

Historical Institutionalism, Hybridity and Institutional Logics in Public Transport History

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James Fowler 

The University of Essex

Abstract

This paper responds to calls for new theoretical frameworks within which to examine transport history and bring it into contact with other disciplines with a view to overcoming some of its alleged previous preoccupations with Anglocentric economic data. It offers three interconnected ideas from other fields, historical institutionalism, hybridity and institutional logics and it proposes that these tools can assist historians in making sense of the qualitative material from archival records. The paper also suggests that by explicitly framing the history of public transport as a political process, historians can engage with a wider social ecology of interest groups than those represented by economic interests. Whilst recognising the assumptions inherent in an institutional approach and the limitations of the scope of the author's own research, the paper argues that these frameworks can nevertheless be used widely and effectively.

Keywords

Institutionalism, hybridity, institutional logics, public transport.

Corresponding author:

Business School, University of Essex, Colchester, CO4 3SQ, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Email: james.fowler@essex.ac.uk

Introduction

This article explores new avenues in transport history research. It brings transport history into contact with other more theory driven disciplines through the use of paradigmatic thinking.¹ I begin by outlining the debates within transport history regarding the limitations of some previous research. I look at historical institutionalism as a means to overcome such limitations through an emphasis on the role of politics. I discuss hybridity theory and an associated perspective, institutional logics, as theoretical frameworks facilitating research beyond econometrics. For the purposes of this article, I use these concepts to offer an explanatory framework identifying the key clashes in transport between the market, the state, democratic participation, and consumer choice in Britain. I chart their progress over time and account for their influence on policy and events in transport history. I take my material from the twentieth century Anglosphere however I see no reason why the underlying principles and frameworks explained here could not be applied to other countries in modern times. I explore hybridity and institutional logic's links to other disciplines in order to enhance their validity and reliability as research methodologies.

A cultural turn in transport history?

There is an on-going debate in transport history about how to maintain modern relevance.² Transport history has been criticised for being too wedded to economic data, too Anglophile, too pre-occupied with railways, and too focussed on the nineteenth century.³ The argument runs that it has directed insufficient attention to social and cultural developments in understanding and interpreting history.⁴ It has been suggested that this may have led to a narrow engagement with the technicalities of movement rather than an exploration of a more holistic understanding of mobility enabled by taking a "cultural turn".⁵ This view has been criticised for insufficient explanation of its own frameworks of reference and neglect of extant scholarship addressing cultural issues.⁶

I propose historical institutionalism as a theoretical context within which to locate a more expansive, sociological view of transport history. In particular I understand transport history to be informed by conflicting goals, values and interests expressed through

¹ Massimo Moraglio, Michael Bess, Greet de Block, Mike Esbester, Valentina Fava and Dhan Zunino Singh, "More Theory Please: Building Transport History Ontologies", *The Journal of Transport History* 41:2 (2020), 1–3 here 3.

² Terry Gourvish, "What Kind of Railway History did we get?", *The Journal of Transport History* 14:2 (1993), 111–125 and Gijs Mom, "What Kind of Transport History did we get?", *The Journal of Transport History* 24:2 (2003), 121–138.

³ Massimo Moraglio, "Seeking a (new) Ontology for Transport History" *The Journal of Transport History* 38:1 (2017), 3–10.

⁴ Gijs Mom, "The Crisis of Transport History. A Critique, and a Vista", *Mobility in History* 6 (2015), 7–19.

⁵ Colin Divall and George Revill, "Cultures of Transport Representation, Practice and Technology", *The Journal of Transport History* 26:1 (2005), 99–111, here 99.

⁶ Michael Freeman, "Turn if you want to. A comment on the 'Cultural Turn' in Divall and Revill's cultures of transport", *The Journal of Transport History* 27:1 (2006), 139–143, here 139 and 140.

politics and policy making. I suggest hybridity and its associated analysis of blended institutional logics can offer an additional refinement when seeking to understand historical context. Hybridity and institutional logics provide useful theoretical assistance because they are apposite to organisations, such as transport, resting on the political fault line between state and private sector interests.

I acknowledge that much previous work has already moved in this direction, and few transport historians would argue that the influence of politics on transport is anything other than pervasive.⁷ Cresswell, for example, explicitly theorises mobility and power relations.⁸ Nevertheless, I suggest that historical institutionalism offers three useful contributions. Firstly, it can make the link between relatively abstract conceptions of how power relations operate and how they manifest themselves in terms of the every-day realities such as fares, congestion, infrastructure and the provision of service over time. Secondly, it provides a useful qualitative revision or counter point⁹ to earlier transport history where the quantitative analyses found in economic history often prevailed.¹⁰ Thirdly, historical institutionalism accentuates particularized truths, complex rather than unitary causality. The theory explores empirical phenomena and examines endogenous explanations of institutional behaviour.¹¹

I argue that these approaches enable transport historians to challenge generalist economic assumptions and explore the origins and consequences of power dynamics in transport policy making. Moreover, there is no barrier to their application in relatively under researched countries and localities where the politics of their transport development and provision is comparatively poorly understood. I suggest that the emphasis in this approach on the particular rather than the general, lends itself to this endeavour.

Historical institutionalism

Historical institutionalism assumes that institutions are the outcome of past events, underpinned by the actions of individuals, and are open to changing significance over time. This process allows habituated actions and meanings become reified as objective social structures.¹² It emphasises asymmetries of power, path dependence and the influence of ideas in the operation and development of institutions.¹³ In contrast to rational

⁷ Christopher Kopper and Massimo Moraglio, "Introduction", in Christopher Kopper and Massimo Moraglio (eds.), *The Organisation of Transport: A History of Users, Industry and Public Policy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 1-7; Gail Radford, *The Rise of Public Authority* (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Geoff Vigar, *The Politics of Mobility: Transport Planning, the Environment and Public Policy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002).

⁸ Tim Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (2010), 17-31.

⁹ Roy Suddaby, William Foster and Albert Mills, "Historical Institutionalism" in Marcelo Bucheli and Daniel Wadhvani (eds), *Organisations in Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (2013), here 100.

¹⁰ John Armstrong, "Transport History, 1945-95: The Rise of a Topic to Maturity", *The Journal of Transport History* 19:2 (1998), 103-121.

¹¹ *Ibid*, here 104-105.

¹² *Ibid*, here 111.

¹³ Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor, "Political Science and the Three Institutionalisms", *Political Studies* 44 (1996), 936-957, here 938.

choice and sociological institutionalism, historical institutionalism allows for a combination self-interested rationality and social norm-following in explaining an individual's actions. I suggest this offers a powerful explanatory advantage when interpreting overtly or implicitly politicised decision making in transport policy and the creation of transport organisations.¹⁴

Studies such as Vigar's "The Politics of Mobility" already provide clear sociologically based examinations of the relationship between power dynamics and the formation of transport institutions and policy. They propose examination of the past linkages, connections and associations in order to more widely understand the politics of transport policy networks, discourses and communities.¹⁵ Thus transport historians may systematically assess the fruits of archival research into the diffusion of institutional characteristics and transport policies within and between different jurisdictions. Furthermore, the role of individual actors in policy making and the degree of agency they enjoyed can be considered.¹⁶ Historical institutionalism by its nature tends to favour larger organisations which are more likely to leave more extensive documentary traces over time and have wider applicability. Nevertheless, Vigar enjoins transport researchers to seek out local case studies and make explicit the link between transport planning and politics at the provincial level which he sees as having been underplayed in research.¹⁷

Numerous journals, often outside the field of transportation or history, do publish examples of the history of transport planning and policy making at the regional or city level as well as on the national stage.¹⁸ However, in the UK the number of unexplored local authority or individual institutional archives remains considerable. Where the literature does exist, the history can be made up of accounts commissioned via the organisation in question, sometimes written by former officials and designed to commemorate and celebrate projects, locales and former glories.¹⁹ The insider knowledge allows them to be meticulous accounts with the caveat that they can lapse into parochial or technical

¹⁴ Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism", in Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating (eds), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), here 126.

¹⁵ Vigar, 212 and Paul Mees, *Transport for Suburbia: Beyond the Automobile Age* (Abingdon: Earthscan, 2010) here 21-29.

¹⁶ Suddaby, here 111-117.

¹⁷ Vigar, here 42-43.

¹⁸ A few examples from the previous decade: James Fowler and Alex Gillett, "Making a Hybrid out of a Crisis: Historical Contingency and the Institutional Logics of London's Public Transport Monopoly", *Journal of Management History* 27:4 (2021), 492-518; Simon Gunn, "The Rise and Fall of British Urban Modernism: Planning Bradford, circa 1945—1970", *Journal of British Studies* 49:4 (2010), 849-869; Till Koglin, "Vélocity and the Politics of Transport Planning", *Geojournal*, 80:4 (2015), 569-586; Crystal Legacy, "The Post-politics of Transport: Establishing a New Meeting Ground for Transport Politics", *Geographical Research* 56:2 (2018), 196-205; Otto Smith, "Central Government and Town Centre Redevelopment in Britain 1956-66", *The Historical Journal* 58:1 (2015), 217-244.

¹⁹ For example: Nicholas Faith's *The Right Line: The Politics, Planning and Against the Odds Gamble Behind Britain's First High-Speed Railway* (London: Seagrave Foulkes, 2007) which was facilitated by the construction company Arup that built the line in question, and John Wright and Ian Maclean's *Circles under the Clyde, a history of the Glasgow underground* (London: Capital Transport, 1997), which is technically not an official publication of Strathclyde Passenger Transport, but acknowledges their support in producing the book for their centenary. John Wright was an official of the SPT system for over 20 years.

detail. Though the limitations of my own research confine my examples to the UK, it seems reasonable to assume that this state of affairs exists abroad too. Some academic analysis of the history of transport at a national level in other countries also calls for more local case studies to reduce the over-reliance on foreign (i.e. European) examples.²⁰

In summary, historical institutionalism is a well-established field that recognises social pressures and influences in organisations that are distinct from material and technical factors.²¹ I suggest that this lends itself to addressing, in general sense, some of the criticisms which have been levelled at Transport History that we saw earlier in the introduction. I now turn to two further frameworks of analysis which, accepting the wider premises of historical institutionalism, deal in greater detail with the evolving form of individual organisations responding to market and state pressures.

Hybridity and institutional logics

Hybrid organisations combine the functions and characteristics of private, public and charitable bodies.²² Their multi-faceted and abstruse nature, combining multiple organisational forms, diverse origins and varying blends of institutional logics permits some limited generalisable definitions (Table 1). However, more importantly, this diversity lets the researcher draw on a wide evidential and comparative span as well as being able to offer precise explanations rooted in specific circumstances.²³

Hybridity is helpful in breaking down the nature of organisations that sit at the awkward interstice between public and private, a dilemma frequently encountered in transport. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to assume that organisations which sit in the same category are therefore identical. This would ignore the influence of history in their structures, processes and cultures. Institutional logics are held to be the dominant norms, values and behavioural expectations enforcing legitimacy, authority and identity.²⁴ They exist within different institutional orders: family, religion, state, market, profession and corporation. I suggest the latter four are of more interest to transport history, and further propose that family and religion may be replaced with a

²⁰ Ryohei Kakumoto, “Sensible Politics and Transport Theories? Japan’s National Railways in the 20th Century”, *Japanese Railway and Transport Review* 22 (1999), 22-33.

²¹ Suddaby, here 100.

²² Carsten Greve, Matthew Flinders and Sandra van Thiel, “Quangos: What’s in a Name? Defining Quangos from a Comparative Perspective”, *Governance* 12:1 (1999), 129–46.

²³ Julie Battilana and Matthew Lee “Advancing Research on Hybrid Organizing – Insights from the Study of Social Enterprises”, *The Academy of Management Annals* 8:1 (2014), 397–441; David Billis, “Towards a Theory of Hybrid Organizations”, in David Billis (Ed.), *Hybrid Organizations and the Third Sector: challenges for practice, theory and policy* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Bob Docherty, Helen Haugh and Fergus Lyon, “Social Enterprises as Hybrid Organizations: A Review and Research Agenda”, *International Journal of Management Reviews* 16 (2014), 417-436.

²⁴ Chris Skelcher and Steven Smith, “Theorizing Hybridity: Institutional Logics, Complex Organizations, and Actor Identities: The Case of Non-profits”, *Public Administration*, 93:2 (2015), 433-448; Patricia Thornton, *Markets From Culture: Institutional Logics and Organisational Decisions in Higher Education Publishing* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2004) and Patricia Thornton, William Ocasio and Michael Lounsbury, *The Institutional Logics Perspective: Foundations, Research, and Theoretical Elaboration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Table 1. Taxonomy of hybridity.

	Privatisation (whole/part)	Public Body	Contract Agency
Definition	Former state-owned company now wholly or partly privatized.	At arm's length but publicly funded.	Quasi Autonomous but overseen by Government Department
Finances	Capital market	State budget	State budget
Ministerial Responsibility	External regulator	Delegated	Directly controlled franchise or concession
Public Task	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public Domain	Partial	Yes	Yes
UK Example	Stagecoach	British Rail	Arriva London
European Example	Swedish Rail Administration	SNCF	Qbuzz

Source: Taken and adapted from Greve et al. "Quangos: What's in a Name? Defining Quangos from a Comparative Perspective".

charitable logic in some instances (Table 2). Each present unique organising principles, practises and symbols influencing conditions and explaining actors' decisions. This paper will principally deal with the state, market and corporation in its main discussion, although professional and charitable logics may represent avenues for future research.

Four assumptions underlie institutional logic making it useful in the discussion of the history of hybrid organisations. First, such logic disputes the primacy of rational choice, thus allowing actors partial autonomy. It seeks to explain their actions through bounded intentions rather than bounded rationality. Intentions are bounded not just by personal

Table 2. Modern institutional logics.

	State	Market	Corporation	Profession	Charitable
Root metaphor	Redistribution	Transaction	Hierarchy network	Relational	Donation
Source of legitimacy	Democratic participation	Share price	Market position	Personal expertise	Philanthropy
Source of authority	Rational bureaucracy	Shareholder activism	Board of directors	Professional association	Trust/ Foundation
Source of Identity	Class	Individual	Bureaucratic	Craft	Ethical
Basis of Norms	Citizenship	Rational self-interest	Career	Membership	Altruism
Basis of strategy	National good	Profit	Size	Personal	Moral good reputation
Economic System	Welfare capitalism	Capitalism	Managerial capitalism	Personal capitalism	Not-for-profit

Source: Adapted from Thornton et al. "The institutional logics perspective: Foundations, research, and theoretical elaboration".

cognitive limitations but by the nature or contradictions in an actor's goals and identity. These are shaped by an individual's social, cultural, and for the purposes of this paper, political preconceptions.²⁵

Secondly, it allows for micro analysis at the organisational level. This means very intensive research of a particular area of an organisation's activities is enabled, such as analysis of a restricted portion of large organisation's activities or perhaps the entire record of a smaller organisation. Third, the integration of symbolic and material evidence found in archives is facilitated. Fourth, historical contingency is accepted. As relatively little research has been done in this area, I see this as a promising theoretical space for transport historians.²⁶

One of the many tasks for a transport historian is to account for the changes in modal choices, ridership, infrastructure etc. Behind these surface realities lies the changing nature of transport organisations and conceptions of mobility. Whilst transport may retain consistent commitments and appearances, its true nature can begin to differ from the beliefs of those charged providing it and the wishes of the travelling public. Charting the evolving balance of institutional logics through archival micro research allows the researcher to plot both organisational changes and also deeper shifts in attitudes and intentions prefiguring them (Table 3).

The use of historical institutionalism, hybridity and institutional logic as conceptual frameworks enables a mass of qualitative data from the archive and the political status of transport institutions to be explicitly rationalised rather than worked out by implication from economic data. Understanding the political parameters of the authorising environment in terms of policy networks, arena and discourses, we can then delve into the detail of the organisations themselves at managerial level and pick apart the interplay of institutional logics in terms of goals, values and interests. Struggles for legitimacy, strategies and norms have real world consequences such as new infrastructure, patterns of service provision and fares. These themselves can be observed over long, periodised, histories.²⁷ History contextualised in such a way links commuters' daily reality to managerial decision making and then on further to political environments. As the borders of state and market are always shifting, extensive archival historical sources exist both within and outside the context of transport history. Moreover, these are generated constantly and accumulate extended antecedences.²⁸ These records may be situated within the historical context of institutional transport policy and the associated power relations. Historical institutionalism, hybridity and institutional logics lend credence to thick historical description, accentuating realism over elegance and difference and detail over formulas.²⁹

²⁵ Thornton, here 80.

²⁶ Thornton, *The Institutional Logics Perspective*, here 103-104.

²⁷ Terry Gourvish, *British Railways 1948-1973 A Business History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and *British Rail 1974-1997 From Integration to Privatisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

²⁸ Kenneth Lipartito, "Historical Sources and Data", in Marcelo Bucheli and Daniel Wadhvani (eds) *Organisations in Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), here 293-300.

²⁹ Philip Scranton, *Endless Novelty, Speciality Production and American Industrialisation 1865-1925* (Woodstock NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997) and Philip Scranton and Patrick Fridenson, *Re-imagining Business History* (Baltimore MD: John Hopkins, 2003).

Table 3. Typology of change in institutional logics.

Form of Change	Definition
Replacement	One logic replaces another
Blending	Combining diverse logics
Segregation	Separation of logics from their origin
Assimilation	Incorporation of the external dimensions
Elaboration	Endogenous reinforcement
Expansion	Shift from one field of application to another
Contraction	Decrease in scope

Source: Adapted from Thornton et al. "The institutional logics perspective: Foundations, research, and theoretical elaboration".

Limitations

Historical institutionalism and the associated frameworks of hybridity and institutional logics come with constraints. Clearly, they presuppose the existence of institutions and accentuate their role. The concepts they employ to analyse their development, such as the state, markets, professions etc. are themselves open to different interpretations in different periods.³⁰ Framing transport within an institutional setting, they place ethnographic research concerning the individual experience of mobility at a discount.³¹ Furthermore, the archival research on which this approach relies requires the existence of quotidian data gathering mechanisms within organisations. This restricts research to certain time periods and, even within those periodisations, relies on the consistency of record keeping. It also privileges larger organisations that generate a volume of records, have the means to store them and are perceived as important enough to be worth keeping.

There is no way of avoiding the silences within the archives which exist as the product of both constructed absences through decisions by the researcher and the objective absence of material.³² However, I suggest that these issues do not invalidate this type of archival research, or the use of theoretical frameworks based upon it, provided that they are acknowledged and elucidated. The call for historians to offer more clarity and explanation of their methods has been made for some time in business and management history.³³ Historians, by means of acknowledging their source work openly and the use of

³⁰ Marcelo Bucheli and Kin Uk Kim, "The State as a Historical Construct in Organisation Studies", in Marcelo Bucheli and Daniel Wadhvani (eds), *Organisations in Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (2013), here 257.

³¹ For example, Barbara Schmuki's article: "If I Walked on my Own at Night I Stuck to Well Lit Areas: Gendered Spaces and Urban Transport in 20th century Britain", *Research in Transportation Economics* 34:1 (2012), 74-85.

³² Stephanie Decker, "The Silence of the Archives: Business History, Post-colonialism and Archival Ethnography", *Management and Organizational History* 8:2 (2013), here 161.

³³ Michael Rowlinson, Roy Jacques, and Charles Booth. "Critical Management and Organizational History", in Mats Alvesson, Hugh Willmott and Todd Bridgman (eds), *Handbook of Critical Management Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 286-303; and Roy Suddaby, William Foster and Albert Mills, "The Future of the Past in Management and Organisation Studies", in Marcelo Bucheli and Daniel Wadhvani (eds), *Organisations in Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3-32, here 20.

theoretical context, have been able to successfully marry historical craft to social scientific theory to offer a dual integrity to their research.³⁴

Transport history: A political turn?

In 1959 Barker and Savage published “An Economic History of Transport in Britain”.³⁵ In this section I speculatively outline what a contrasting book “A Political History of Transport in Britain” might contain: changing policy, organisational form and provision in transport linked directly to political interactions. Such changes would be presented as the result of political confrontations over ownership, participation, planning and accountability, and be engaged with through the interpretive framework of historical institutionalism, hybridity and institutional logics.

In Table 4 below I give a putative generic blueprint for the evolution of transport organisations in the Britain over time. Using this, I discuss clusters of existing transport history literature from the *Journal of Transport History* and other journals which relate to the particular political dilemmas created by the chronological development. This taxonomy is not designed to be universal or exhaustive. I acknowledge that many transport providers did not originate as private companies, and the historical pattern of ownership seldom follows a neat linear path from proliferation to fragmentation. The political dilemmas indicated were almost always present to some degree simultaneously rather than discretely. Every organisation has charted its own course in the way it blended, assimilated, replaced, expanded or even segregated its logics in day-to-day managerial practice. Nevertheless, I argue that historians can pinpoint distinct transport policy choices that were made and influenced by a variety of identifiable individual actors. The historical institutional, hybridity and institutional logics perspectives allow us to refine those discussions by accepting individual choices as being both rationally and socially influenced, historically contextualised, and by directly recognising their political dimensions.

In Britain, most, though not all, transport provision originated privately.³⁶ In keeping with the market logics of share price and profitability, much of the literature primarily uses economic units as the framework of analysis.³⁷ If the hand of the state is visible,

³⁴ Mairi Mclean, Charles Harvey and Stewart Clegg, “Conceptualising Historical Organisation Studies”, *Academy of Management Review* 41:4 (2016), here 610 and Kevin Tennent, “Management and Business History – A Reflexive Research Agenda for the 2020s”, *Journal of Management History* 27:1 (2021), here 80.

³⁵ Theodore Barker and Christopher Savage, *An Economic History of Transport in Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1959).

³⁶ Phillip Bagwell and Peter Lyth, *Transport in Britain: From Canal Lock to Gridlock* (London: Hambledon, 2002).

³⁷ A small sample includes: Anthony Arnold and Sean McCartney, “Rates of Return, Concentration Levels and Strategic Change in the British Railway Industry, 1830–1912”, *The Journal of Transport History* 26:1 (2005), 41–60; Terry Gourvish, *Railways and the British Economy, 1830–1914* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1980); Gerald Crompton, “Canals and the Industrial Revolution”, *The Journal of Transport History* 14:2 (1993), 93–110; Robert Irving, “The Profitability and Performance of UK Railways 1870–1914”, *The Economic History Review* 31:1 (1978), 46–66; Tim Leunig, “Time is Money: A Re-Assessment of the Passenger Social Savings from Victorian British Railways”, *The Journal of Economic History* 66:3 (2006), 635–673.

Table 4. The evolution of transport organisation in Britain.

Timescale/Proposed Sequence	Dominant Form	Dominant Political Dilemma	Logics
(1) Proliferation	Private Company	Market failure	Market logic contracts slowly.
(2) Co-ordination	Arms-Length Corporation or Municipality	Democratic participation	Assimilation or replacement by corporate or state logics.
(3) Unification	Central Government	Subsidy	Blend of logics. Some replacement. State logic elaborated.
(4) Fragmentation	Franchise	Consumer choice	Expansion and assimilation of market logic.

Source: Author.

then it is discussed in terms of safety or financial regulation.³⁸ However, from some political perspectives these solutions to market failure were sticking plasters. There was a fundamental problem with transport's organisational form as a private company operating in shareholders' interests meaning that certain important types of social failure were inevitable.³⁹ Such discourses tend to characterise the history of private transport in this period as a political struggle between private interests and a growing regulatory state. This found expression in the idea that travellers had rights over transport extending beyond their identities as customers and shareholders.⁴⁰

In the early 20th Century, a strong municipal movement in the UK and the influence of the "efficiency craze" in organisational management from America challenged the assumptions of market logics in transport. Where there were large numbers of pre-existing small transport firms the trend was towards consolidation, and where new systems were created, they were envisaged from the outset as co-ordinated rather than competitive.⁴¹ The intervention of the state and municipalities, the creation of quasi-public corporations and the private consolidation and amalgamation between different companies oblige us to think more in terms of hybridity. Here, the supporting literature

³⁸ Mike Esbester, "No Good Reason for the Government to Interfere: Business, The State and Railway Employee Safety in Britain 1900-39", *Business and Economic History* 4 (2006), 1-19 and Paul Miranti, "The Mind's Eye of Reform: The ICC's Bureau of Statistics and Accounts and a Vision of Regulation, 1887-1940", *The Business History Review* 63:3 (1989), 469-509.

³⁹ Herbert Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport* (London: Constable, 1933) and George Bernard Shaw, *The Commonsense of Municipal Trading* (London: Constable, 1908).

⁴⁰ In America popular referendums on bond issues allowed some degree of civic participation in transport issues at an early stage of their development. For example, see Scott Fletcher "Public Dreams, Private Means", *The Journal of Transport History* 24:1 (2003), 38-58.

⁴¹ John Hibbs, *Transport policy: The Myth of Integrated Planning* (London: The Institute of Economic Affairs, 2000), here 21.

combining theory, politics and history becomes denser.⁴² I argue that at that heart of these changes in organisational form lie not just efficiency arguments as understood in economic terms, but the issues of democratic participation, consumer choice, subsidy via taxation and accountability in transport.⁴³

Transport changed, not just in terms of what and how much it carried and what it cost, but in terms of what the public wanted from it and what those who controlled it believed it existed to do. In Britain there was a drawn-out struggle to unify and socialise transport, but wherever possible without actually democratising powers over its control.⁴⁴ Other jurisdictions have similar histories of swings between privatisation, municipal and state control.⁴⁵ The role of politics is self-evident, and the use of hybridity and institutional logics as frameworks is of considerable use in picking apart clashes of interest, values, continuity and change.

These debates evolved. In the 1980s, after decades of state orientated centralisation, there was a resurgence of interest in many countries in applying market logics to transport organisations. In simple terms “the market” needed to be restored to transport in order to achieve greater consumer choice, which would in turn drive efficiency and reduce subsidy.⁴⁶ Analysis using hybridity as a framework shows that the return to pure free markets was illusory. Instead, governments sub-contracted delivery to private organisations but the costs were still met by the state.⁴⁷ A superficial market logic disguised

⁴² Examples include Michael Bonavia, *Railway Policy Between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985); Julian Greaves, *Industrial Reorganisation and Government Policy in Interwar Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Robert Millward and John Singleton, eds. *The Political Economy of Nationalisation in Britain 1920-50* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Gail Radford, *The Rise of Public Authority Statebuilding and Economic Development in Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Peter Scott, “The Growth of Road Haulage 1921-58”, *The Journal of Transport History* 19:2 (1998), 138-155.

⁴³ James Fowler, “Statistics: Spur to Productivity or Publicity Stunt? London Underground Railways 1913-32”, *Essays in Economic and Business History* 37:1 (2018), 146-179; Kevin Hey, “The Origins and Formation of the Traffic Commissioners”, *The Journal of Transport History* 22:2 (2001), 85-98 and Corinne Mulley, “The Nationalisation of the Bus Industry. The Transport Act, 1947: Its Underlying Philosophy and Initial Progress”, *The Journal of Transport History* 19:2 (1998), 122-136.

⁴⁴ Two case studies from the period can be found at: Kevin Tennent, “Profit or Utility Maximizing? Strategy, Tactics and the Municipal Tramways of York, c.1918-1935”, *Journal of Management History*, 23:4 (2017), 401-422 and David Turner and Kevin Tennent “Progressive Strategies of Municipal Trading: The Policies of the London County Council Tramways c. 1891-1914”, *Business History*, 63:3 (2019), 397-420.

⁴⁵ Christopher Boone, “Streetcars and Politics in Rio de Janeiro: Private Enterprise versus Municipal Government in the Provision of Mass Transit, 1903-1920”, *The Journal of Latin American Studies* 27:2 (1995), 343-365; Christopher Boone; “The Politics of Transportation Services in Suburban Montreal: Sorting Out the “Mile End Muddle” 1893-1909”, *Urban History Review* 24:2 (1996), 25-39; Gregory Breisger, “Generations of Transit Disaster: The New York City Subways”, *The Journal of Private Enterprise* 30:3 (2015), 51-77; Martin Erikson, “Compensating for the War. Railway Nationalisation and Transport Policy Change in Sweden, 1939-47”, *The Journal of Transport History*, 38:2 (2017), 232-250; George Hilton, “The Decline of Railroad Commutation”, *The Business History Review* 36:2 (1962), 171-187; John Stone, “Continuity and Change in Urban Transport Policy: Politics, Institutions and Actors in Melbourne and Vancouver since 1970”, *Planning, Practice and Research* 29:4 (2014), 388-404; Allen Whitt and Glenn Yago, “Corporate Strategies and the Decline of Transit in US Cities”, *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 21:1 (1985), 37-65.

⁴⁶ John Hibbs, “Bus De-regulation, the Next Step”, *Economic Affairs* 2:3 (1982), 183-185; John Pucher, Anders Markstedt and Ira Hirschman, “Impacts of Subsidies on the Costs of Urban Public Transport”, *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy* 17:2 (1983), 155-176.

⁴⁷ John Hibbs, Oliver Knipping, Rico Merkert, Chris Nash, Rana Roy, David Tyrrell and Richard Wellings, *The Railways, The Market and The Government* (London: Hobbs, 2006) here 224.

actual state control, but with the corollary that any lingering democratic participation via a direct connection between elected representatives and actual ownership was expunged. Fragmentation obfuscated accountability and ostensibly attempted to remove politics from transport,⁴⁸ outcomes that have been explicitly and tacitly acknowledged in the British Government's most recent White Paper on the future of the railways. This White Paper now seeks to reverse the breakup of responsibility for the service whilst still trying to avoid direct political involvement.⁴⁹

Conclusion

I have offered a very brief perspective of transport history in Britain above without relying on economics or economic data. I express the problems of market failure, state failure, democratic accountability and consumer choice as a series of political clashes with clear impacts on transport organisation and provision.⁵⁰ I rationalise these through general schemas of hybridity and institutional logics (Tables One and Two) which allow historical change to be systematically researched, charted and analysed (Tables Three and Four).

Therefore, despite the limitations discussed earlier, I make the following claims for these structures of reasoning: Firstly, that they offer an alternative analytical framework to universal economic laws and locate transport in diverse social and political circumstances which differ across the globe. Secondly, that they facilitate historical analysis of transport and mobility through wider cultural or social understandings such as power relations. Thirdly, that they build on the wide but scattered body of extant literature, refining and coalescing its evidence and claims. Fourthly, that they present transport historians with an opportunity to make use of a wealth of archival material via business and civic institutions. Fifthly, that they are credible and widely employed conceptual frameworks which would bring transport history into contact with public administration, management and organisation studies, politics and institutional history. I recommend them to transport history.

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⁴⁸ Iain Docherty, Jon Shaw, Greg Marsden, and Jillian Anable, "The Curious Death – and Life? – of British Transport Policy", *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 36:8 (2018), 1458-1479; John Hibbs, *Transport Without Politics...?* (London: The Institute for Economic Affairs, 1982); Louise Reardon and Greg Marsden, "Exploring the Role of the State in the Depoliticization of UK Transport Policy", *Policy and Politics* 48:2 (2020), 223–240; Jon Shaw, Colin Hunter, and David Gray, "Disintegrated Transport Policy: The Multimodal Studies Process in England", *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 24 (2006), 575-596.


⁴⁹ The Department for Transport: "Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail", <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-british-railways-williams-shapps-plan-for-rail> (accessed 30 May 2021)

⁵⁰ Sim Harris presents as them as ownership, costs and control. I have constructed and adapted my ideas to some extent from his book *The Railway Dilemma: The Perpetual Problems of Ownership, Costs and Control* (Addlestone: Ian Allan, 2016).

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ORCID iD

James Fowler  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0815-2493>

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