

Session proposal for International Conference of Transport, Traffic and Mobility (T<sup>2</sup>M)

“Mobilities and Materialities: Building Bridges Between Past and Future”

Paris, 16-19 October 2019

### **Public transport as public space**

Convenors: Tauri Tuvikene (Tallinn University), Wojciech Kębłowski (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Université Libre de Bruxelles), Wladimir Sgibnev (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography)

As public transport continues to be studied primarily by engineers and planners, who rely on the dominant economic and technocratic readings and approaches, it remains peripheral in the social sciences and humanities literature. Yet, public transport embraces intense and intimate sites for encountering cultural diversity, facilitating social integration and negotiating public space. It is a site of encounters that shapes perceptions of others and can add to collective experience (Paget-Seekins & Tironi, 2016), conviviality and “intercultural dialogue” (Koefoed et al., 2017), acting as a site of everyday multiculturalism (Lobo, 2014) and micro-encounters (Purifoye, 2015). At the same time, public transport is entangled with processes “of differentiation and exclusion” (Wilson, 2011: 635), which could result in “racialisation, stigmatisation and intolerance” (Koefoed et al., 2017). This session aims to explore the public space dimension and potential of public transport in different cities around the world considering the historical development and difference of public transport vehicles and systems, as well as attending to the cultural and political diversity across countries and regions. In this way we expect to position public transport at the frontline of considering what is, can be, or should be public in the city. Examining public transport in conjunction with diverse conceptualisations of public space and publicness the session aims to expand the existing understanding of public spaces through historical, political, social and cultural account of everyday mobilities and public transport spaces. Public transport potentially confronts citizens with social diversity, speaking to them of different types of ownership, surveillance, subversion, interaction and transformation of social norms. Thus, it is also important to pay attention to the historical shifts and futures of public transport—including the so-called sharing and platform economies as well as self-driving mobilities—and the ways they affect the publicness of public transport.

We welcome both theoretical and empirical, case-oriented or comparative analysis from the variety of disciplinary perspectives: cultural history, literary, narrative, cultural and media studies, ethnography and anthropology, geography, sociology, etc. The paper should take urban public transport as the centre of attention and offer a critical analysis of public transport as public space.

If you are interested in taking part of the session, please do send an abstract of maximum 300 words and 100 – 150 words of biographical note on each speaker to session convenors Tauri Tuvikene (tauri.tuvikene@tlu.ee), Wojciech Kębłowski (wojciech.keblowski@vub.be) and Wladimir Sgibnev (w\_sgibnev@ifl-leipzig.de) by 27 February 2019.

More information on the conference: <https://t2m.org/conferences/call-for-paper-t2m-conference-2019-mobilities-and-materialities-building-bridges-between-past-and-future/>

## References

Koefoed, L., Christensen, M. D., & Simonsen, K. (2017). Mobile encounters: bus 5A as a cross-cultural meeting place. *Mobilities*, 12(5), 726–739.

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Paget-Seekins, L., & Tironi, M. (2016). The publicness of public transport: The changing nature of public transport in Latin American cities. *Transport Policy*, 49, 176–183.

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Wilson, H. F. (2011). Passing Proximity in the Multicultural City: The Everyday Encounters of Bus Passengering. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 43(3), 634–649.