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ScienceDirect
Journal of Transport Geography 14 (2006) 406
JOURNAL OF TRANSPORT GEOGRAPHY
www.elsevier.com/locate/jtrangeo

TGRG page

The return of the text book?

It is often said in British academia that the UK Government's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has impacted detrimentally on the production of text books in many disciplines. Would-be authors spend time conducting original investigations and writing up research papers rather than putting together introductory syntheses, as the pressure to be judged both 'research active' and the originator of high quality research work exerts itself strongly. Loftus (2006) suggests (perhaps tongue in cheek?) that the demands of the 'RAE-ification' process situate academics in the middle of the 'violence' of capitalist society and its increasingly managerialist excesses, and as such allow us to better understand the world we investigate. This may be so, but publishers still bemoan the lack of UK-based volunteers putting themselves forward to pass on this understanding to undergraduates in a text book. The last general text in our sub-discipline emanating from these shores was Hoyle and Knowles' second edition of *Modern Transport Geography* in 1998.

The culture of 'publish or perish' – or "publish and perish" (Castree and Sparke, 2000, p. 224) – is of course not confined to Great Britain and Northern Ireland: similar pressures, albeit for different reasons, are well established elsewhere and are unlikely to abate so long as neoliberal notions of public sector accountability hold sway. Against this background it is thus most welcome that there is something of a rush of transport geography text books reaching the market at the moment. Black's (2003) *Transportation: A Geographical Analysis* and Hanson and Giuliano's (2004) *The Geography of Urban Transportation* were both well received by reviewers in this journal, and Rodrigue, Comtois and Slack's *The Geography of Transport Systems* will be published in the summer of 2006. Together these books make a formidable contribution to the education of the next generation of transport geographers. A recurring theme is the significance of transport issues to the broader endeavour of human geography, and this is taken up and expanded in Knowles, Shaw and Docherty's forthcoming *Transport Geographies: An Introduction*, which advances a complementary European (i.e. policy orientated and qualitative) perspective to that of its North American counterparts.

So many text books, in such short succession! Transport geographers seem to be adhering to the often observed service pattern of Britain's buses, where after a very long wait (often in the rain) four turn up at once.

Association of American Geographers' Annual Meeting, 2007

Representatives of the TGRG are again teaming up with colleagues from the Association of American Geographers' Transportation Geography Specialty Group and the German Geographical Society's *Arbeitskreis Verkehr* to run a session at the 2007 meeting of the AAG in San Francisco in April. The session will be on Transport and Governance, and an official call for papers will be issued soon (see www.abdn.ac.uk/tgrg).

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doi:10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2006.06.006