Available online at www.sciencedirect.com
ScienceDirect
Journal of Transport Geography 16 (2008) 376–377
JOURNAL OF TRANSPORT GEOGRAPHY
www.elsevier.com/locate/jtrangeo

TGRG Page

Geography and mobilities

The recent annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Boston in April 2008 provided, as always, many opportunities for transport geographers to exchange thoughts and information about their current activities. In keeping with longstanding tradition, sessions involving other study groups were arranged, and key among them was the panel discussion *Transport meets Mobilities* organised by the Transport Geography Specialty Group of the AAG, the Transport Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) and the Transport Working Group of the German Geographical Society. The idea was to bring together well known academics associated with transport geography on the one hand and 'mobilities' on the other to address four key questions about the relationship between the two areas of scholarship:

- To what extent are transport geography and mobilities compatible?
- How far do they already coincide?
- How far is it desirable/practicable/profitable for them to coincide?
- What are potential ways forward in terms of theoretical and methodological development and empirical data collection?

The panel – which was comprised of Andy Goetz and Tim Schwanen (transport geography) and Rob Kitchin, Tim Cresswell and Sven Kesselring (mobilities) – worked through a series of considerations ranging from stereotypical and actual characterisations of each topic, through examples of *de facto* cross-fertilisation to ways in which both areas might be strengthened by a greater appreciation of each other's strengths. One important point with regard to characterisation was that heterogeneity already evident within both transport geography and mobilities is often overlooked, to the extent that transport geographers often regard mobilities scholarship as too cultural and by the same token mobilities scholars often regard transport geography as too traditional. Recent work drawing on both the traditional and the cultural – see, for example, Jain and Lyons' (2008) paper on conceptualising travel time as a 'gift' – demonstrates both that transport geography is a broader church than many assume and that there are clear benefits to be derived from marrying the skill sets of scholars who know about transport networks and flows with those expert in understanding their spaces and utilities.

The panel was agreed that it is useful to conceive of mobility as a key conceptual idea within geography – alongside space, place, scale, landscape, etc. – since it is undeniable that mobility in its various forms is crucial to the geography of many human and physical activities. And in conceiving of mobility in this way, a significant opportunity for transport geographers to reposition themselves within broader human geography endeavours presents itself, although here the difference between traditional concerns about *movement* and more recent, innovative ideas of *mobility* – which add to movement layers of meaning in relation to politics, sociology, the production and utilisation of travel space and so on – is of course crucial to take on board. The intention of the panel session's convenors is to produce in more detail a record of the discussion for publication in advance of a more significant paper session at next year's AAG Annual Meeting in Las Vegas.

Ten years of sustainable transport in the UK?

July 1998 saw the publication of *A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone*, the first British Transport White Paper for 20 years, which was supposed to herald the dawn of a new approach to transport policy emphasising public transport, walking and cycling at the expense of private modes. Commentary on the White Paper and its successors across the UK has been voluminous – and includes a special collection of papers by TGRG members in *Geography* – although large-scale analyses of progress across all modes have been harder to come by. TGRG Chair Iain Docherty and I have recently renewed our collaboration to edit a new collection of essays assessing the Labour government's performance in transport in the decade since the publication of *A New Deal for Transport*. The resulting book, *Traffic Jam: Ten Years of 'Sustainable' Transport in the UK* (Docherty and Shaw, 2008), represents a recast and completely rewritten version of our previous volume on the same subject, *A New Deal for Transport? The UK's Struggle with the Sustainable Transport Agenda* (Docherty and Shaw, 2003).

doi:10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2008.06.001

In that book the mood was one of optimistic critique, recognising the difficulty of mobilising quickly what was in transport terms a cutting-edge agenda. This time, however, there is discernable frustration in the tenor of the contributions; while there has been progress in some areas, the core argument is that after 10 years and several high profile statements of intent the Westminster government should by now have achieved a considerable amount more than it has. It is perhaps more difficult to judge the devolved administrations – Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London were granted their own parliaments/assemblies in 1999/2000 – as there is an extent to which they have been 'finding their feet' in a new political environment, although the former Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, showed that it is possible to hit the ground running. *Traffic Jam*, which contains 11 new and bespoke chapters written by experienced transport academics and a foreword by acclaimed transport journalist Christian Wolmar, is published in October 2008 by the Policy Press. It is available for pre-order on a number of sites including Amazon.

References

Docherty, I., Shaw, J. (Eds.), 2003. A New Deal for Transport? The UK's Struggle with the Sustainable Transport Agenda. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.

Docherty, I., Shaw, J. (Eds.), 2008. Traffic Jam: 10 Years of 'Sustainable' Transport in the UK. Policy Press, Bristol.

Jain, J., Lyons, G., 2008. The gift of travel time. Journal of Transport Geography 16 (2), 81–89.

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