

T²M

International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility



Photo 1 and 2: Perpignan-Figueras flying junction (Ingerop) and dual gauge track in Spain (Talgo)

Newsletter

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Editorial:

Like every member of T2M you may have sent a proposal for the conference to be held in Madrid. Waiting to the answer of the local organizers and because you are a transport specialist, you impatiently plan your trip to Madrid. How will you get there? If you live in Europe, you may find an interest in using train. Except if you come from Portugal, two surprises await you on the rails. First, Spanish and French trains do not share the same track gauge! Various solutions can help you to cross the frontier, such as dual gauge tracks. For the new high-speed lines, the European standard gauge has been adopted. But the second problem arises there: French trains drive on the left whereas Spanish ones prefer the right side ! Here is the opportunity to observe a wonderful flying junction at the frontier, such as the one between Perpignan and Figueras! Like languages, technology knows translation processes, and technological choices have a powerful historical inertia.

This issue of the T2M newsletter will give you the opportunity to virtually travel from a continent to another without any problem due to the rigidity of the real world. Before a glimpse at the New York underground, you will read an interesting exchange with our Australian colleague Robert Lee, and then travel in the research done in the Southern Hemisphere with Anita Perkins!

Étienne Faugier
Claudine Moutou
Arnaud Passalacqua

newsletter@t2m.org

Deadline for copy for the next issue: **Monday 3 September 2012**



Photo 2: Robert Lee

Explaining to a wider audience how the history of transport and mobility has shaped present day, is a goal many of us share. One academic in Australia who has had significant success in this endeavour is Professor Robert Lee. Robert has been teaching Australian and Asian History to students at The University of Western Sydney since 1979. His books include a focus on railway construction in 19th century Australia and Asia, including that of the French in China.

An Interview by Claudine Moutou

In the Spotlight

I was excited to come across your book *Transport an Australian History* (2010), and noticed your personal collection of tickets illustrate the inside covers.

I did an awful lot of travelling by train as a kid. My family comes from Grafton, which is on the north coast region of New South Wales (NSW), which from Sydney was an overnight journey by train. My interest in documenting and capturing events started early, which explains why there are so many tickets. Some of the tickets go back to the 1950s. There are also tram tickets from the 1940s, which belonged to my father.

I confess I was also interested in trains as a teenager, this was the late 1960s. My mates and I travelled around NSW and took pictures, documenting the last days of steam traction.

Did these early experiences spark your academic interest in transport history?

At university I was not much involved transport history until my Honours when I decided to do my research thesis on the area my family came from. I started reading the local Grafton newspaper, *The Daily Examiner* from the period 1870s to 1890s and found out what everyone was obsessed with... transport issues. The transport issues at that time were shipping services, harbour improvements and the hope that the government would build a railway. Gallons of ink were spent discussing building a railway. This began my academic interest in shipping and railway construction.

My PhD was on the French in China. There was very little work done on this, and almost none in English. It was gloriously unfashionable at that time to look at the late 19th, early 20th century imperialism, and especially dull to focus on French engineers and bankers in China! I started my PhD in 1976, the year Mao Zedong died, so the focus was all on the Cold War, and the Cultural Revolution. But I thought it was an interesting topic, partly because of the international relations around China at that time, and the rivalry of the Western powers and Japan. The

interesting thing, for someone interested in transport history, was the extent the French Foreign Ministry was obsessed with securing concessions to build railways in China. When reading the archives I found a great deal of interesting things about the financing of the railways and the expectations of what these railways would achieve in foreign policy terms.

What research are you working on now?

I'm working on a paper on railway tourism in Australia at the moment, and also mid-way through a project on transport planning in Australia around the time of the Second World War, which had an enormous impact here as elsewhere. I also read for pleasure. I'm engrossed a big biography of Caravaggio by Peter Robb: he was a very naughty young man who travelled because of crime, something Australians can relate too, since that's the basis of our modern society. I'm also enjoying reading alternately thrillers by Agatha Christie and Raymond Chandler. It's an Anglo-American adventure and I'm enjoying the different mobility obsessions: Christie's train timetables and Chandler's southern Californian autos and boulevards.

Is there anything distinctive about an Australian perspective on transport history?

Yes. Very little writing on transport history in Australia is national. This is largely because of the organisation of transport. In Australia, railways, roads, ports, etc were built by and maintained by colonial governments, which later became state governments. At Federation in 1901, the Australian constitution vested transport responsibilities in the states. Exceptions are civil aviation which is regulated nationally due to the package of international treaties signed in Paris 1919, and aspects of road transport because of the federal government's power to levy excise on fuel. The writing of transport history in Australia reflects this state focus, which is different to other federations.

As the organisation of transport has influenced the writing of Australian transport history, does it also reflect how we protect transport history?

We do not have national museum that looks at transport, apart from the National Maritime Museum in Sydney. However there are state-based museums of varying quality and resources. Queensland probably has the best at Ipswich, although not the finest collection.

I love museums but they are difficult things. The antiquarian interest is a wonderful and if I had more space I would be a collector. Thankfully, my collection of transport tickets only occupies a shoe box. But museums need to be more than just the artefacts. They need to tell a story about how artefacts and people have related, and their impact on life and the environment. Museums have to appeal to a wide audience, and therefore compromises often have to be made.

I found the exercise of writing labels for museum exhibits a fascinating one - it is very strict with rigid word limits. I really had to be clear about the point I wanted to make. I also tried to do it differently from how it had been done in many Australian transport museums. I focused more on social history, and when I wrote about the technical history, I tried to emphasise how it was not uniquely Australian by showing international linkages and influences.

So why should transport history matter?

It matters to Australians because we are a country that is so dependent upon people to reach or move around. Virtually all of our history is dependent upon people in one way or another to

reach this vast continent or move around within it. Migration is a major theme.

Our indigenous populations, the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders both have a maritime past. Then the colonisation of Australia in 1788, which quickly became the world's classiest gaol, happens quite late in the history of European expansion abroad. From the 1830s most people came here voluntarily. Most came by ship at great personal risk. We have a lot of ship wrecks, especially on the south eastern coast. More recently we have refugees travelling by boat to escape conflict. I wrote about refugees in the Transport book, which I think surprised some people. It is an important aspect about what transport is about, relocation.

Are you observing a new generation of students interested in transport history?

I wish I could say yes, but I can't really. The most enthusiastic of my students are interested in transport policy rather than the social side of transport.

What about mobility as a concept?

I have been trying to push a focus on mobility and tried to get mobility in the title of my book but my publisher wouldn't agree. They said the public would think it was about people who cannot walk. It will take a while for mobility as a concept, to be part of how Australians see their history and present.

That said Australia is an intensely mobile society. Australians travel a lot within their country, and they also travel abroad a lot. Changes in the affordability of international travel have led to this experience of dual identity, with many migrants retaining close relationships with the countries of their ancestors, far more than used to be the case.

There is talk of the T²M conference coming to Sydney sometime in the future. Do you think enticing academics to Australia is a challenge?

If T²M does come to Australia they can be assured of a very warm welcome and a fascinating time when they get here. I think all former colonies are interesting for their cultural mix. You have the imprint of the imperial power. You have the indigenous life and culture, whose level of state organisation and resilience varies enormously from place to place within the same country. You also have technological adaption from the West into a colonial environment. Colonial and semi-colonial countries are interesting places, and Australia is a fascinating example.

But yes, it can be a challenge getting academics to visit. It is a bit like the Irish potato famine in the 1840s: European scholars, like the Irish refugees find it cheaper and faster to travel to America than to come to Australia. The fares are going to be expensive but much less expensive than they would have been before the Second World War. The price for the Qantas flying boat ticket from Sydney to London in 1938 was 100 pounds one-way and took a week. Nowadays it will not take 10 weeks' salary each way, and it will not take a week to get here, but it is still a long journey. It is however worth doing for the experience. It does inspire awe that we can cross the world in 24 hours.

President's Page

Dear colleagues,

Five days ago, the Berlin Government had to go public and to confess that the new Berlin Airport will not be opened in June 2nd, but (maybe much) later. Till today, it does not dare to offer a new opening date.

This headline "catastrophe" underlines again that we choose the right topic for our research. Transport and mobility studies experience growing interest and importance, not at least to understand and to explain the public the catastrophes of and in transport infrastructures.

Consequently, the German transport history network declared airports to the topic of their next annual meeting (January 17-18, 2013 at Airport Frankfurt, suggestions for papers have to go to Christopher Kopper).

More general, the number and quality of mobility conferences is growing at a rapid pace. Just have a look at the following workshop and conferences:

In *March*:

Models of Mobility (York University, Canada), March 2012.

<http://www.ghi-dc.org/files/pdf/2012/mobility/program.pdf>

Local and mobile: Linking mobilities, mobile communication and locative media.

Third Mobilities Conference 2012 of the Pan-American Mobilities Network and the Cosmobilities Network (March 16-18 2012) at NC State University.

In the *coming months*, we are waiting for a couple of new conferences

(see <http://t2m.org/news-from-the-field/forthcoming-conferences/>), including the:

Travel Ideals: Engaging with spaces and mobility.

An inaugural conference of the Travel Research Network (University of Melbourne, 18-20 July 2012)

<http://www.travelresearchnetwork.com/conference2012.html>

Revisiting the Transportation Revolution. Annual Meeting of the Economic History Association in Vancouver/British Columbia (September 21-23, 2012) <http://eh.net/eha/meetings/2012-meeting>

Most important and in the core of any transport and mobility study event is the **deadline** of the call for papers for our annual conference in Madrid (November 15-18, 2012). The deadline is May 20th. You still have a chance to send in your proposal under submissions@t2m.org, if you haven't done so.

I wish you a good summer and the selection of your proposed paper in Madrid,

Yours Hans Dienel



T²M Travel Grants & Awards

John Scholes Transport History Research Essay Prize

The John Scholes Prize, of up to £250 (pounds Sterling), is awarded annually to the writer of an unpublished essay based on original research into any aspect of the history of transport and mobility. The prize is intended for recent entrants to the profession and may be awarded to the writer of one outstanding article, or be divided between two or more entrants.

Publication in the *Journal of Transport History* will be at the discretion of the Editor and subject to the normal refereeing process.

The prize is funded by the Transport History Research Trust in memory of John Scholes. John was the first Curator of Historical Relics at the British Transport Commission. The prize is awarded by the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility (T²M – www.t2m.org)

Eligibility

Entry is limited to researchers who, at the time of submission, are not in a permanent / tenured academic (or equivalent) position, and who have not published either an academic monograph or an essay in a major academic journal.

Entries

Essays (in English, double-spaced) must not exceed 8,000 words (including footnotes). Sources must be documented fully. Entries must be submitted electronically, to arrive no later than Friday **29 June 2012**. They should not bear any reference to the author or institutional affiliation.

Senior scholars will judge entries against criteria of originality, thoroughness and excellence of argument, source use, composition and illustration. The judges will not enter into correspondence.

Entries for the prize should be sent to the *JTH* Editor at jth.editorial@gmail.com. A cover letter and a one-page CV must demonstrate eligibility for the prize. The subject line of the message should read 'John Scholes Prize entry'.

Society of Automotive Historians, Richard Scharchburg Student Paper Award, 2012

Deadline: June 11 2012

In order to encourage research and writing effort among university students in the area of automotive history, the Society confers its annual award for the best student paper in the auto history field.

The award is named for Richard Scharchburg, the late Professor of History at Kettering University, eminent automotive historian, and past president of the Society of Automotive Historians. Persons submitting papers must be enrolled at educational institutions (upper-class undergraduate or graduate level) at the time of submission. This competition is international in scope, but papers must be in the English language. Papers already published or scheduled for publication will not be accepted.

Manuscripts should not exceed 10,000 words, and should be double-spaced. An abstract is requested. Judging criteria include clear statement of purpose and testable hypothesis, accuracy

and thoroughness of research, originality of the research, documentation, quality and extent of bibliographic resources, and writing style.

Diagrams, graphs, or photographs may be included. Submissions are to be electronic, in Word 1997-2003 format or pdf files only, to the e-mail address below.

Possible subjects include but are not limited to historical aspects of automobile companies and their leaders, regulation of the auto industry, financial and economic aspects of the industry, the social effects of the automobile, highway development, environmental matters, and automotive marketing, design, engineering and safety.

A cover letter should be included stating the student's address, school, program, advisor, and stage in studies. The student should indicate how the paper submitted will relate to his or her professional future. Submissions must e-mail dated by 11 June 2012. All papers submitted will be acknowledged.

Upon recommendation of the judges, the winning paper will considered for publication in the Society's Automotive History Review. The award consists of a plaque and a cash prize of \$500.00.

Submissions should be sent to:

John A. Heitmann, Ph.D, Chair, Student Awards Committee

Department of History

University of Dayton

300 College Park

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jheitmann1@udayton.edu

Tel: [937-229-2803](tel:937-229-2803)

Fax: [937-229-2816](tel:937-229-2816)

News

Lectureship in the History of Transport and Mobility

The Institute of Railway Studies & Transport History is pleased to announce (despite the misleading header to the advert!) a lectureship in the history of transport and mobility:

Qualified to PhD level and ideally holding (or prepared to study for) an appropriate teaching qualification, you will have an emerging publication record in Modern History from 1800 and be able to demonstrate experience of undertaking research, research supervision and the acquisition of research funding. In addition, you should have proven experience of taking responsibility for teaching and learning at undergraduate and postgraduate level and be able to provide evidence of successful course planning, design and delivery across a range of modules. Given York's collegial nature, you must demonstrate a willingness to work proactively with colleagues in other departments and institutions.

The intended start date is 1 October 2012 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Contact: colin.divall@york.ac.uk

Glasgow Riverside Museum wins Luigi Micheletti Award

Congratulations to the Glasgow Riverside Museum: Scotland's Museum of Transport and Travel who recently won the Luigi Micheletti Award. The Luigi Micheletti Award is a European prize for innovative museums in the fields of technology, labour and social history. The Riverside Museum was praised for its approach to topic matter and displays, the interaction with the community, use of space and new technology. The Riverside Museum incorporates the previous Museum of Transport whilst expanding the collection two fold.

Journal of Transport History

The next edition of the JTH carries six papers in surface transport with a strong policy orientation:

Constructing the cyclist: ideology and representations in urban traffic planning in Stockholm, 1930–70 by Martin Emanuel.

Cycling as heritage: representing the history of cycling in the Netherlands by Manuel Stoffers

When cycling gets political: building cycling paths in Germany and the Netherlands, 1910–1940 by Anne Ebert.

‘Call of the beaches’: rail travel and the democratisation of holidays in interwar New Zealand by Neill Atkinson.

The Australian Standard Garratt: the engine that brought down a government by Bobbie Oliver.

‘Starvation strings’ and the public good: development of a Swedish bike trail network in the early twentieth century by Anna-Maria Rautio & Lars Östlund.

In keeping with standard practice, each paper sent to the JTH is peer-reviewed before being accepted for publication. Referees selected for their professional expertise scrutinise papers for their contribution to intellectual debate, for rigorous and lucid argumentation (including contextualization and evidence), and for appropriate and high-quality prose, illustration and citation.

The JTH also publishes occasional reviews of museums and exhibitions, and regular book reviews.

As the official journal of the T2M association, members receive copies of the twice-annual JTH as part of their membership subscription to T2M.

The home-page of the Journal contains links to author submission guidelines and to current and back-copies: <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/journals/journal.asp?id=4>

Address all queries and submissions to the Editor, Gordon Pirie, at jth.editorial@gmail.com
back-copies: <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/journals/journal.asp?id=4>

Address all queries and submissions to the Editor, Gordon Pirie, at jth.editorial@gmail.com.

Transfers

Although the contents were already accessible to subscribers online, a glitch at the printer's made the first issue of Volume 2 of *Transfers* only very recently appear in print. Subscribers can expect to receive the issues any day now. For those of the T²M members who have not yet taken a subscription the subscription form is given here, as well as the content overviews of the last two issues of 2011. You can help the journal break even by asking your university library to take an institutional subscription.

T2M members can subscribe to *Transfers* at a discounted rate.

Gijs Mom

Editor, *Transfers*

Transfers Interdisciplinary Journal of Mobility Studies Volume 2 • Issue 1 • Spring 2012

Editorial

Gijs Mom, Georgine Clarsen and Cotten Seiler

Articles

Thinking Mobility, Marc Augé

Off-grid Mobilities: Incorporating a Way of Life, Phillip Vannini and Jonathan Taggart

Airports as Urban Narratives: Toward a Cultural History of Global Infrastructures,
Nathalie Roseau

Special Section on Roads

My Way or the Highway: Introduction to the Special Section on Roads, Thomas Zeller

Building a Hybrid Highway System: Road Infrastructure as an Instrument of Economic Urbanization in Belgium, Michael Ryckewaert

European Models, Domestic Hesitance: The Renewal of the Italian Road Network in the 1920s, Massimo Moraglio

Britain and "the Motorway Club": The Effect of European and North American

Motorway Construction on Attitudes in Britain, 1930–1960, Peter Merriman

How Were Motorways Specified? A Comment on the Special Section on Roads, Maxwell Gordon Lay

Mobility and Art

When Bicycles Become both Attitude and Form, Rosanna Dematté

Exhibition Review

L'art de l'automobile, chefs-d'oeuvre de la collection Ralph Lauren, Paul Smith

Movie Review

Vietnamese Cinema on the Move: Representing Mobility and Circulating Movies in Vietnam and Abroad, Stéphanie Ponsavady

Ideas in Motion

Cycling: Image and Imaginary in the Cultural Turn; Review Essay, Peter Cox

The Research Trends

Mobilities Research in the Southern Hemisphere

By Anita Perkins¹

A distinctive new field?

Is there something distinctive about mobilities research being carried out in the Southern Hemisphere? This question arose in the course of a conversation I had with Professor Gordon Pirie over lunch at the Berlin Transport Museum, during the inaugural T²M Summer School held in September 2011.

Two contributing factors potentially led us to this discussion. First, both historically and in contemporary times, to some people in the top half of the globe, the Southern Hemisphere is an attractive lesser known (oftentimes ‘exotic’) travel destination vis-à-vis research object. Just prior to our lunch-time conversation, for example, I had given a presentation about the writing of Georg Forster, a German ethnographer who travelled to New Zealand and other regions of the South Pacific on Captain Cook’s second major voyage of 1772-1775. Indeed, over centuries New Zealand has remained a utopic destination for German travellers, (both armchair and physical), and thus it is not surprising that New Zealand is the Guest of Honour at this year’s Frankfurt Book Fair.

The second issue which perhaps sparked our conversation was the apparent need to decentre mobilities research from some of its main Northern Hemisphere hubs. When perusing the application form for the T²M Summer School last year, I found that submissions were encouraged from students in which mobilities studies is under represented. Although this criteria would certainly not preclude participants from some Northern Hemisphere countries, as the only postgraduate student, to my knowledge conducting mobilities research in a country of a mere four million inhabitants, I felt a need to represent the faraway New Zealand. I also admit to gaining a kind of novelty status as the participant who had travelled from the furthest away destination to reach Berlin.

Researcher perspectives

So what are we, mobilities researchers located in the bottom half of the globe, actually researching? And, is it so different from the work carried out in Lancaster, Berlin or Philadelphia? What challenges and opportunities does our region afford us? One would certainly approach such questions tentatively and describe the field of mobilities studies in the Southern Hemisphere as an emerging, yet contextually rich and diverse landscape. I asked four researchers - Professor Gordon Pirie, African Centre for Cities, University of Capetown, South Africa, PhD Candidate Claudine Moutou, Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies, University of Sydney, Australia, Dr Martha Bell, Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Otago, New Zealand and Dr David Bissell, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University – about: (i) how their location in the world informs their research, (ii) their perspective on the emerging scene of mobilities research in their respective country, and (iii) what they see as potential future directions of scholarship in the Southern Hemisphere.

The influence of location on mobilities research

Pirie notes that while he is interested in the new mobilities paradigm in relation to his work on motility, this paradigm is otherwise not well known in South Africa. However, there are a number of South-African based scholars with great research strengths in the related areas of transportation studies and cross-border migration. In Sydney, Australia, Claudine Moutou is conducting work on understanding the phenomena of business opposition when suburban town centre streets are changed to accommodate more public transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. To that end, Moutou is using the concept of motility to observe how businesses exchange and create value from the accessibility features of their business street - which in Australia's car culture requires challenging the deeply held belief that businesses need car parking to survive. This highly interdisciplinary research could well serve as a nodal point from which to establish connections with other Australian researchers. She explains "I am a transport sociologist studying transport studies within a business school." David Bissell is also commencing research in Sydney: "I'm about to start a new project on commuting stress in Sydney so clearly there are going to be some significant issues coming out that relate to the social-cultural-political context of this city." In his analysis, Bissell plans to consider the difficult question of whether there is something specifically 'southern' taking place in Sydney that could be extrapolated in a way that is significant to the wider Southern Hemisphere context. Across the Tasman in New Zealand, a country well-known for the outdoor lifestyle it offers, Martha Bell works, broadly speaking, about the phenomenology of movement and the ways that physicality, ability and dis/ability have created or inhibited the social organisation of work, sport or leisure for different social groups, such as women, children, and families. For example, she is currently working on an in-depth social history of adventure racing.

Emerging research scenes in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand

'Under-researched' is a term that Pirie uses to describe the current state of mobilities studies in South Africa. As he writes on topics of urbanisation, Pirie is trying to figure out whether a traditional discipline such as English, Geography or Sociology may take advantage of "the great potential for inter-/trans-disciplinary mobility inquiry on our big, exploding continent", in spite of "the dire shortage of money, space and minds". Concerning mobilities research in New Zealand, Bell says: "Here we are faced with an intricate paradoxical history and a number of contemporary contexts to unravel. Yet, I certainly think that the area ripest for research here in NZ is sport, leisure and changing patterns of work". In my own research I compare mobile experiences in travel texts, (writing and film) in the two time periods of 1770-1830 and 1989-2010, from a cultural perspective.

Looking at these texts from a mobilities point of view can shed light on how, for example, Georg Forster's experience in New Zealand and his respect for Maori problematized barbarian/civilised cultural dichotomies in the early European context. Bissell has recently collaborated on a project with Australian-based researchers Drs Maria Hynes and Scott Sharpe on Air New Zealand's humorous safety demonstration videos, (soon to appear in *EPD Society and Space*). Bissell explains: "We have been thinking about the notion of an 'Antipodean affect' in the southern context, that is, whether there is something about the experience of mobilities in this part of the world that draws on a particularly Antipodean humour to generate particular feelings." Rather unexpectedly, Moutou's first encounter with mobilities researchers was not in Australia but in Berlin at the 2011 T2M Summer School. While somewhat unfamiliar with the emerging mobilities scene in Australia, Moutou is excited by this idea, and sees great potential to build on the already well-established transport studies scene.

Future directions of scholarship in the Southern Hemisphere

While there exist New Zealand-specific contexts for mobilities researchers, such as the culture of rugby, it is imperative to embed such studies in global processes, in Bell's opinion: "I don't think the decline in amateur rugby has occurred independently of the huge forces enhancing mobile communication and travel and that is not just referring to global professional labour migration". Moutou is not certain what direction mobilities studies in Australia or the Southern Hemisphere will take. However, she identifies a number of areas in this region that could benefit from a mobilities perspective. These include the colonial past and the migratory present, especially "the distances we need or are willing to travel to connect with what we deem our 'home' or our 'community'".

Environmental concerns in relation to everyday and international travel is also of relevance. Finally, Moutou makes a connection between the capacity of mobilities research to influence socio-cultural outcomes: "I think mobilities research could help cultivate more understanding of people's perspectives, which hopefully will reduce the ability of politicians to use it so divisively." Looking to the future, while Pirie is not entirely convinced that there will be South Africa-specific or Southern Hemisphere-specific insights made in mobilities research, "there's a discernible mood in the air that the realities of cities in the global South are about to have a significant impact on our knowledge and imaginaries".

Geographically bounded mobilities?

According to these scholars, it seems that mobilities research in the Southern Hemisphere is still in a process of emergence as we begin to establish particular contexts of research and develop Southern networks. Still, there is much to be excited about – all researchers see great potential in their respective countries of scholarship and interest is growing at a rapid pace, as the following examples from Australasia indicate: the third Aotearoa New Zealand Mobilities Symposium will be held 14-15 June, at the University of Auckland; the inaugural conference of the Travel Research Network will be held at the University of Melbourne, 18-20 July; and *Sites: a Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies* which focuses on the Pacific Region, will release a special issue on mobilities in June.

An ideal future may see mobilities research in the Southern Hemisphere responding to academic and social challenges, from the establishment of new trans-disciplinary connections in South Africa, to new political understandings of cultural diversity in Australia, to new policies that address public health and dis/ability issues in New Zealand. All in all, one thing is certain - we cannot argue with the words of Gordon Pirie: "It's a fascinating time to be around".

¹ Anita Perkins is a PhD Candidate in the German Programme of the Department of Languages and Cultures at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her current work compares mobile experiences in travel texts, (writing and film) in the two time periods of 1770-1830 and 1989-2010, from a cultural perspective. She presented at the T²M Summer School, 2012, and a number of other conferences relating to mobilities studies.

Contact: nitaturtle@gmail.com

Conference and Workshop Reports

Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) New York, USA. 27 February 2012

An enormous market of markets stretching beyond the reach of sight, where a foreign guest with only a few days has to choose where to find the best oranges, beads and parchment. That was the immediate experience of arriving at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers. The framework for the conference was the Hilton and Sheraton Hotels on Manhattan, and local hearsay estimated that there was 8.000 participants and 5.000 papers, and even if the numbers are a bit off, you still get the impression.

These conference formats probably serve different agendas, but from the point of view of a European conference novice, it seems that the association easily could have organized this as 4-5 independent meetings. However, this ocean of geographers and prospects – like myself – gives other opportunities; I was part of the session "Cultural and historical geographies of intra-urban mass transit" organized by the British historians Richard Dennis and Carlos Lopez Galviz. The session was in itself a day-long seminar within the conference, which seems to a common practice.

In our room, the Holland Suite, gathered historians, ethnographers and others interested in the cultural history of public transport. It seems that the subject has something to offer in terms of cross-inspiration. There were papers as different as the design of the underground map, the naming of Belgian metro stations, transporting the insane in Istanbul and negotiating modernity in London and Paris. An interesting study on the ethnography of the train travel advocated for democratization of aesthetic consumption, and our own T2M-members Massimo Moraglio and Martin Shiefelbusch participated, taking on the topics of public space and transport planning to the stage. It was nice to be in the company of mobility colleagues, and as a welcome guest, Gordon Pirie, editor of JTH was also spotted in the room. It was the kind of session you leave with the feeling that something more should come of it, and it seems that some of the material actually will be taken further in a conference and an anthology celebrating the London Underground, edited by the session organizers (Ed. – see Conference call for Papers in this edition).

The fact that this session was part of the AAG Annual Meeting points to the fact that geography and mobility studies is sharing fields of study, a field that seems to be growing. This was supported by another longer session organized by protagonists of the New Mobilities Paradigm, among them Mimi Sheller, Sven Kesselring and Danish sociology Professor Ole B. Jensen. The frame was a rethinking of the relation between utopian thinking and mobility, and several interesting cases were brought to light, from the power of the pedestrian to utopian city planning. Discussions were so active that time became short, and also here there was a sense that mobility is a growing field, producing new questions in almost viral patterns.

Among these are a basic one about modernity, freedom and speed. These concepts were once happily married but following recent studies, the marriage has been questioned. A line in my notebook from the session say that the speed with which we move through American cities today has not been rising significantly in the last 100 years. This question in itself could give birth to interesting discussions.

Apart from being about mobility, the two sessions also gives an impression of the diversity of the field. The conference hosted sessions and papers on such a broad range of subjects that attempting an overview would be utterly futile. Logically, globalisation and climate change was strongly represented, but other tracks seemed to go through the many presentations. An attention to new theories and new material seemed present – in a session on ideology and space, one presenter talked about Antonio Gramsci's notes in a fascist prison, while another analyzed the blockbuster movie *Inception* as an example of dreaming other worlds through space and time. Also an interesting session on squatters and the production of critical spaces took the problem of spatial politics to the fore.

The large format of the conference also made possible the attendance of prominent figures. The New York-based critical geographer Saskia Sassen was one of them, who was given the title of "honorary geographer". Sassen has a critical agenda towards globalisation, and in front of a packed lecture hall she discussed the consequences of global mobility for those who do not have access to it. Maybe her approach was symbolic of a theme running through the meeting, that could be relevant for future T2M discussions, namely the ethical and political perspectives on mobility.

Much wiser and much more tired, we left the conference, jumped in the subway and left Manhattan's grid. A giant, rewarding conference was over.

Mikkel Thelle, University of Copenhagen

A View from the Street

By Thomas Errazuriz

Sanitizing NYC Subway

He seemed to be as one of those guys that carry his house in his bags with him. He got in the subway wearing his Vietnam veteran hat and walked, as in a mission, directly to the empty seats at the end of the car. But he did not seat nor did he leave his heavy bags down. While he managed to balance the weight following the movement of the subway, he took out some napkins and hand sanitizers and carefully started to clean his seat. Not happy with scrambling every border three times, once he finished he continued with the surrounding seats and the sidewall of the car. Only then he left his bags on the hygienic surface. But the task was not yet over. Still standing, he opened one of his bags and took out the Financial Times.

After a couple of stations watching him, the last thing I was expecting -and I felt a little guilty for prejudicing- was him reading the Financial Times in his now sanitized environment. Well, he didn't. The newspaper was the last sanitizing dispositive. He squat and started to take out sheets of newspaper and placed them as a carpet over the floor. Having covered enough space around him, he took the bags that earlier had left over the clean seats and put them on the floor, over his perfectly set carpet and finally sat down.

Anybody that has lived for some years in NYC is used to find the weirdest stuff in the subway, but here there was something else. He was not just another crazy guy in the subway... ok he was, but there was something interesting about his behavior. His psychological disorder, a phobia to germs and non-sanitized environments, was an extreme symptom of what I had seen many times in NYC subway. People using napkins to avoid touching the pole, parents freaked out about their children touching things or people in the subway, or people using too much hand sanitizer. It's true that the subway system is not as clean as we would like it to be, but it is also true that there is a limit for sanitizing our environment. A phobia to germs, bacteria, viruses or any kind of invisible microorganism is at the end of the day a phobia to people, to social interaction and to public spaces.

When swine flu psychosis took over, many governments recommended people to avoid touching, hugging, shaking hands or kissing others unless it was absolutely necessary. They even suggested not to leave home. It became common to see people wearing masks in the subway and though one could not know if they were being cautious or themselves were carrying the flu, it was certain that being out there on the streets, or in public transportation had become dangerous.

Although it is clear that the Vietnam veteran who transformed his seat in order to be able to ride in the subway had probably an obsessive-compulsive disorder and mysophobia (the fear of germs), where should we draw the line about what is normal or acceptable concerning germs control? When do you stop being cautious and become a social misfit?

Living in a city and riding the subway or any other vehicle of public transportation is not only about sharing space with others, accepting a certain social order, values and norms. It is also about interchanging microorganisms on a daily basis. These can make you sick, but can also make you stronger. Not being able to grab the pole or using hand sanitizer every time there is physical contact with strangers or with public objects may not be mysophobia, but can be taken as a sign of social desadjustment or need for social seclusion.

What does the Vietnam veteran and many others too aware of microorganisms need in order to commute without the fear of being infected? One possible answer could be psychological treatment or education. Unfortunately the most common solution for those who can afford it (and why not, may be the cause of their rejection) is to drive an automobile, a privatized mobile space with nothing else but germs of our one.

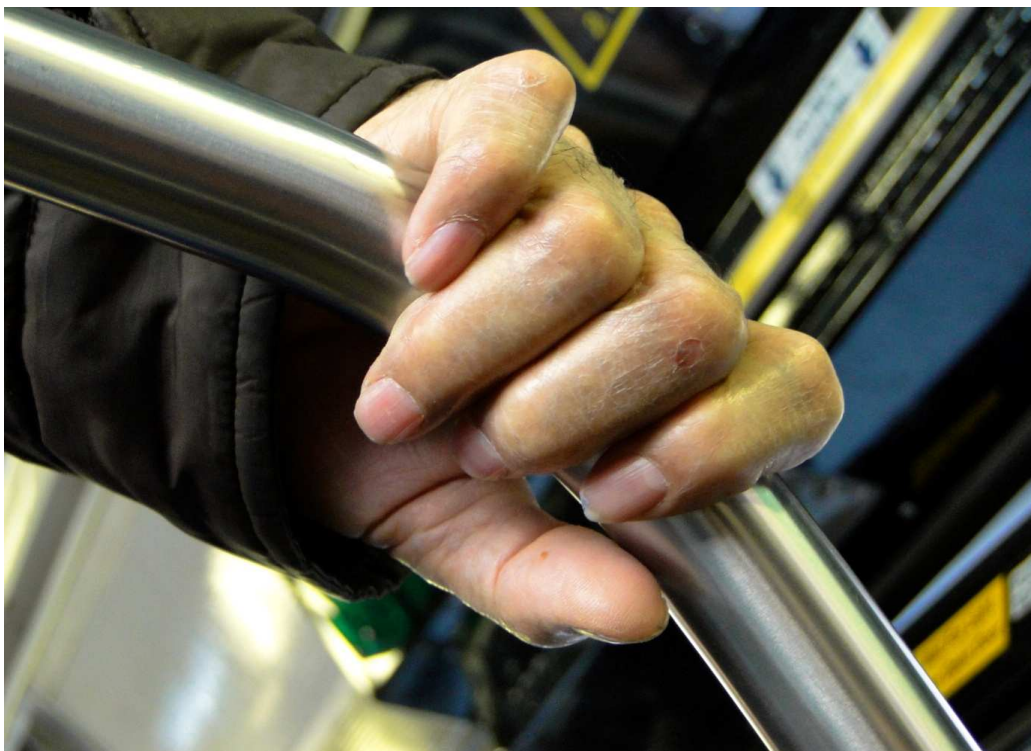


Photo 2 and 3 taken by Tomas Errazuriz

Call for Papers

CfP of the German working group on transport history – for a workshop on airport history.

Workshop des Arbeitskreises für Verkehrsgeschichte der Gesellschaft für Technikgeschichte
Titel: Flughäfen – multimodale und multifunktionale Verkehrsknotenpunkte

Datum: 17.-18. Januar 2013

Ort: Flughafen Frankfurt

Veranstalter: Fraport AG/Arbeitskreis für Verkehrsgeschichte der Gesellschaft für Technikgeschichte

Deadline: 15. Oktober 2012

Going Underground: Travel Beneath the Metropolis 1863-2013 - A Conference to Mark the 150th Anniversary of the London Underground

10 January 2013 will mark the 150th Anniversary of the public opening of the Metropolitan Railway in London. Taking the construction and opening of the Metropolitan Railway as a departure point, this conference seeks to explore the past, present and future of the London Underground from a variety of perspectives that investigate its histories, geographies, cultures, politics and social characteristics.

Please send abstracts and an author biography (including institutional affiliation) each of no more than 250 words by **Friday 13 July 2012** by email to the Centre for Metropolitan History at ihrcmh@sas.ac.uk

Transatlantic Perspectives

The German Historical Institute in Washington DC is currently developing the website Transatlantic Perspectives with the support of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The Transatlantic Perspectives aims to highlight the role of émigrés and other migrants in transatlantic institutions and networks that facilitated transfers and exchanges between Europe and the United States between 1930 and 1980. They are seeking contributors to write short encyclopedic entries for the site, and also soliciting sources, documents and images, and information about archival collections relevant to the themes of the project.

If you are working on questions of transatlantic migration and exile, transnational transfers, or mutual European-American perceptions, and are interested in contributing to this project, please contact Jan Logemann (logemann@ghi-dc.org) or Lauren Shaw (shaw@ghi-dc.org) for more information and contributor guidelines. Although ongoing, please contact then by September 15, 2012.

For more information: www.transatlanticperspectives.org

Member's Publication

Gordon Pirie, *Cultures and Caricatures of British Imperial Aviation: Passengers, Pilots, Publicity*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2012.

Cultures and caricatures of British imperial aviation assembles an unprecedented mass of scattered evidence to examine the social exclusivity of people who used private and commercial aircraft to circulate through the empire in the 1930s. While airline publicity stressed flying patriotically and in style, flying was not always slick, romantic or modern. It did not end danger or delay, nor was it necessarily progressive.

Imperial flying was mobility laced with imperious assumptions and prejudices. It reinforced social rank and continued to depend on the subservience and muscle of colonised people for regular and emergency travel assistance.

Books for the young at heart

Martin W. Sandler: *Secret Subway: The fascinating tale of an amazing feat of engineering* (National Geographic Society, Washington D.C. 2009). 96pp. Hardback. English.

This is an example of a book that can help engage young people in transport museums. It works well as a takeaway after a great day's visit or as an enticer to see the artefacts for themselves.

Classed as juvenile non-fiction, this story is about the covert building in the late 19th century of a passenger pneumatic railway under Broadway in New York. The hero of this story is the inventor Alfred Ely Beach whose visionary transport idea nearly became a reality. Built under the guise of being a mail-delivery system so as to circumvent the bureaucratic obstacle that was the politician William Marcy Tweed, construction was well under-way for the transit system until the economic depression of 1893 stopped it in its tracks.

The book is presented as an eight chapter story beginning with the problem of a large and growing New York city populace and the need for easier and quicker ways of moving around the city. It integrates technical and social history including various historical illustrations, and is best read from start to finish.

The next generation of transport professionals and 'mobilizers' will gain much inspiration and insight from this book. It is a reminder that visionary transport ideas need a dose of good fortune and persistent effort to see them materialise.

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