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Transport Geography Research Group at the 2014 RGS-IBG conference

The Transport Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society (with Institute of British Geographers) put together a packed conference session for the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2014. Topics ranged across most of the concerns of the transport geography community – from socio-technical niches in parking policies, air travel, ports and freight to cross-disciplinary interests such as mobilities and livelihoods in developing countries, automobility, energy and climate change and transport justice. Several of the sessions were explicitly linked to the overall conference theme of *Geographies of Co-Production*.

Given that this conference had the greatest number of TGRG-sponsored sessions ever, it would be impossible to do full justice to the entire content in this short article. Below is a summary of the key highlights from these sessions. Information about all the TGRG sponsored sessions can be found on the TGRG website (tgrg.wordpress.com), where many of the sessions also have full write-ups by their convenors with downloadable author presentations.

A Knowledge Exchange Event with the UK Department for Transport (DfT) kicked off our TGRG activities on the day before the official RGS-IBG conference commenced. This was a return event from last year, loosely based around the Group's conference programme, back by popular request from the DfT. This year's event was more tightly focused, mixing academic and policy-maker presentations with poster sessions. This winning formula proved even more popular than last year, with an excellent turn out from DfT staff, including its Deputy Chief Scientific Advisor Miles Elsden, and UK-based and international academics. TGRG thanks Peter Jones and his team at University College London for organising the event and providing drinks for the post-event networking session.

Day 1 of the conference featured the annual Hoyle Lecture and drinks reception, as well as the TGRG Annual General Meeting. This year's Hoyle lecture was given by Jon Shaw (Plymouth University) and Iain Docherty (University of Glasgow): a lively double-act presenting to a packed room. They gave an entertaining and (semi-auto) ethnographical account of their recent book *The Transport Debate* (Shaw and Docherty, 2014). Whilst in many ways this book is a follow up to their edited volume *Traffic Jam* (Docherty and Shaw, 2008), *The Transport Debate* takes a radically different approach, structured around vignette accounts of a fictional family, the Smiths, and their day-to-day travel choices, and synthesising their ultimate policy recommendations by combining insights from the mobilities field with more traditional transport research.

Day 1 also featured three linked sessions on air transport under the heading of *Air Transport Liberalisation and Airline Network Dynamics*, convened by Anne Graham (University of Westminster) and Frédéric Dobruszkes (Free University of Brussels). These included 12 presentations, attracting an audience of 20–25 geographers and experts working in cognate disciplines. There were three sub-themes: Emerging/developing markets, European studies, and Europe looking outwards. The sessions attracted a diverse range of international speakers from countries including the UK, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Greece, Poland and China. The impact of air transport liberalisation was considered for a number of different regions and countries such as Africa, China, Central and Eastern Europe, and for traffic flows between Europe and countries including Morocco, Tunisia, Russia and Turkey. Various aspects of airline networks were discussed, particularly in terms of connectivity, competition, dependency and the role of low cost carriers. A concluding session brought together the common threads of the sessions and identified possible future research directions.

The *Urban and Suburban Geographies of Ageing* double session, organised by Debbie Lager, Bettina van Hoven (both University of Groningen), Chiara Negrini (Kingston University) and Tim Schwanen (University of Oxford), was sponsored by the Urban Geography Research Group and the Geographies of Health Research Group, but was also of interest and importance to transport geographers. The session brought together geographers engaged with mobilities and immobilities in old age. It looked at the transport dimension and the experiences of older people in navigating the outdoor environment and discussed a variety of issues around (minority) older adults (i.e., ethnicity and sexual orientation) and urban design, in particular housing and spatial distributions of older populations. Both slots were well attended and marked a renewed engagement among geographers with the different socio-spatial configurations and inequalities of later life.

A double session on *Evaluating Transport-related Policies and Practices*, convened by Lisa Davison (University of Ulster) and Marcus Enoch (Loughborough University) rounded off the day 1 programme. A total of 8 presentations covered themes of impact evaluation of different public transport modes, modelling and monitoring change, adapting policies to account for trends as diverse as new forms of mobility or the ageing population, monitoring travel plans and unintended transport impacts of regeneration.

Day 2 featured a post-graduate research session of current and emerging research in transport that was organised by our TGRG postgraduate student representative Joanna Elvy (Institute of Transport Studies at Leeds University). Lisa Davison (outgoing TGRG Treasurer from University of Ulster) and Angela Curl (incoming TGRG Secretary from University of Glasgow) organised a session exploring the conference theme of co-production in relation to how transport geographers work as and with co-producers of knowledge including with policy makers, the public, other geographers or other transport fields, and finally the social impact of work related travel (organised by Juliet Jain and Billy Clayton, both

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University of the West of England, as a joint session with the Gender and Feminist Geographies Research Group (GFGRG)). This session included five interesting papers on some of the family and gender impacts of work-related mobility, particularly migration and long-distance, high frequency business travel. There was also a session on the *Blurring Boundaries Between Physical and Digital Spaces* organised by Jacek Pawlak and John Polak (both Imperial College London). This was a varied session, ranging through visualisation techniques, the challenges of utilising Big Data in transport research, and explorations of the effect of digital technologies on behaviour in physical space and how to harness this.

The well-attended double session on *Transport and Energy* built on this similarly popular theme from last year's conference. It was organised through the continuing collaboration between Robin Lovelace (University of Leeds) for the TGRG and Stewart Barr (University of Exeter) from the Energy Geographies Working Group (EGWG), this year including Noel Cass and James Faulconbridge (both Lancaster University) as co-organisers. The sessions comprised 10 excellent presentations on a range of different modes of travel, scales of analysis and methodological approaches. Divided roughly equally between empirical and theoretical perspectives, topics included the transport energy demand implications of shopping journeys, the transition to low-emission vehicles, the problem of reducing energy use by the aviation industry, modelling emissions savings potential of a dramatic shift to cycling in the UK, the relationship between mobility and the temporal/spatial sequencing of practices, the impact of residential location on mobility, the carbon implications of rural lifestyles, the car as a consumption object and the implications for low carbon automobility, and finally car-sharing in Sydney.

Day 3 saw a first time collaboration, at least in recent years, on three sessions with the Developing Areas Research Group (DARG) exploring *Mobilities and Livelihoods in Developing Urban Contexts* (co-convened by Gina Porter (Durham University) and Karen Lucas (University of Leeds)). The wide-ranging discussions amongst the presenters and participants generated by the 13 papers presented in these sessions indicates the value of bringing together researchers whose approach and prime focus may differ, but whose common concern is to understand and contribute towards improving the lives of marginalized residents of rapidly developing urban areas. We hope to continue this debate through a special issue to bring together the different disciplinary perspectives contributing to this important emerging area in transport geography.

There were also two further TGRG sponsored sessions on day 3 concerned with freight and logistics. The first double time slot looked at the *Geography of Port System Evolution* (convened by Jason Monios (Napier University) and Gordon Wilmsmeier (UN-ECLAC Chile)). This was followed by a double time slot on the *Modal Variety of Cities and Regions* (convened by Cesar Ducruet (French National Centre for Scientific Research) and Wouter Jacobs (ITMM, Antwerp)). The TGRG sessions during the conference ended with a five-paper session on the integration of parking and public transport strategies (convened by Graham Parkhurst and Billy Clayton (both University of West of England) with Marc Dijk (Maastricht University)).

References

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