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## AK Verkehr Page 2014 in the Journal of Transport Geography

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The German AK Verkehr has been going through a challenging time. Regular readers of this page may have noticed in last year's report that there was no annual AK Verkehr conference in 2012. This year's bad news is that the 13th annual conference, scheduled for 7 June 2013 in Aachen, did not take place, although it had been perfectly organised by Cordula Neiberger (RWTH Aachen University). It was titled 'Freight Transport and Logistics in the Context of Globalisation, Digitalisation and Climate Change', and the focus on freight transport and logistics is likely to have been the reason for the lack of registrations that eventually led to the cancellation of the conference at short notice. While freight transport and logistics are clearly extremely important issues for transport geography, few colleagues in the wider scene of the AK Verkehr pursue research in this direction.

Another challenge is transport research funding. The early years of AK Verkehr around the turn of the millennium were strongly fuelled by a stream of young researchers entering the arena. Their PhD research and other projects were funded by large-scale programmes set up by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), including programmes such as 'Mobility in Agglomerations' or 'Leisure Transport'. Now the focus of the Ministry appears to have shifted towards technological applications, such as electric vehicles or smart technologies for the elderly. Consortium leaders are often transport companies, consultants, software developers or urban regions rather than universities, and while many projects still include interesting facets for geographers' contributions, their scientific motivation often takes second place to their economic and industrial value. Last year's general elections led to a distinct change on the political level as well, as the former BMVBS (Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development) is now named BMVI (Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure). This means that the link between transport and urban development/housing that had been established under Chancellor Schröder in 1998 has been dissolved. Building and housing are now to be represented by the Federal Ministry of the Environment (now BMUB), and practical reorganisation is still under way.

The AK Verkehr held a meeting in Dortmund on 13 February 2014, the first day of the Second Dortmund Conference in Spatial Planning. The meeting served to elect new speakers and discuss ideas for new arrangements and activities. As of this meeting, Mathes Wilde (Goethe University Frankfurt am Main) and Joachim Scheiner (Technische Universität Dortmund) joined

the board of speakers, while Markus Hesse (University of Luxembourg) resigned after ten years at his own request. The ideas discussed included publishing a newsletter (or at least regular messages) via a mailing list, intensifying contact with practitioners, defining broader rather than clear-cut calls for annual conferences so as to attract more colleagues from various backgrounds, relaunching the AK website ([www.geographie.de/vgdh/verkehr/](http://www.geographie.de/vgdh/verkehr/)), cooperating with other working groups in German and international geography as well as beyond geography (sociology, environmental psychology etc), and motivating young researchers to join the board of speakers (as exemplified by the immediate election of Mathes Wilde).

The next AK Verkehr conference will be held in Erfurt on 12-13 March 2015, immediately preceding the BUVKO congress (Federal Congress on the Environment and Transport). The AK conference will be hosted by Mathias Gather (FH Erfurt) and jointly organised by Cordula Neiberger and Joachim Scheiner. It will also focus on Transport and the Environment. It has already been decided that the follow-up conference will take place in Dortmund in 2016, hosted by Joachim Scheiner. Further activities may be hosted at the 59th German Geographentag (now called Deutscher Kongress für Geographie) on 1-6 October 2015 in Berlin. AK Verkehr members were also involved in setting up two sessions at this year's meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Tampa, Florida. In both sessions, 'Understanding Transport Policy' and 'The Metropolitan Transport Challenge: Transport Policy, Practice and Analysis', the empirical and theoretical implications of the multiple challenges to transport policy were discussed.

The Dortmund Conference in Spatial Planning, to which the AK Verkehr meeting in February was linked, also deserves a few words at this point. The conference is jointly organised by the Faculty of Spatial Planning, Technische Universität Dortmund, and the Academy for Spatial Research and Planning, Hannover. This year it was devoted to "Services of General Interest and Spatial Planning". The conference included two paper sessions on Transport and Mobility. Further, a workshop series including six sessions on 'Mobility Biographies and Mobility Socialisation' was linked to the conference. This workshop series was organised by Kay Axhausen, Christian Holz-Rau, Martin Lanzendorf and Joachim Scheiner.

Pegasus is also alive and well (not the horse). It has grown to be a large network involving young researchers in transport and mobility issues from various disciplines (see [www.pegasus-netzwerk.de/](http://www.pegasus-netzwerk.de/)). There is no formal relationship between the Pegasus network and AK Verkehr, but intense personal exchange. As announced in last year's report (Le Bris et al., 2013), the annual Pegasus meeting 2013 took place in Frankfurt am Main on 11-12 October. It was devoted to 'Mobility Research – A World between Stagnation and Change'. Similar to the preceding years, the conference included a mix of lecture presentations in eight sessions, fast track (5 minute presentations) and mobility cafés (group discussions). The reporter heard from several participants that it was an exciting conference with a wide scope of themes, the clear majority of presentations being placed within the framework of environmental and social sustainability issues. It is part of the special character of the Pegasus conferences that they provide an excellent opportunity for open and unconstrained exchange on early-stage research. The next Pegasus annual conference will be held on 10-11 October in Karlsruhe. The theme of this year's call for papers is 'Integrated Research on Mobility – Challenges for Interdisciplinary Cooperation'(see [www.pegasus-netzwerk.de/?page\\_id=22](http://www.pegasus-netzwerk.de/?page_id=22)).

The highly regarded European Transport Conference (ETC) was hosted by Goethe University Frankfurt am Main for the first time from 30 September to 2 October 2013, which we largely owe to Martin Lanzendorf. As usual, ETC covered an extremely broad range of transport-related topics in research, policy and practice, and included an attractive package of socialising and networking opportunities. Young researchers from Pegasus and AK Verkehr were involved in the

ETC in terms of organising the successful Young Researchers' and Practitioners' Forum (YRPF), which included the chance to present early-stage ideas and experimental projects with more time for discussion than in the usual international conference formats. The follow-up conferences in 2014 (29 September to 1 October) and 2015 will also be held in Frankfurt. The upcoming conference will again include a YRPF, organised by Annika Busch-Geertsema, Thomas Klinger, Mathes Wilde (all at Goethe University Frankfurt), and Maik Hömke (ETH Zürich). This time the focus will be on 'Stability and Change in Travel Behaviour and Transport Opportunities: Perspectives from European Young Professionals'.

#### Reference

Le Bris, J., Busch-Geertsema, A., Neiberger, C., 2013. AK Verkehr page, *Journal of Transport Geography* 30, 248-249.