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Transport geographies: Mobilities, flows and spaces

In this column in Volume 14 (5) of the *Journal of Transport Geography*, I remarked on the very positive development that three English language transport geography textbooks had been published between 2003 and 2006. Since writing those words I am pleased to report that one German language text book has also been published (Nuhn and Hesse, 2006 – see *Arbeitskreis Verkehr* Page, Vol. 14 (6)) and another, co-authored by long-time Transport Geography Research Group (TGRG) collaborator Matthias Gather, is due out this year. Also due for publication this year, in December, is the first British-based transport geography text book since the second edition of *Modern Transport Geography* edited by Brian Hoyle and Richard Knowles in 1998. *Transport Geographies: Mobilities, Flows and Spaces* (Blackwell, 2007) is edited by Richard Knowles, myself and Iain Docherty and brings together 27 renowned authors. Contributors wrote their chapters from universities in Australia, China, England, Germany, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South Africa and the USA.

Our aim in the book is to provide a general introduction to key ideas, concepts and themes of the various geographies of transport. High in our minds has been to stress their relations both to the discipline of geography more broadly and to complementary areas of study such as economics, engineering, environmental studies, political science, psychology, spatial planning, sociology and transport studies. The book is generally qualitative in approach and draws upon a range of case study material – much of which has a strong policy focus – from across Europe and beyond. We have been careful to shape the contents to be complementary to the substantial body of more quantitative and model based analyses traditionally associated with transport geography.

The contributions are research-based and wide ranging, and the book is divided into three sections. The first of these sets out some 'fundamentals'. In addition to a brief introduction situating transport geography at the heart of the geographical endeavour, we include contributions based around the three 'pillars' of sustainability – namely the economy, the environment and society – as this captures many of the key linkages between transport and other significant areas of geographical research. Also contained in this section is a chapter on transport governance, analysing matters arising as states and other authorities grapple with the complexities of regulating transport activities and their impacts.

The second section considers in more detail major transport flows and their geographical consequences apparent at different spatial scales. Issues of mobility and accessibility are recurring themes, as are economic, environmental and social concerns. Our selection of spatial scales is of course contestable – we have, for example, chosen to focus on the 'urban' and the 'rural' rather than the 'local' – but those chosen strike a balance between the demands of the transport-related and the geographical elements of the subject matter. Rounding off the section are chapters considering transport choices and activities taking place across space from the local to the global: an investigation into why we travel the way we do sits alongside an analysis of transport in tourism.

The final section covers the possible trajectories of both global transport trends and the sub-discipline of transport geography. The main thrust is that seemingly inexorable increases in the mobility of the human race and the continuing refinement of our understanding about travel and transport behaviour, its impacts and its geographies, provide a wealth of opportunities for transport geographers to influence intellectual and policy agendas improving transport experiences around the world.

The book will be published in time for use in courses beginning in January 2008, and we hope it makes a useful contribution to the education of transport geographers and others in universities and colleges around the world.

Reference

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Jon Shaw
School of Geography,
University of Plymouth,
Drake Circus, Plymouth PL4 8AA,
England, UK
E-mail address: jon.shaw@plymouth.ac.uk

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