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Transport Geography Research Group

The main opportunity for members of the Transport Geography Research Group (TGRG) to come together is the RGS-IBG Annual Conference, which was held in London this year from 26th to 29th August. Twenty session convenors put together a programme of nine themed and one open session, some in collaboration with other RGS-IBG research or working groups. In addition, on the day before the conference, the outgoing Chairperson, Professor Peter Jones (UCL) presided over an extremely successful seminar at the UK Department for Transport (DfT) that brought around 30 TGRG conference delegates together with a similar number of civil servants from DfT and other government departments. DfT were able to choose from the conference programme the themes that interested them most, and this year it was cycling and business travel. The afternoon event was attended by DfT's Deputy Chief Scientist, Dr. Miles Eldon, and very well received by DfT staff.

The centrepiece of TGRG's presence at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference is the annual Brian Hoyle Lecture in Transport Geography. The group was pleased to welcome Professor Andrew Goetz (Denver), whose lecture 'The Place of Transport in Geography' took a large audience through 50 years of transport geography and placed it in the wider context of geography, though also noting that transport geographers often find themselves working alongside quite varied disciplines. A recording and the slides from the lecture can be found on www.tgrg.wordpress.com.

During this year's conference TGRG had a presence in every time slot on the programme, and sometimes multiple sessions took place simultaneously. Session convenors have contributed to this conference report in order to fully reflect the content of the conference. The first session, 'Energy and Transport: a roadblock to sustainability?', held jointly with the Energy Geographies Working Group, was convened by Robin Lovelace (Leeds) and Stewart Barr (Exeter). The papers addressed a range of scales, modes, agents, practices and methods, from global energy supply chains and scenarios for reducing emissions from shipping, the aviation dependence of the student gap year, to measuring the entropy of street networks, not to mention papers with surprising findings in national differences in the energy content of commuting and also in the business travel practices of Estonian SMEs.

Graham Parkhurst and Juliet Jain (UWE) convened the double session 'New paradigms in conceptualising shared mobility'. All mobility in the public domain involves the sharing of spaces, but in recent years the modalities and opportunities for sharing have expanded sharply. The papers in this session considered collective mobility solutions at the forefront of development, with contributions reflecting on the technical possibilities, as well as the positive and negative side of 'sharing' in the mobility sphere.

'Space–time knowledge in social networks: a new paradigm for transport geography?' was an ambitious double session convened by Janet Dickinson (Bournemouth) and Chris Speed (Edinburgh). They brought together geographers with diverse interests from the self-quantified person to the space bound nature of human existence. The role of mobile technologies and social networks in reshaping mobility practices is clear, from crowd-sourcing travel and local information to cycling, yet our social networks are still embedded in space and place, confirming that geography still matters. The session ended with a workshop run by the convenors to challenge participants to move objects to locations without going there themselves using the Sixth Sense smartphone app. Overall discussion raised questions about the nature of contemporary community and the desire to share that present new challenges to the transport field.

The 'Mobility as Practice' session was co-convened with the Urban Geography Research Group by Mags Adam (Salford), James Faulconbridge and Noel Cass (both Lancaster). The double session attracted a large audience and opened up a valuable line of discussion about the merits of considering questions about transport through the lens of close analysis of the micro-scale details of everyday journeys. Ranging from theoretical questions about the merits of practice theory to the empirical challenges of observing and filming cycling, the papers demonstrated the vibrancy of research that takes seriously the subtleties of the performance of mobility using a variety of transport means. The implications of a practice approach for policy concerns about low carbon mobility were particularly clear and discussed in all of the papers.

During the same slot as one of the 'Mobility as Practice' sessions there was an open session on 'Transport Networks' for papers submitted directly to RGS-IBG. Four interesting papers were presented of which three focused on different dimension of air transport: one on the changing geographies of air transport in the Baltic countries, one on the demand for air freight transport in Germany, and one on airport terminal design and governance. The final paper focused on shipping and the benefits and disadvantages of adopting lower speeds in maritime transport.

'Walking & Cycling: The contributions of health and transport geography' was co-sponsored with the Geography of Health Research Group. Angela Curl (Glasgow) and Lisa Davison (Ulster) and brought together what appeared to be an eclectic mix of presentations exploring the contribution of geographers' research in active modes. However, the session proved that despite the variety in approach, there were strong links between each paper with themes such as community, health, the built environment, policy (and in some case politics) and practice being emphasised throughout. Overall this was a successful and interesting joint

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session which managed to demonstrate the breadth and depth of the discipline in terms of methodological approaches.

Another double session 'Designing Mobility: Mobilising design' was convened with the Economic Geography Research Group by Justin Spinney (Cardiff), Suzanne Reimer (Southampton) and Philip Pinch (London South Bank). The focus was on exploring the role of designers and design knowledge, including marketing, in shaping mobility and immobility. Bringing such questions of governance and economy to the fore, this session sought to illuminate the linkages between seemingly mundane spatial practice and the broader dynamics of knowledge and production networks in a number of ways. Five substantial papers were presented, which stimulated a lively discussion.

Encouraging new and emerging transport geographers is a priority for TGRG, and the usual opportunity for students to present their work was included in a session which also enabled work not tapping into the themed sessions to be presented. This session was convened by Ian Philips (Leeds) and Kate Pangbourne (Aberdeen). Contributions covered the significant role of transport in the ecological footprint of rural communities in Scotland, the importance of transport for communities displaced by earthquakes in Italy, progress with travel planning for the regeneration project, Media City, in Salford and the key role of mobile phones in facilitating social ties, business life and mobility in Africa. What was striking about all these presentations was their concern for communities, in both the developed and developing world.

The movement of freight, a traditional concern of transport geography, was covered in the Seamless Freight Transport session convened by Allan Woodburn and Michael Browne (both Westminster). Contributions covered ports, intermodality, rail freight, and urban delivery from consolidation centres and light commercial vehicles.

A final double session, 'Unequal and uneven mobility and its social consequences', was convened by Karen Lucas (Leeds) and Kate Pangbourne. This focused squarely on the social consequences of transport – either through the construction of infrastructure or through the uneven accessibility effects of public transport services. Contributors had studied the experiences of Somali women in London, analysed the effect of perceptions of personal security on confidence to travel, the concept of fairness, the tolerance of inequality in High Speed Rail developments in the UK and Turkey, public participation processes in English Local Transport Planning, the prognosis for low carbon transition in rural communities, including social effects in transport modelling and an intriguing glimpse into the world of arts disciplines with an exploration of female mobility of the Beat generation. These sessions were very well attended and stimulated a fascinating discussion around the concept of fairness, public consultation and participatory processes.

The last TGRG session of the conference, 'The Geography of Business Travel', convened by Lisa Davison and Kate Pangbourne, had contributions ranging from the theoretical, drawing on a range of disciplines, to empirical studies based on primary and secondary data and further, to a commercial tool available to support decision making. It was interesting that it clearly linked back to the first TGRG session of the conference on energy and transport, which also included a paper on business travel. This topic represents a rich seam for the discipline, as it encompasses a variety of factors, practices and impacts all in need of further research. In particular, the development of a business travel market, its lack of homogeneity, its status-related image and perks as well as its connection to leisure travel make business travel a difficult practice to alter, though efforts are clearly being made to do so, which transport geographers should resolve to study. As the conference drew to a close, presenters dashed for their trains or engaged in activities typified by the 'leisure' tourism segment thus demonstrating some of the complexities of the geography of business travel.

The high level of attendance across most of the TGRG sessions is testament to the vibrancy of the group and the relevance of its work. The abstracts of all the papers can be found via the RGS-IBG website (www.rgs.org) and many of the presentations are available on www.tgrg.wordpress.com. The relevance of transport geography and mobility studies within the discipline was also brought home by the number of non-TGRG sponsored sessions with a transport theme, such as 'Transport Networks' described above, as well as 'Facilitating Comfort in Personal Mobility' chaired by Angela Curl. This session contained a mix of papers, covering commuting, measuring accessibility in the Czech Republic, walking levels and inequality in Scotland, and bike congestion and commuting in The Netherlands.

At the TGRG's annual general meeting, the Alan Hay Award for a significant contribution to transport geography was presented *in absentia* to Professor Markus Hesse (Luxembourg), and two changes to the committee were made. Peter Jones stepped down as Chairperson, and Dr. Karen Lucas was elected in his stead. Her mission as Chair is to build on the new initiatives established in the last couple of years. A working group was established to explore how to establish more activity throughout the year. Joanna Elvey (Leeds) has joined the committee as a post-graduate representative. Joanna will work with the other postgraduate representative, Ian Phillips to raise the profile of TGRG within the RGS-IBG Postgraduate Forum. The website has been revived by Robin Lovelace and is being used to promote the group to the wider world and inform the membership, with a growing number of contributions from members. All members are encouraged to submit material for the website, and to direct potential new members to it, where they will find full information about how to join. We also have an e-mail distribution list using the JISCMAIL platform. Anyone can sign themselves up to this list by searching for RGS-TGRG at www.jiscmail.ac.uk.

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