You are receiving this newsletter following your recent indication of support or interest in an Inter-Modal Transport Data-Sharing Programme. This proposed research programme is a collaboration between Associate Professor Zhou Jiangping of the Faculty of Architecture and Dr John Ure, Director of the Technology Research Project (TRP), based at the Social Sciences Research Centre (SSRC) of the University of Hong Kong, and in collaboration with other industry specialists. This newsletter sets out our progress to date. Further information about the programme and associated partners can be found below.

THE YEAR OF THE PIG

Welcome to 2019, the Chinese year of the Pig, traditionally a sign of happiness and good fortune. Indeed, real pigs are known as highly intelligent animals who like to live in a clean environment; it is only humans that keep them in dirty pigsties. Given growing environmental concerns, we could all learn a lot from the social lives of pigs.

PROGRAMME UPDATE - SOME GOOD NEWS

We are pleased to announce that Associate Prof Zhou Jiangping of the University of Hong Kong Faculty of Architecture has agreed to partner with the inter-modal transport data-sharing programme. Prof Zhou and his colleagues will take responsibility for steering the application to the Innovation & Technology Fund (ITF). An academic component will be added to the programme to generate publishable papers beyond the report itself, and to provide students with an opportunity to understand better the importance and mechanics of data-sharing.

As an inclusive programme, academics and students from all Hong Kong universities will be invited to participate in alignment with a preference of The Research Grants Council (RGC) for inter-university cooperation. We envision that the programme will be extended to 12 months while the original 8-month timeframe will be extended to ten months in the lead up to the publication of the final report.

Preparatory Research Phase

We have begun a preparatory research phase to map out the existing transport data ecosystem in Hong Kong. As part of this research phase we are meeting with sectoral experts to elicit their views on the issues and challenges facing the
Hong Kong transport sector and data sharing. We will then meet with the transport operators and the payment platforms to explore the data they currently collect, its utility, and their initial thinking around data sharing. The research will feed into our preparation for the opening Forum later this year.

INDUSTRY UPDATES & INSIGHTS

2018 was the year when the world seemed finally to wake up to the challenge of climate change and the desperately important need to reduce carbon emissions. But having woken up, not many nation-states have yet ‘gotten out of bed’. It seems too often there needs to be a crisis before serious action is taken, but the real threat this time around is the tipping point between reversible and non-reversible is not very far away.

There has been good news.

For example, Maersk, the world’s largest shipping container company, announced on 5 December a commitment to cut carbon emissions to zero by 2050 by moving away from low-quality bunker fuel. In 2017 China launched an all-electric freighter powered by a massive MKh battery-pack, and in 2020 Norway will launch an all battery-powered ferry. While batteries on-their-own will not be a sufficient answer for long-haulage vessels, the industry is beginning to look serious at alternatives, such as fuel-cells and, of course, nuclear which carries its own waste disposal problems.

These developments are important because marine transportation is responsible for the highest percentage of four out of six air pollutants in Hong Kong according to the Environment Protection Agency (which also monitors data from across the GBA) and worldwide accounts for 2%-3% of global greenhouse gases according to US EPA. Data collection and data-sharing are essential tools for both the industry and for smart seas/city management.

It is clearly not enough to wait for market trends alone to cut carbon emissions because there is often a dichotomy between the immediate interests of fossil-fuel using enterprises and the wider issue of public health, an externality of growing importance.

But what seems to be driving a change of priority in the private sector is a realisation that climate change can wreck the supply chains they rely upon, push up their costs and reduce their markets. Automobile companies were once reluctant to embrace regulations that require a shift away from the internal combustion engine, but it now seems that 2018 is likely to be the sales zenith of petrol-driven vehicles, and in the coming years the growth of the market will be dominated by battery electric vehicles (BEV) which Moody’s forecast to make up 19% of the market by 2030.

INDUSTRY UPDATES & INSIGHTS

In January 2019, KPMG released a survey on citizen views on smart city development across 5 cities in Asia-Pacific (Hong Kong, Melbourne, Seoul, Singapore and Shanghai). Among the +4000 citizens asked about the quality of their city’s transportation and mobility, citizens in Hong Kong were the least satisfied (3.24 on a five-point scale), while 57% of citizens across all cities considered improved walkability a key priority for smart city. On actions needed to improve smart mobility, 46% of Hong Kong citizens wanted tighter regulation of private cars and vehicles. These results are encouraging us to explore new ways of supporting sustainable mobility. For survey details see here.

COMMUNICATIONS PREFERENCES

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