An Interview with John McCarthy, Editor of *Urban, Planning and Transport Research; an Open Access Journal*

**Part Two**

*What do you feel the main differences and challenges are with editing an open access journal as opposed to a subscription journal?*

I think it clearly varies in terms of the particular case; in the case of this journal, linking to its aims, I think the number of articles related to cases or content in the global south have sometimes imposed challenges. For instance many people clearly are using English as a second language and that can impose challenges for referees and obviously editors and copy editors. My view would be in many cases the advantages of dissemination of the ideas and the recommendations arising from that research vastly outweigh the minor issues and challenges that come with dealing with English as a second language from authors. There is support available and many authors are dealing with that in a very positive way, referees are very helpful in contributing ideas on how many authors can improve and get over those problems. But inevitably with a journal like this that does have a lot of content from people who are submitting with English as a second language, that’s a challenge.

In some cases also I think this is very much again linked to the aims, the encouragement which the journal has for multidisciplinarity for instance can sometimes mean that some submissions are maybe what many referees might not normally be used to, they may be particularly focused on a particular niche topic that many mainstreams journals wouldn’t necessarily welcome, that may well be interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in orientation or maybe just extremely focused on a particular sub-theme of transport or spatial planning, which again, may have been linked clearly to the submitters particular area of interest but might be one which traditional journals wouldn’t necessarily welcome.

Now that again I think is a good thing for me and for the journal and it’s a good thing also because those are precisely in many cases the focused niche articles and sometimes multidisciplinary that are most practice relevant and therefore can add value to the real world. The problem and the challenge that I think that comes with that sometimes is it can be difficult to recruit referees because it helps referees having clear knowledge of that particular field and it means in many cases that I for instance have had to go outside the established editorial board and select individual referees with a particular subject knowledge in that area. But again I feel that that’s really worth the effort because it is resulting in practice based real life research that is adding value. And I think also it is a particular strength of the journal that it encourages that because again it’s filling a gap that many journals don’t. So that’s a challenge as well.

The other one I think again linked to both of those things is again, there’s a flip side to all of these things, speed clearly one big advantage of the journal is speed of publication as with any online journal. I think for some referees
clearly the expectation that perhaps they will deal with the comments quite quickly relatively speaking perhaps might be a challenge. Certainly it’s only been in a minority of cases where I’ve had any real difficulty with delay in referee’s comments and the vast majority cases once a referee agrees to give comments they do that quite quickly. And that’s really helpful because it obviously means that because of the online format that the journal can be published very quickly and the results disseminated. But as it’s coming through I guess there’s often a flip side between advantages and disadvantages and I feel with all these cases the advantages outweigh the difficulties and challenges.