine future change strengthens planning</i>	Consider how much change has happened in the last 20 years to access. Consider how, where and when you work and play and engage with others. The future is not just more or less of what we have now. The form and qualities of activities and their access is likely to change, perhaps quite substantially. A planning approach that actively encourages exploration of what change might unfold helps better determine how to account for and shape such change.
Encourages diversity of perspective	<i>Actively thinking beyond the transport system brings new insight and prospects</i>	The system (or system of systems) of transport and society is a complex one in relation to supply and demand. Mobility planning with only a transport mindset constrains the ability to make sense of the system that planning seeks to shape. A planning approach that considers triple access naturally lends itself to bringing transport, spatial and digital planners and other experts together. Their shared mental model of the present and future can strengthen planning.

Weaknesses

It doesn't guarantee better outcomes	<i>What is a better future is subjective and in the hands of those involved</i>	Within conventional mobility planning it is possible to progress towards a future that for some is desirable. The new approach is intended to offer a process that is more overtly vision-led and broader in outlook through its triple-access view. However, the actors involved in the process are what determines the plan that results. They bring their own values, vested interests and preconceptions. Be careful what you wish for.
Contested territories	<i>Limited understanding of triple access dynamics produces difference of opinion</i>	The nature and use of the Triple Access System continues to change and be changed. Research efforts reveal how challenging it is to make sense of the System and how its elements interact. As a result, while the new approach invites an opening of minds to thinking more broadly than only about motorised transport, it may not be possible to achieve a strong shared level of confidence in a particular interpretation of the System.
It doesn't compute	<i>Getting people to buy-in to the new approach is not guaranteed</i>	Whether as decision makers, planners or analysts, not everyone sees the need for a new approach. They may not be convinced that uncertainty about the future is that great. They may have strong faith in a transport-centric approach to mobility planning and believe the existing processes and tools are sufficient. The new approach is predicated on people's buy-in to engaging with it and seeing a need to innovate.
Dependence on more actors	<i>A greater pool of expertise is needed to capitalise upon what the approach offers</i>	Conventional mobility planning has been centred upon the transport system with mixed experience of engagement with spatial planning. Even more remote has been any engagement with evolving expertise in digital planning. Added to this is a need for expertise in foresight methods to explore possible futures and how they may be reached. This all points to a need for a greater range of expertise to be involved in the planning process which is harder to find and harness.
Lack of precedents	<i>Planning authorities taking a lead with a new approach can feel exposed</i>	While conventional urban mobility planning may not be perfect or may even fall short, there is strength in numbers, strength in conforming with norms of practice and norms of professional, public, political expectation. In contrast, embracing triple access with vision-led appetite, and addressing uncertainty is more novel. The reassurance of others having already tried and tested the approach to good effect is in short supply.
Cognitive overload	<i>The complexity of present and future triple access is too hard to process</i>	There are many, many factors at play in making sense of the present day Triple Access System and its use in a diverse society. The complexity is compounded by the challenge of contemplating how and to what extent such factors are important in influencing the future. Being able to process this and draw planning conclusions from it with confidence can be highly demanding if not unmanageable.
Lack of evidence	<i>How different forms of access are at work is poorly understood</i>	While evidence on the transport system and its use is integral to transport planning, the picture is less clear in relation to the land-use system and even more so in terms of the telecommunications system and its use. The three systems and how they are used are interconnected and changing (at different rates). Making sense empirically of the Triple Access System is challenging (albeit that the TAS exists and affects transport whether sense is made of it or not).
New skills required	<i>This planning approach calls for new capabilities and competencies</i>	Not only does this new planning approach encourage a fresh philosophical perspective on how and why we plan and how we might plan differently, it also demands new skills and processes – and related capabilities and competencies. Being able to co-create a shared triple-access vision, being able to constructively explore uncertainty, and being able to guide more robust decision making are challenging prospects for those unfamiliar with them.
Hard to model	<i>Representing a more complex system is too resource and time hungry</i>	Representing supply and demand for physical mobility, spatial proximity and digital connectivity would need further model development, and data may not exist to support this. To then model multiple 'what-if' futures would need more resources and time that could slow the planning process.
Too abstract and intangible	<i>The new approach is conceptually appealing but hard to apply</i>	Triple Access Planning points to the triple access reality of our lives and in this respect can be conceptually very appealing. However, moving from the abstract to the specifics of how to observe, understand and influence triple access demands more than a new philosophy. It can well demand tools and processes, and detailed guidance for their use. The new approach does not 'hand hold' practitioners through its application.

Opportunities

The need for adaptive capacity	<i>In the face of system shocks society needs to be adaptive and resilient</i>	COVID-19 highlighted our collective reliance upon the Triple Access System as a source of resilience within which businesses and individuals could adapt their behaviours. Resilience and adaptive capacity would seem of growing importance. A planning process that is able to actively improve examination of, and changes to, a system comprised of multiple forms of access should be of great appeal.
Responsible planning	<i>Strong planning is needed that is more than only accountable to due process</i>	While established planning process and appraisal offer a framework for addressing future mobility, it is no longer sufficient to have demonstrated accountability in following due process. There is a need for planning that helps decision makers to take greater responsibility for charting a course ahead that holds the prospect of achieving meaningful change to help address environmental and social as well as economic concerns. The approach offered more proactively facilitates this.
Moving beyond white male privilege	<i>In order to better account for a diverse population we must think differently</i>	The transport system has predominantly been designed by men; in many countries by white, men. Gender, ethnicity and other protected characteristics that reflect the true and diverse makeup of the society that transport and access support have been largely overlooked. Thankfully, this is changing and needs to change. A planning approach that is less rooted in the past and more concerned with engaging diverse voices in the present about preferable futures is key.
COVID-19 exposure	<i>Greater familiarity with triple access and uncertainty opens people's minds</i>	The COVID-19 pandemic was a global shock that demonstrated how things can change in unexpected, uncertain ways. Many people shifted significantly from a reliance on physical mobility to a greater reliance on digital connectivity. Professionals and the public alike are more likely to 'get it' now.
Necessity is the mother of invention	<i>Uncertainty and a climate emergency invite new, bolder ways forward</i>	Uncertainty becomes an opportunity in the sense that if the future cannot be predicted then we are offered greater invitation to shape it. The climate emergency demands that it is shaped in pursuit of a vision that is different to business as usual and which involves a makeup of access that treads more lightly on the planet. The proactive and participatory nature of the approach lends itself strongly to enabling and helping to justify bolder ways forwards.
Accommodating uncertainty	<i>Society is in a state of flux with a heightened need to plan for uncertainty</i>	Once upon a time it may have seemed that 'more of the same' car-dependent planning would suffice in a world where road traffic and economic output seemed to be tightly coupled. Now the world is changing. Decarbonisation demands something different. The digital age may well further transform how we live our lives, but in ways that can be hard to imagine. Being able to explore and account for different possible triple access futures is preferable to (only) forecasting traffic.
'De-car'-bonise	<i>Triple access offers the prospect of less motorised mobility and emissions</i>	Alongside economic prosperity and social wellbeing is environmental sustainability and the imperative to urgently address climate change. Giving greater emphasis to spatial proximity and digital connectivity in urban mobility planning can help reduce dependence upon motorised mobility and especially the private car, leading to reduced carbon dioxide emissions while still allowing people to lead their lives socially and economically
Rethinking measures	<i>Transport measures could have new consequences in a triple access world</i>	Transport measures within mobility planning have been seen as transport solutions addressing a transport problem. Problems more fundamentally relate to access, and in this respect a triple access lens can increasingly be used to think through the possible consequences of transport measures as part of an urban mobility plan – e.g. road pricing is not just about the choice between car and public transport but may influence the role of spatial proximity and digital connectivity.
Preparing for the worst	<i>If the need for major change intensifies, forecast-led planning won't do</i>	It is hard to judge different forms of planning or even their outcomes as right or wrong. Weaker planning that 'goes with the flow' of external forces may seem sufficient. However, in the face of climate change and shifting attitudes and behaviours, the demand for stronger planning that can respond to this may grow. Planning authorities that are engaging with, and growing their proficiency in, the new approach stand to be better placed to respond.
Appetite for change	<i>There is growing recognition of a need to move away from business as usual</i>	The adage 'if you do what you've always done you will get what you've always got' is pertinent to mobility planning. Whether as professionals, politicians or as members of the public, there is a wish (albeit not universal) to work with the dynamics of our times to shape a different type of future society that supports diversity and prospers while living within its means and environmental boundaries. A new approach to planning helps free up our minds to embrace new possibilities.

Threats

Silo mentality	<i>Joined-up government can often remain elusive making triple access problematic</i>	Efforts in the past to more strongly embrace access-based planning have proved challenging due to differing perspectives and understandings and the difficulty of bringing these together across different jurisdictions of responsibility. It is rare for mobility, spatial and digital planning to be treated as a combined function. Existing organisational structures may work against being able to fulfil such a function.
Damned by faint praise	<i>A new approach that doesn't fit someone's agenda is unwelcome</i>	Stronger planning suggests shaping a more inclusive, fair, environmentally sensitive and prosperous future. This may not fit the narrative of beneficiaries of a present system that serves them well. As a result they may either seek to exert disproportionate influence on a new and participative approach, or they may subtly cast doubt on the credibility of the approach, anxious to preserve the more familiar orthodox approach to planning where their influence is established.
Professional resistance to change	<i>Those invested in established approaches may be uncomfortable</i>	Sense of purpose, reputation and security come from achieving a level of proficiency in the application of particular tools, methods and processes. Understandably individuals and organisations have invested in such proficiency associated with established approaches. They may be instinctively reluctant to embrace a new approach that is seen to diminish their return on the investment in skills and experience that they have made.
Lack of appraisal framework	<i>The planning system continues to expect conformity with approved approaches</i>	The new approach may be, or be perceived to be, acting outside of the bounds of recognised appraisal practice. By not being able to demonstrate conformity or to effectively offer a convincing alternative appraisal framework, Triple Access Planning, including its treatment of uncertainty, may fail to garner support and endorsement. Without this sense of legitimacy, putting it into practice could be jeopardised.
Other access influencers	<i>There are multiple influencers of access and this complicates shaping the future</i>	With recognition of the triple access nature of transport comes a realisation of how many different players are involved in shaping the forms of access available in society. The way employment, shopping and other services are organised in space and time and their functional form all affect access. Digital and transport service providers in the private and public sectors are at play. This makes it challenging to co-ordinate understanding of access in the present and shaping of it in the future.
Hard to understand	<i>If the concepts are new they may be harder to understand and buy into</i>	Planners are familiar with urban mobility planning that is forecast-led and transport-focused. They have a confidence in practicing this approach. A new approach requires new understanding which can make it harder to believe in and in turn invest effort in.
A need to quantify	<i>Analytical rigour often means numbers, and precise numbers at that</i>	The adage 'if you can't count it, it doesn't count' reminds us that what matters may lie beyond what (big) data and numbers are able to convincingly represent. The concept of 'access' has struggled to be embraced in mobility planning because a unifying definition and means of measuring has proved elusive. Definitions and numbers can only go so far in helping us in a meaningful way in planning for the future. Nevertheless if a new approach cannot play the numbers game...
Politics	<i>Stakes are high for politicians in the face of change and they need legitimacy</i>	Decision making on policies and investments that shape the future is seldom easy for the politicians involved. They are unlikely to welcome any suggestion of uncertainty bringing into question their judgement. They may wish to assert confidence in more conventional thinking and a belief that primacy of motorised mobility will endure. Conversely a vision-led approach in which uncertainty abounds could be mis-used in service of vested interests.
Lack of headspace	<i>Planning authorities may lack capacity and resources for planning differently</i>	Many transport authorities are resource constrained and facing short-term pressures and demands that have been exacerbated significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic. This can make it difficult to prioritise strategic planning for the longer-term. While expectation for onward mobility planning and its delivery will exist, this can already be intellectually and procedurally challenging. Accordingly, it may be difficult to find the capacity and resources to engage in a new approach.
Lack of public buy-in	<i>Many people see themselves as locked-in to car dependent lifestyles</i>	Triple Access Planning seeks to better equip society for a sustainable prosperous future by 'putting the private car in its place' in a wide repertoire of forms of access. While this may be the case, the sort of mobility planning it produces may provoke strong resistance from parts of the public who see the way ahead as incompatible with their present-day means of access fulfilment.