POLICIES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION IN TRANSPORTATION: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

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This special issue arose from the 2013 Rio World Conference of Transport Research (WCTR). It relates to Topic Area G, which considers the institutional processes of developing and implementing transport plans and policies at local, regional and national levels. In particular, its focus is on the problem of ensuring the social inclusion of transport-disadvantaged groups within transport policy, which was a highly popular new theme at the conference attracting six different presentation sessions over the four days. The sessions covered issues such as transit service provision for special needs groups and remote communities, accessibility, exclusion and participation, social impact and distributional analysis of transport systems and developing new governance and policy mechanisms within the sector to ensure more inclusive delivery. The seven case study papers in this special issue were selected from these sessions.

The focus of the issue is on how to deliver socially inclusive transport in cities with already highly developed transport infrastructures and where the majority of the population has access to high levels of motorized mobility. Here the main thrust of transport policy to date (where this exists) has been on providing supplementary transit services to transport disadvantaged groups and communities so that they can more easily and affordably access key activities such as work, health visits and education. However, at best this goal has remained a marginal aspect of transport policies and a significant proportion of the lowest-income groups in advanced economies will experience various aspects of transport-related exclusion at some point during their lifecycle.

The unequal distribution of mobility and accessibility in countries with advanced transport systems is well recognised within the contemporary transportation literatures (e.g. Hine, 2011; Manaugh and El-Geneidy, 2012; Lucas, 2012). It is also acknowledged by national and transnational institutions such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the European Union. This is a cross-cultural phenomenon and is largely driven by factors such as income, age, gender, race, level of education and disability (Ohnmacht et al., 2009). Other significant factors are the low availability of privately owned vehicles amongst low-income groups combined with the increased inadequacy of public transit for meeting their basic accessibility needs (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). This is compounded by the nature of the urban structures and land use planning, the residential locations of low-income, regional disparities and other factors that are not directly linked to the transport system (Banister, 2008).

The longer-term negative social outcomes of uneven mobility and accessibility are less well recorded or understood by researchers and policymakers alike. Transport planners are increasingly concerned with ensuring that all groups of society, including socially disadvantaged groups, have good access to transport (see for example Department for Transport, 2006). This is because it is understood that low levels of mobility may also affect people's ability to access essential services and personal support networks. This may in turn negatively impact on their full social participation and can considerably reduce the overall quality of their lives (Sustainable Development Commission, 2011). Nevertheless, transport policy remains ill-equipped to deal with this problem and often

further contributes to it through inappropriate infrastructure investments and decision-making processes (Martens, 2006).

There have in fact been two previous special issues on the topic of transport and social exclusion that have appeared in our sister journal *Transport Policy* over the last ten years. The first of these was published in 2003 at the height of the UK transport and social exclusion policy agenda (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Hine's (2003) introduction to the issue identifies that it focuses on both the effects of the transport systems on social exclusion, as well as the potential transport solutions with particular emphasis on the role of demand responsive transport. Six of the nine research papers in this issue focused on the UK, which is not surprising as the publication appeared at the height of New Labour's social exclusion policy agenda. This was also at a time when few other countries in Europe or further afield were considering this issue.

Some five years later, when the second special issue on the topic was produced (Stanley and Lucas, 2009) it is possible to see more international interest beginning to emerge around the topic. The special issue arose from a workshop at the 10th International Conference on Competition and Ownership in Land Passenger Transport (Thredbo 10), which explored the relationship between social exclusion and public transport in different national contexts. The conference was held in Queensland and one of the most obvious departures of the special issue from its predecessor is that it charts the entry of Australian academics and policymakers into the transport-related social exclusion arena. It also demonstrates a widening of the disciplinary focus to include psychological perspectives, health and wellbeing and the engagement of the public bus and community transport sectors.

There have also been several notable edited book collections related to the theme of transport and social exclusion in the intervening years. The first of these is Hine and Mitchell's (2003) early literature review *The Role of Transport on Social Exclusion in Urban Scotland*, which usefully identifies some definitions, indicators and potential solutions to the problem. Raje's (2004) *Transport, Demand management and Social Inclusion* identifies the need for wider ethnic perspectives on the problem, in the recognition that it is often Black, Asian and other minority ethnic populations (BAMEs) within cities that find themselves trapped in social housing enclaves and unable to access adequate transport services. Lucas' (2004) *Running on Empty* draws comparisons between the transport and social exclusion agenda in the UK and the Black environmental justice in transportation agenda in the US. Two further related publications are Uteng and Cresswell's (2008) *Gendered Mobilities*, in which they identify the important role of transport in the daily freedoms of women's lives, and Ohnmacht et al's (2009) *Mobility and Inequality.* Both serve to trace a widening of the research and debate to mainland Europe. Meanwhile, Currie et al's (2007) *No Way To Go* and (2011) *New Perspectives and Methods in Transport and Social Exclusion Research* record an expansion of this interest to Australian transport research. Still more recently, a number of authors have drawn on theories of social and distributive justice to frame the notion of transport-related social exclusion more firmly in a normative discourse (Beyazit, 2011; Van Wee 2011; Martens, 2012).

Similarly, there has been a significant widening of the policy interest on the subject over the same period. As recorded in Lucas (2012), there have now been transport and social exclusion related research studies commissioned in countries as far flung as Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Africa, Spain, New Zealand and the

USA, although they may not always be found using this nomenclature and their findings also are not usually published within the academic literatures. As such, there remains a significant gap between best knowledge of the subject and best practice within transport policy when it comes to identification of the problem of transport-related social exclusion, as well as in the evaluation of its potential solutions. A key aim of this special issue, therefore, is to offers some case study examples of how to bridge the gap between research and practice in order to more effectively and actively promote socially inclusive transport policies, systems and services.

We recognise that social exclusion from transport occurs with far greater severity within emerging and developing economies. However, this is triggered by very different economic, environmental, social and transport contexts than in the western world and thus also requires quite different policy responses. These issues are not directly addressed by the papers in this special issue, which is not to suggest that some of the examples we offer cannot be adapted to these developing urban contexts. However, they will need to be properly tailored and adapted to suit the social circumstances and mobility and accessibility needs of the vast majority of transport-excluded poor in these countries.

Outline of the papers in this edition

The terms exclusion and inclusion are often used interchangeably within most of the social policy literatures and they can be said to represent two sides of the same coin. Nevertheless, there is a subtle distinction between the research that concerns itself with social exclusion and that centring on social inclusion. The focus of the papers in this special issue is on social *inclusion* in transportation, in other words how to find appropriate ways to *address* the problems of transport-related social exclusion rather than to simply identify them. In this way, the ambition of the research that is presented is to *transform* current thinking and practices, in this case within the transport policy sector.

The first paper by *Joanna Elvy* discusses her findings from review of UK transport policy over the last ten years with a focus on current local authority approaches and commitment to the engagement of socially excluded and 'at risk' individuals and communities within the transport planning process. She uses content analysis to scrutinise the latest round of local transport planning documents (LTP3) of 32 authorities to identify where there is reference to the active engagement of 'hard to reach' population groups within the preparation of these plans. Her paper concludes that policy rhetoric tends to outstrip actual performance in this respect and concludes that much more still needs to be done to engage with transport disadvantaged individuals and communities, particularly those whose mobility and accessibility is largely dependent on the provision of transport services by the local transport authority.

The second paper by *Brennan, Olaru and Smith* move the immediate focus away from transport to consider how housing policies intersect with the mobility, accessibility and inclusion of low-income households in Perth, Western Australia. This is an important area of study for transport inclusion policy because the mobility decisions of individuals and households are embedded in their location choices and the lack of affordable housing in places with good public transport and access to local amenities is a particular feature of the social exclusion within many cities. Using hedonic pricing methods, the value of access to quality local schools, shops, parks and transport facilities is

particularly noted as a premium factor within house prices within the paper. This has the effect of pushing populations with low socio-economic status to the outer suburbs of the city, which gives them less access not only to a ready supply of suitable jobs but they must also rely on poorer performing schools and a severely reduced access to transit services. The paper suggests that policies for promoting socially inclusive transport need to be better integrated with the housing policy agenda, particularly at the lower end of the housing market where there is a higher risk of non-car owning low income households tend to locate.

Continuing with the theme of more integrated public policy, in the third paper, *Carrier, Apparicio, Séguin and Crouse* consider the environmental and social equity effects of ambient air quality around schools in Montréal, Canada. This is an important issue because the traffic from busy roads in close proximity to schools is one of the primary sources this pollution. Past studies have also shown that young children are particularly vulnerable to the negative health effects of high concentrations of various air pollutants because their organs are not yet fully developed. Children from lower income households are also more likely to experience wider health inequalities and so may be even more vulnerable to these exposures. The study used a combination of public data sources to determine the socio-economic status of the location areas of elementary schools and to calculate air pollutant levels from roads 200 metres proximal to these locations. Their study established that children from socially disadvantaged population groups are more likely to attend elementary schools that are located in more polluted environments, although the level of their exposure did not exceed World Health Organisation (WHO) standards. This again suggests that transport inclusion policies need to move beyond a sole focus on transport provision to take into account other aspects of social policy, in this case planning policies to ensure the physical location of schools away from busy roads in tandem with air quality strategies to reduce pollution from traffic in these areas.

Looking towards the future of social equity policy for transport, the sixth paper by *Lucas and Pangbourne* develop a method to assess the social and distributional impacts of transport policies. Their case study uses the example of carbon mitigation policies for transport that have been developed by the Scottish Government but could easily be applied to assess the social inclusiveness of other aspects of transport, as well as adapted for use in other geographical contexts. The paper identifies that some groups are less able to adapt to major changes to the existing transport system whilst policymakers are often unaware of the unintended social consequences of the new policy interventions they introduce. Their paper develops and then demonstrates an evaluation framework that is specifically designed to highlight the social and distributional impacts of different transport policy interventions. They conclude that the lack of robust evidence with which to assess the differential impacts of different policy measures on different social groups remains a significant barrier to the development and delivery of a more socially inclusive transport policy agenda,

Following in this vein, the last next two papers in the special issue also describe research to evaluate the social inclusiveness of transport polices interventions targeting the needs of transport disadvantaged population groups. In the first of these, *Roger* Mackett evaluates the wellbeing and quality of life benefits of the concessionary fares policy for local bus travel for older people in the UK, which was introduced to improve their access to a range of basic necessities such as health care and shops and to reduce social isolation. The paper finds that overall the concessionary bus pass scheme has

increased bus usage by older people, especially for those who do not have regular access to a car. The buses have mostly been used for the purposes of shopping but it also appears they have allowed older people more affordable access to health care visits and other community-based activities. Several studies have also found evidence that holding a bus pass had reduced physical isolation and improved older people's quality of life. However, the paper concludes that the extent to which these benefits are targeting the sub-section of more vulnerable elderly people who can be considered to be experiencing or at risk of social exclusion is not clear. The concessionary fares scheme is a universal benefit, which may not be the most effective way to reduce the significant transport inequalities that are apparent amongst less mobile, disabled and more fragile old people.

In the next paper, *Martens, van der Kloof and Bastiaanssen* evaluate the impact of a local transport intervention which offered bicycle lessons for immigrant and refugee women in Amsterdam, drawing on a survey and in-depth interviews. This group of residents was targeted for the intervention because they are identified as most likely to experience accessibility deficits due to multiple disadvantages, such as low incomes, limited car access, and poor social networks.. The results of the survey show that the bicycle lessons are successful in teaching women the skills of cycling. The in-depth interviews amongst 19 women provided insight into the impact of the lessons on actual activity participation. The results show that the impact on bicycle use varied amongst the women participating in the study; some used the bikes regularly for everyday trips whilst other felt they were still constrained in their bicycle use. The paper offers a 'ladder of bicycle appropriation to describe their different levels of use with half of the respondents positioned at the top rung of the ladder, using the bike for most practical purposes. Only one woman was positoned on the bottom rung; still unable to use the bike at all. The study also found that the lessons have substantially improved feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence amongst the women that received them and many made new friends and feel mentally stronger. But the bicycle lessons alone cannot increase mobility and access. Most participants were living on low incomes and so they also need help to purchase a bicycle and may also experience difficulties in storing it within their homes due to a lack of space or in their neighbourhoods due to fear of theft. The women also felt that there should be more traffic management measures in place to support the safety of their bicycles use in traffic.

In the final paper, Hans Jeekel offers an overview of the recent academic studies relating to the social, cultural and governance aspects of transport and mobility. Jeekel was a member of the Dutch parliament from 1995 to 1998 and as such his paper offers a useful policymaker perspective of the contribution of social policy research on transport to the real world of policy making. His paper focuses on car-based policies across three key domains. The first consists of policies that have focused on analysing social equity and inequalities in the transport domain and perspectives of different social groups related to car mobility. The second domain considers how car-based policies have served to affect patterns of mobility and different people's freedom to move. Here he questions the 'inclusion' benefits of hypermobility and asks whether the new systems of automobility that drive the need to 'rush around' really improve quality of life. On the basis of this analysis, the last domain reflects on Dutch national policies for car mobility and the direction in which future policy should proceed. In particular he identifies that most policy makers currently work on policies to facilitate car mobility. Even though they may recognise the negative social and environmental

consequences of this approach, they are reluctant to adopt more sustainable and socially just transport policies because they are too risk averse to change the status quo. In particular, they see policies for greater social inclusion in transport 'too difficult to deliver' because they require curtailment of the lifestyle choices of the car-owning majority of the population, as well as a significant redirection and retargeting of transport spending towards transport disadvantaged groups.

Jeekel's concluding comments of his paper taken together with the observations of the other authors in this special issue serve to remind us that whilst much has been written and researched about transport-related exclusion and policies for social inclusion in transport in the academic domain, there is still a long way to go in translating the findings of this research into policy-practice. Let us hope that in future years we can increase policy awareness of the importance of developing and delivering socially inclusive transport policies worldwide by communicating more case studies of examples of best practices not only in academic journals and at international conferences, but also in the places where they can influence the policy community.

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