

Newsletter October 2017

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International Association for the History of **TRANSPORT, TRAFFIC & MOBILITY**

**"In the Spotlight" – with Prof. Oliver Schwedes (TU
Berlin)**

by Robin Kellermann



*Prof. Schwedes is a political scientist and Head of the Department of Integrated Transport Planning at Technische Universität Berlin. Recently, he published a monograph "**Urban Mobility in a Global Perspective. An international comparison of the possibilities and limits of integrated transport policy and planning.**"*

- ***Dear Oliver, one of your key research activities focuses on the concept of 'mobility management' as a strategic means to achieve sustainable transport. Can you try to briefly explain the potentialities (and limitations) of this approach?***

The strategic approach of integrated transport planning includes three planning dimensions: infrastructure, traffic, and mobility. The first is managing the structure of the transport system and thereby making the connections. The second is managing the process within the transport system and thereby sustaining the traffic flow. The third, finally, is influencing people's habits and actions. These are the three pillars of integrated transport planning today: infrastructure management, traffic management, and mobility management.

The unique benefit of mobility management compared to infrastructure and traffic management is that it raises awareness for the needs and requirements of transport users, which have long been neglected in transportation planning. Mobility management is often limited by the other two planning fields, which decide about the built infrastructure and the regulation of traffic flow, often without considering the viable input of mobility management. This is why joining all three approaches in an integrated transport planning strategy is so important.

- ***Recently, you prominently claimed that despite the concept being discussed for 25 years, 'mobility management' has failed to become a mainstream transport-political strategy. How do you explain this failure, especially against the backdrop of the transport sector representing a most problematic sector of CO2-emissions?***

The idea of mobility management started in Germany and elsewhere as an answer to the deficits of infrastructure and traffic management, which lack a deeper understanding of human behavior. In the 1970s, a relatively small group of people within the planning community positioned themselves against the dominant "windscreen perspective" and promoted sustainable transport planning and policy. They found themselves confronted with very strong actors in the transport sector, who profited (and still do today) from the paradigm of 'higher, farther, and faster,' building infrastructure and producing cars. Society, at that time, was generally in favor of mass motorization and people valued city highways as a symbol of modernity, which in fact is changing today. Along with this changing mindset, mobility management is getting more and more important. At the same time the powerful actors in the field of transport policy are still present and actively fight for their own profits and interests. The German "Dieselgate" scandal shows that very clearly!

- ***In your research you mostly refer to Germany. From an international perspective, how is 'mobility management' being discussed and implemented in other regions of the world and what lessons can be learned from such a comparative perspective?***

Transport literature often notes a few examples of successfully implemented mobility management efforts worldwide, the most prominent being Singapore. The problem with this and all other examples is that they work in a politically quite authoritarian context. The government in Singapore is pushing its citizens not to use the car but public transport. With a bunch of different costly taxes they enforce its citizens not to use the car but public transport. For a democratic society this is not acceptable and therefore not

transferable. So what we can learn from such a comparative perspective is that mobility management works best in smart combination with infrastructure and traffic management. Still, democratic societies will have to find their own way of convincing the people.

- ***As you know, our association has a core interest in historical perspectives. Despite different problems, conditions and contexts, is there something that today's 'mobility management' can learn or adapt from the problems of managing the beginnings of mass transportation in the 19th century?***

I think it is helpful to remember the idea of mobility as public service, which was developed at the beginning of the 20th century along with the welfare state. Until then, transport was organized in competition by private companies resulting in many frictions. Particularly, solving the social question motivated politics at that time to offer a minimum supply of transport connection for everyone, even the poor. I think we can learn from history and manage mobility as a public good, serving the public interest. What is crucial today is also to add a sustainable approach to this, and to step away from the individually organized transport that we still see today: people in their own private cars.

- ***What is your personal vision to achieve a sustainable transport world?***

A sustainable transport world must rely on a socially just society!