

Under the Viaduct: Neglected Spaces No Longer

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Viaducts within cities hold a strong shared association. They can be dark, ominous places, and in many urban contexts sit within poorly maintained or sparsely populated areas. Poorly designed elevated structures can pose significant barriers between communities, and those 'left over' spaces beneath are inherently uninviting. As a consequence, they are typically underused and gradually worsen in condition.

This needn't be the case. Around the world, examples abound of creative and attractive utilisation of the space beneath viaducts, such as Paris' Viaduct des Arts, London's Westbourne Studios and Melbourne's Burnley Bouldering Wall. As cities grow and become denser, the focus on maximising the community and economic value of urban land will continue to intensify. Disconnected and underutilised space is less tenable than in the past and the creative place-making impacts and opportunities of infrastructure design is better understood.

Here in Australia, whilst many new roads and railways are being built underground or at surface level, inevitably with land constraints, extensive elevated structures will be constructed over the coming years, sometimes through the middle of urban areas. With imagination, there is much that can be done to retrofit existing elevated infrastructure and design undercrofts as positive spaces in new build projects.

Matt will present findings from action research being undertaken between Arup, Roads and Maritime NSW, Transport for NSW and UrbanGrowth NSW. He will share insights on what can be achieved with fore-thought and imagination, drawing inspiration from around the globe and from within Australia's principal cities (<http://inside.arup.com/2016/10/17/under-the-viaduct/>).