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TGRG page

Transport and Sustainability

Transport and Sustainability was chosen by TGRG[1] as its main theme at the 2007 RGS-IBG Conference in London to enable transport researchers to report on analyses of the sustainability of urban, inter-urban, rural and international transport systems, new transport infrastructure, dependency on non-renewable fuels and effects of transport policy changes.

Transport systems and transport behaviour are becoming increasingly less sustainable. Personal mobility continues to grow rapidly in the developed world mainly as a result of higher per capita incomes enabling even more widespread ownership, and use, of cars and much greater use of low priced air transport. Whilst there is growing recognition of the adverse environmental consequences of hypermobility and of extensive transport infrastructure development in already developed countries, only lip service is being paid to reducing environmental impacts of transport and ensuring that users pay the full social and environmental costs of their transport decisions.

Stewart Barr and Gareth Shaw (University of Exeter) started Session 1 with a paper comparing attitudes in the UK towards low cost airlines, which are the fastest growing transport sector with a lot of traffic induced by very low ticket prices, with environmentally responsible behaviour. Janet Dickinson (Bournemouth University) countered this by considering climate change and holidays and advocated making the connection by travelling slowly. Werner Gronau (Intercollege Cyprus) and Elke Freitag (Trier University, Germany) argued that there were a range of opportunities for sustainable tourism development. Changing modes and scale, Jamie Dallen (University of Exeter) examined the social, environmental and economic sustainability of rural rail services in Southwest England. High speed rail's ability to challenge air transport over medium length inter-city journey lengths in Spain was then well illustrated by Clive Charlton (Plymouth University).

David Banister (Oxford University) started Session 2 with a searching analysis of transport's unsustainability. Martin Dijst (Utrecht University, The Netherlands) followed with a paper which examined temporal and spatial fragmentation from the use of ICTs. Individual carbon emissions from Dutch passenger transport were analysed economically, temporally and regionally in a paper by Dominic Stead and Yusak Susilo (Delft University, The Netherlands). Alexander Chlan and Pavla Lejskova (University of Pardubice, Czech Republic) then considered the (un)sustainable development of the transport sector in the Czech Republic with extensive road building and the rapid expansion of car and lorry use in its post-communist market economy. This session concluded with an examination by Gordon Wilmsmeier with Alfred Baird (both Napier University, Edinburgh) of the environmental benefits of container trans-shipment hub development for north European shipping at Scapa Flow in Scotland's Orkney Islands.

Margaret Currie (University of Aberdeen) opened Session 3 by considering the role of bus and community transport services in rural Scotland and making policy recommendations. Kate Pangbourne (University of Aberdeen) assessed the new geography of Scottish transport governance contrasting the 'hollowing out' of deregulation and privatisation with more recent initiatives under devolved government that were characterised as 'filling in' and even 'over-stuffing'. Nothatati Yayha's paper with John Nelson and Corinne Mulley (all Newcastle University) asked how the decline in local bus usage can be arrested, what do passengers want and can this be delivered by Quality Bus Partnerships? Maria Attard and Theres Ciantar (University of Malta) then considered the Mediterranean island of Malta's spatial road accident data and how it can be used to prioritise road safety measures. In the final paper in this session, Richard Harrison (Lancaster University) considered how walking could be facilitated as the most sustainable means of transport.

Session 4 opened with David Banister examining critical questions about the future sustainability of transport. Christof Hertel and Heike Flaemig (Hamburg University of Technology, Germany) then asked what does sustainability mean in freight transport and how can it be measured apart from its carbon footprint? Holger Dalkman and Phil Sivell's (Transport Research Laboratory) paper examined Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) as a possible instrument to promote sustainable mobility. Heike Flaemig then asked what information and communication systems offer for sustainable goods flow. Christof Hertel concluded by identifying a blind spot in the failure of cor-

[1] The Transport Geography Research Group of the RGS-IBG (Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers).

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porate social responsibility reports to cover sustainable transportation in the supply chain.

These 20 papers presented in four TGRG sessions at the 2007 Conference highlight an impressive range of research on Transport and Sustainability by geographers from throughout the European Union. Together they demonstrate how Transport Geography is engaging with one of the most important issues facing the world today.

TGRG has chosen the two themes 'Transport Governance' and 'Transport Implications of Tourism and Climate Change' for the 2008 RGS-IBG Conference at the Royal Geographical Society and Imperial College, London from 27 to 29th August.

Richard Knowles
2007 TGRG Conference Convenor
School of Environment & Life Sciences,
Research Institute for the Built & Human Environment,
University of Salford,
UK
E-mail address: r.d.knowles@salford.ac.uk