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Editorial: Transport and Tourism: a Weak Symbiosis. An Introduction to the Special Issue

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“Tourism’s very existence depends on transport. Still, researchers in transportation and logistics do not show much interest in tourism whereas travel and tourism researchers pay more attention to accessibility than to transport.” These were the opening sentences of the call for papers for the TTRA European Chapter Conference “Transport and Tourism: Challenges, Issues and Conflicts” held in Rotterdam and Breda, The Netherlands from 22 to 24 April 2009.

Before we present the papers in the special issue, we will first discuss the deep gap between tourism and transport research communities. Only two out of 27 papers presented at the TTRA conference, mainly a tourism conference, were written by pure transport researchers. Large transport conferences generally dedicate one session to tourism transport (e.g. the annual European Transport Conference). The gap is also revealed by the strong difference between definitions of transport and tourism in both disciplines, the structure of transport and tourism databases, the different theoretical approach to transport and a general lack of interest in or exchange between each other’s disciplines, at conferences, for example. The transportation sector tends to define transport from a utility perspective only, “to carry something across the space between one place and another” (Tiffin and Kissling, 2007, p. 4), or in the natural use of terms like systems, objectives, goals, inputs, outputs and feedbacks (Tiffin and Kissling, 2007, p. 19). Transport economics defines transport almost exclusively as costs in order to gain a benefit from the transfer of persons or goods to another location where these persons and goods generate more value than before the location change (e.g. Quinet and Vickerman, 2004; see also Lumsdon and Page, 2004). The utilitarian definition of transport is also used within tourism transport studies and defined as the “functional element of travel” (Lumsdon and Page, 2004, p. 2) or transport is “getting from A to B as quickly and as smoothly as possible” (Peters, 2006, p. 3).

Within the tourism sector, transport is defined differently. A broad definition from the perspective of the tourism sector is “Mobility’ is an attribute of people, goods and information which are in a dynamic state” (Peters, 2006, p. 3). A major issue is that tourism transport “also assumes the subjectivity of experiences” (Peters, 2006, p. 3), or in other words “it is also appropriate to differentiate transport as a means to an end and transport which is integral to the tourism experience” (Lumsdon and Page, 2004).

The same problem exists for the definition of tourism. While, for example, Peters (2006) distinguishes between transport and ‘travel’, where the latter has a utility in itself and is limited to specific tourism contexts, the United Nations and UNWTO (World Tourism Organisation) defines a traveller as “someone who moves between different geographic locations for any purpose and any duration” (United Nations, 2010, p. 9). From this broad definition, the United

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Nations narrows down tourism to all visitors, defined as people travelling to a place not belonging to his or her 'normal environment' and for less than one consecutive year. This means that all the above motives and both same day and overnight visitors are included. Finally, tourists are those visitors that stay at least one night outside of their usual environment (see United Nations, 2010, p. 9-10).

If transport researchers are confronted with this list of definitions, they quickly start to raise objections as in transport studies same day visitors are considered to be leisure (certainly not a business traveler), tourists are considered to be holiday makers and sometimes also visiting friends and relatives, but again certainly not travellers that are on a business trip or, for example, on a conference trip. These very different views of course have important consequences for tourism and transport statistics as the two sets of figures are not easily integrated (see Peeters et al., 2007, p. 84 for an overview of the many differences between UNWTO tourism statistics and European passenger transport statistics, which form the base for TEN-STAC, a European transport model, described in TEN-STAC, 2003). There is a clear case for the way tourism studies define tourism: all holidaymakers, business travellers, visitors or friends and relatives in principle use the same infrastructure for both transport (railways, roads, airlines) as accommodation (hotels) and leisure facilities (the attractiveness of a place does play a role in business and conference travel destination choices; e.g. Høyer, 2009), so it would really be practical if transport motives were better aligned to those definitions instead of inventing the different motives each time again. On the other hand, tourism scholars should integrate the definitions of transport modes and the role of transport and access in tourism and tourism theory and statistics.

Integrated knowledge of transport and tourism is essential for developing destinations, tourism enterprises and effective tourism policies, and to cope with emerging local and global issues and conflicts. Four sub-themes emerge: global transport developments like air transport congestion, low cost carriers and regional airports, climate change, effects of oil prices (peak-oil), revival of (high-speed) rail, migration patterns, the cruise tourism boom, and emerging transport technologies like 'space travel'. Transport and logistics at destinations is a theme covering local infrastructure, networks, accessibility, transport mode choice and mode shifts, route information, safety and security, movements of goods to and waste from large city centre accommodation, airports, railway stations and (mega) events. The theme ICT considers e-ticketing, GPS applications, internet booking, video-conferencing, electronic logistic support systems, ICT in transport network management and capacity planning, safety systems, and virtual travel. Finally ethical issues covers local and global tourism transport induced environmental problems, pro-poor/community based tourism, and cross-cultural and economic guest-host issues related to mainly long-haul tourism travel.

From the twenty-seven conference papers, nine were submitted for this special issue. We have selected four papers, of which two papers, those by Eijgelaar (2011) and Gross & Lück (2011) fit in the conference's subtheme of global transport developments, and the other two, those by Brackstone, Robbins & Dickinson (2011) and Vujicic & Wickelgren (2011) in that of transport and logistics at destinations. These two subthemes provided the great majority of conference papers.

In his paper on voluntary carbon offsets, Eijgelaar states that the aviation share of tourism emissions is expected to grow substantially, and that by mid century aviation could be responsible for a large share of national carbon budgets. Without reducing air traffic volumes, it is unlikely that international emission reduction targets will be met. A change in behaviour is therefore necessary. Voluntary carbon offsetting is studied as a possible short-term solution. Eijgelaar examines the mitigation potential of this offsetting by comparing public and industry awareness of climate change and aviation emissions and attitudes to various mitigation measures as communicated online by many offset providers. In a more direct evaluation of the mitigation potential, he looks at actual shares of offset volumes. These shares turn out to be very low. The

total volume of annual flight offsets compensates less than 1% of global annual air travel emissions. Eijgelaar concludes that the gaps between awareness, attitude and actual behaviour are not bridged by carbon offset providers. Voluntary carbon offsetting does not contribute significantly to climate change mitigation in tourism. He therefore estimates that the future potential for this is low and states that for future research an understanding of attitudes to air travel and its alternatives is essential if solutions are to be found. It is particularly important to investigate whether offsetting limits the willingness to change travel behaviour, transport modes and destination choice.

The paper by Gross and Lück aims to give a comparative historical review of low-cost carrier (LCC) business models in Australia and New Zealand, with references to situations in Europe and North America, using primary and secondary sources. These authors also aim to chart future prospects. They first introduce the concept of LCC. A common characteristic of LCCs is their goal to simplify operations in order to lower their cost. Contrary to Australia and New Zealand, traditional carriers in Europe and North America competed stronger with LCC's. The former's history is therefore turbulent. From a relatively late starting point they developed rapidly. Next, they sketch the aviation profile in Australia and New Zealand, where flying is a convenient means of transport considering the vast distances that people often travel and the lack of a high speed rail network. In their study of business models, they found a wide range of low-cost strategies, with no clear distinction between traditional and low cost carriers. They analyze the many configuration opportunities of the business components and refer to procurement and suppliers, process management and marketing, and opportunities for their practical implementation. In this regard, they point out interesting differences with Europe. Whereas in Europe many airports are dependent on LCCs, this is less the case in Australia and New Zealand. In Europe, airports are mainly offered in parallel markets. As a result, LCCs generally do not have problems in obtaining slots. On the other hand, Australia does not have many secondary airports near major cities. LCCs therefore have to compete with traditional carriers while in New Zealand, there are almost no secondary airports that are served by LCCs. Furthermore, the geography of Australia and New Zealand differs considerably from Europe so routes are generally much longer. Contrary to European LCCs, operators in Australia and New Zealand have more personnel, maintain different booking categories, offer frequent flyer programs and have a less transparent pricing policy, with less difference between lowest and highest fares. Gross and Lück conclude that due to the relatively small market and longer distances, LCCs cannot offer the low fares that are common in Europe. With an expected growth in demand, competition will be fierce and new entrants will find it difficult to enter this market. Although the LCC development has contributed to the growth of air transport in most regions of the world, the authors do not mention the issue of climate change whereas Eijgelaar has shown that travel behaviour needs to change to effectively mitigate climate change.

In their case study on planning approaches with regard to more sustainable travel in the UK, Robbins, Brackstone and Dickinson identify the factors that substantially impact on modal choice and also evaluate the effectiveness of policies oriented at modal shift. They indicate that there is a large potential for conflict between domestic tourism growth and policies oriented at diminishing the use of cars. They discuss the gain to be obtained by a modal shift from the car to alternative modes of transport and then the desirability of a reduced car share as a major objective. The paper concludes with a discussion on the need for a coordinated and integrated approach to tourism mobility. The study is based on the annual visitor survey administered on behalf of the National Trust (NT) by Bournemouth University for 150 NT properties. This survey contains a few questions on the transport mode used by visitors, which are analysed by the authors. They found that travel to these properties is dominated by car travel, but that properties with high quality public transport access may reduce the car share to 75%, and that if car use reduction measures are implemented, the car share could reduce to 50%. The authors also investigate the impact of the implementation of 'green' transport plans by the NT, which aim at reducing car

dependence on arrival. Their conclusion is that the existence of a public transport service and easy access to information about it do not achieve a substantial modal shift. They recommend several measures, such as concentrating efforts on properties with low public transport accessibility, car restraint policies, coordination of efforts by stakeholders and setting national policy objectives. The mismatch between transport and tourism policies is another fine example of the differences between the two worlds of transport and tourism.

Vujicic and Wickelgren look at success factors of destination branding with regard to air transportation, where Valencia Airport is used as a case. Their paper examines the role of key actors in the development process and particularly that of the airport. As deregulation of the air transport industry has forced this industry to look for new actors involved in retailing and tourism, it is uncertain to what extent destination branding enhances the position of an airport. They therefore pose the question as to what contributes to a successful outcome of destination branding efforts, defined in terms of passenger numbers and connected air transportation. They are particularly interested in the kind of service relationships between airports and the organization of destination branding. The focus in Valencia is on cultural tourism and events rather than on sunbathing as is the case with competing Spanish tourist centres. Valencia's success in extending its brand beyond the seaside resort can be seen as a good example of consolidation and reinforcement of the emotional connection between visitor and destination. As the airport still plays a passive role in the city's destination branding efforts, the question remains what the outcome would be if the airport joined the city's efforts in destination branding. This Valencia case is also a perfect example of how the tourism and transport sectors are unable to closely cooperate for an apparently mutual goal.

We hope that the four papers in this special issue will generate interest from the transport sector in tourism transport related issues and that some tourism scholars will find their way to other papers in this issue or more in general in EJTIR. The importance of better understanding and integrating transport research within tourism studies is evident. Furthermore, the transport discipline should take note of tourism transport as a 'dangerous' climate change cannot be avoided if tourism transport is not included in mitigation policies (e.g. Dubois et al., 2010; Peeters and Dubois, 2010; Scott et al., 2010), policies that will have to cover not only higher technological efficiency of (air) transport but also a strong modal shift and redistribution of tourism origin and destination flows.

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