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Transport Geography Research Group Page

This is an important year for the Transport Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (TGRG). The group is celebrating 40 years of continuous activity, which started with a Working Group set up in 1972. To mark the event we held a drinks reception at the Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers Annual Conference in Edinburgh this July, where we were joined by many past chairs and other key figures in the group's development. The event was kindly sponsored by Elsevier Publishing, publishers of this journal. The news of the substantial increase in this journal's Impact Factor added greatly to the celebratory nature of the event, and we would like to go on record in congratulating Professor Richard Knowles for this achievement, having been Editor-in-Chief of JTG since its inception, as well as a founder member of TGRG.

1. RGS conference 2012

This year's Hoyle Lecture was given by Professor Richard Knowles (University of Salford), and was sponsored by Ashgate Publishing. His subject was 'Transport shaping space, before and after Peak Oil'. Professor Knowles is a previous chair of TGRG and was awarded the Alan Hay Award for services to transport geography at the 2010 AGM.

The group was very active across the three days of the conference and sponsored or co-sponsored ten substantive paper sessions, involving contributors from 22 international institutions, from across Europe, the Middle East, North America, Australia and New Zealand. There were also contributions from 21 British academic institutions, in addition to the welcome inclusion of several non-academic collaborators. The sessions were wide-ranging, covering many perspectives and drawing in a multiplicity of different disciplinary backgrounds and methods. On Day one, a double session on the freight transport sector, organised by Professor Alfred Baird (Edinburgh Napier University) and Professor Richard Knowles covered intermodality and environmental considerations, and the changing geography of international freight movements and logistics. Next there were two sessions examining mobility, the first was convened by Dr. Kate Pangbourne (University of Aberdeen), and focused on the future: exploring potential game-changers such as an 'Internet of Cars' and 3D printing, macro institutional complexities hampering efforts to tackle pressing mobility related issues, empirical examples of similar issues at more local scales, and some of the social implications of continued inequality in transport reflected in structural car dependence. An unthemed session enabled researchers working beyond our main themes for the conference to present their work; we enjoyed an insight into cycling advocacy and activism, the role of airports in ski-tourism regions, the tensions between public space and privacy in airports, the national concessionary travel scheme in Scotland, and its impact on elderly mobility, and the utilisation of GIS to develop touring routes for an East–West economic corridor in Southeast Asia.

On Day Two, a session convened by Dr. Stewart Barr (University of Exeter) and Dr. Jan Prillwitz (Utrecht University) saw TGRG working jointly with the Energy Geographies Working Group. Papers in this session tackled the subject both from the perspectives of climate change and peak oil, exploring the implications of peak oil for the transport system, incorporating transport energy in household energy budgets as a way to conceptualise some of the social impacts of climate change mitigation in transport policy, improving transport's energy efficiency as a means of tackling oil dependency and peak oil, the adaptation of rural towns to low footprint transport, and the vulnerability of car commuters to peak oil. The second session on mobility, 'Mobile Urban Lives' was convened by Dr. James Faulconbridge (University of Lancaster) and Dr. Lesley Murray (University of Brighton). We enjoyed presentations on the methodological challenge of understanding children's mobilities, new understandings of urban mobility in Canadian cities, a historical perspective on individual mobility, constructions of 'home' by the hyper-mobile and the impact of disruption on individuals in urban settings. Our third session on Day 2, on safety and security in transport, was convened by Dr. Tim Ryley and Dr. Lucy Budd (both Loughborough University). This explored safety and security experiences and issues on a number of different scales, from cycling, long distance corridors and air travel, the development of airline discourses of passenger health, the construction of cycling as unsafe in pregnancy, and early findings from work on a decision-support system for assessing security impact. Day two finished with a workshop session to explore future directions for transport geography over a 40 year horizon, organised by Professor Richard Knowles, Dr. Lisa Davison (University of Ulster) and Angela Curl (University of Edinburgh). It began with an overview of developments in the last 40 years and the challenges facing academics and policy makers in the next 40 years, given by Professor Peter Jones (UCL).

Day Three was another busy day, beginning with a double session on transport in the city, convened by Dr. Robin Hickman and Professor Peter Jones. This included statistical explorations of the relationship between commuting and household migration distances, the relationship between residence location choice and travel preferences, the role of public transport networks and institutional factors in successful city-region development, public transport in segmented cities, residential car-reduction, the modelling of health and Greenhouse gas implications of travel patterns in different settings, spaces of travel as 'new' urban centres, and a comparative assessment of the role of urban form in generating sustainable transport futures. Our final double session was organised in conjunction with the GIS Research Group, and co-convened by Dr. Seraphim Alvanides (Northumbria University), Dr. Kate Pangbourne and Dr. Matthew Wilson (University of Kentucky). This was

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a visually exciting session, with very varied sessions that highlight the diversity of approach and application that is unlocked by geolocated digital data, from multi-modal tourist trip planning, incorporating user preferences in intermodal journey planning, the methodological uses of GIS in travel survey development, the potential for GPS to unlock dynamic road user charging as a policy tool; and analysing human movement, data mining of bicycle flows for planning more sustainable urban transport, using GPS to understand urban cycling behaviours, visualising traffic flows from floating car data, GPS for analysing the space–time patterns of high-rise inhabitants in Rotterdam and a glimpse of the 'future' in utilising new mobile technologies to create 'social' networks from mobile objects such as cars to transform individual travel decisions.

Space precludes detailing all the contributors, but further details can be found at http://www.rgs.org/WhatsOn/ConferencesAndSeminars/Annual+International+Conference/Annual+international+conference.htm. The esteemed 5th recipient of the Alan Hay Award for services to Transport Geography is Professor Derek Hall (Seabank Associates, Scotland), who has served both as a past Chair and Secretary to the TGRG, and gave a previous Hoyle lecture. He has contributed extensively to our knowledge of transport in Eastern Europe and to the links between transport and tourism.

2. Other activities

As a group, we were awarded a small grant by RGS-IBG to enable us to hold a Knowledge Exchange event with Transport Scotland, as part of our 40 year celebratory activities. This was organised by Professor Peter Jones, Dr. Lisa Davison and Dr. Kate Pangbourne, and Dr. Donna Easterlow of Transport Scotland. Themes were identified in conjunction with Transport Scotland, and included interchange and journey planning, urban and rural transport issues, and accessibility and social justice. A keynote presentation on Peak Car was given by Professor Phil Goodwin (Emeritus Professor, University of the West of England), as an example of a current research issue with major policy implications. A wide range of geographers and government officials took part in the event, with a capacity attendance at Transport Scotland's Edinburgh office on 6th July.

3. Membership matters

The Transport Geography Research Group is a large group, with over 200 members registered with the RGS, at least 40 of whom are postgraduate students, and further 100 members who are not affiliated with the RGS. Peter Jones continues as Chair, Lisa Davison as Treasurer and Kate Pangbourne has been re-elected as Secretary for a further 3 year term. The committee has been strengthened by the addition of two post-graduate representatives, Ian Philips (University of Leeds) and Jamie Cecil (University of Hertfordshire). Two new posts have been created to help coordinate communications: Robin Lovelace (University of Sheffield) will reinvigorate our web presence, and Scott Copsey (University of Hertfordshire) will act as membership secretary. These additions should enable us to communicate better with the members of TGRG, and to stimulate additional activity and interest in the coming year.

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