
AK Verkehr Page 2016 in the Journal of Transport Geography

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Since last year's AK Verkehr page was published, AK Verkehr has been involved in two major events. The first was the Deutscher Kongress fuer Geographie (DKG, German Congress for Geography) in Berlin, and the second was the annual AK Verkehr conference, which was held in Dortmund this time.

The DKG was the 59th in a long-standing tradition of biannual meetings of German-speaking geographers. It was held from 1-6 October 2015 at Humboldt Universitaet zu Berlin. Transport geographers contributed with a substantial number of sessions and presentations, in which several members of AK Verkehr were actively involved. The transport sessions covered various aspects of transport, including the individual and geographical preconditions for sustainable mobility, pathways to sustainable and social transport policy, environmental fairness in the transport sector, multi-optional mobility, sustainable tourism and leisure transport, and biographical perspectives on mobility, housing and work.

The annual AK Verkehr conference has also attained a certain longevity in its tradition. This year's was the 14th in the series, and it was held from 23-25 February 2016 at the Campus Stadt of Technische Universitaet Dortmund. The Campus Stadt is located in the Dortmund 'U' tower which is a remarkable example of an industrial monument and was built in the early 20th century to house a brewery. The conference itself was hosted by Joachim Scheiner and organised by Karin Kirsch (both Technische Universitaet Dortmund). The conference immediately followed the 3rd Dortmund Conference in Spatial Planning that was devoted to 'Spatial Patterns – Structure, Dynamic, Planning'. It was expected that both events would to some extent attract the same participants.

The AK Verkehr conference was entitled 'Dynamics in Mobility and Accessibility'. Just under 60 attendants discussed a variety of topics that were organised in six sessions covering trends in mobility, perspectives in policy and planning, accessibility and GIS modelling, and miscellaneous issues. As in the preceding year, two sessions were devoted to young academics, but a general observation was that the majority of attendants were clearly younger than the author of this page anyway. Excellent to see that there is no shortage of young people in transport geography.

Word-of-mouth feedback confirmed that the conference was much appreciated, and the quality of the 19 presentations was generally highly rated. That said, it should be added that the event

started with some notable technical difficulties. These concerned the audio system as well as a memorable, unheralded fire-alarm test that forced all participants to leave the room. Special thanks go to presenter Lisa Doering who interrupted her talk and continued seamlessly after the false alarm. An event to remember.

The conference also included a short AK Verkehr organisational meeting, at which Cordula Neiberger (RWTH Aachen) and Joachim Scheiner, two of the four members of the AK speaker board, took the opportunity to introduce participants to the relaunched AK website (vgdh.geographie.de/verkehr/), reported briefly on last year's work, gave the opportunity to report from the most recent Pegasus conference, asked for ideas and suggestions for the future of the AK, and provided information about upcoming AK conferences. The follow-up conference will be hosted by Martin Lanzendorf at Goethe Universitaet Frankfurt/Main in 2017. Further, Peter Pez (Universitaet Lueneburg) suggested hosting the 2018 conference as a joint conference with the AK Geographische Handelsforschung (geographical trade research).

Thomas Klinger, Goethe Universitaet Frankfurt, reported briefly on last year's Pegasus meeting. Pegasus is a German early career researcher network in transport and mobility studies. The meeting was held from 16-17 October 2015 at Bergische Universitaet Wuppertal. The title was 'Designing the future – challenges and options for sustainable mobility'. The follow-up meeting will be held from 30 September to 1 October 2016 in Stuttgart. The call for papers is open until 15 June (pegasus-netzwerk.de), and it includes the classic presentation format, poster presentations, and a 'mobility café'. The conference theme is 'Challenges of an integrated mobility and urban planning'.

There are two more notable items of news from Germany beyond the scope of the AK, but still worthy of report.

Firstly, the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure announced the draft version of a new Bundesverkehrswegeplan (BVWP, Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan) in mid-March. The plan covers an investment of 260 billion euros until the year 2030, the highest expenditure ever projected in such a plan. Two-thirds of the sum are devoted to maintenance purposes, and one-third to the construction of new infrastructure. The geographical distribution is supposed to comply with capacity and maintenance needs rather than reflecting a politically motivated equal allocation among the German Laender (federal states). While the plan is proudly entitled BVWP 2030 according to the year of its projected termination and, hence, brings with it a breath of the future (past plans were named after their year of establishment which sounds more mundane), there is criticism of some of the general public about the focus on road construction. Of the planned expenditure, 50% is devoted to roads, 40% to railways, and 10% to shipping. The *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, one of the most respected daily newspapers, comments with reference to the Munich area that "never before has so much money and concrete been poured over the region" (Kruegel 2016, author's translation), concluding that "it is a giant investment and construction programme that shall prevent the transport infarct in the region of Munich in the mid-term, but will accelerate it in the long term" (ibid.). This sounds like it is up to transport geographers (and others) to keep an eye on federal transport planning in Germany, and continue to inform policy and planning from a research perspective.

Secondly, a new initiative has recently been started by the Innovation Centre for Mobility and Societal Change (InnoZ), Berlin, to boost social scientific transport and mobility studies by calling for a new, large-scale research programme to be set up by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The background for this initiative is a similar initiative that was launched in 1996 but that obviously did not result in a 'transport turnaround' towards more sustainable transport. The initiative has been started by Weert Canzler, Andreas Knie and Robert Schoenduwe (all from

InnoZ), and it is supported by Hans-Liudger Dienel (Technische Universitaet Berlin), Konrad Goetz (Institut fuer sozial-oekologische Forschung Frankfurt/Main), Sven Kesselring (Hochschule fuer Wirtschaft und Umwelt Nuertingen-Geislingen), Martin Lanzendorf (Goethe Universitaet Frankfurt/Main), Stephan Rammler (Hochschule fuer bildende Kuenste Braunschweig), Ulrike Reutter (Bergische Universitaet Wuppertal), and Joachim Scheiner (Technische Universitaet Dortmund). While this board includes a number of geographers and a spatial planner, the majority originate from sociology, which, as a discipline, has clearly failed to accommodate transport and mobility issues in Germany to date. The initiative includes a series of workshops, the first to be held on 25-26 April. A common understanding of research needs shall be achieved, and a position paper is to be published as the outcome. See <http://www.zukunftsschmiede.info/> for more information.

Literature

Kruegel, Christian (2016): Dobrindt setzt auf Autobahnen - die falsche Antwort. In: Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 17. March 2016. <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/bundesverkehrswegeplan-dobrindt-setzt-auf-autobahnen-die-falsche-antwort-1.2910478>