

Book Review

Journal of Planning Education and Research
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Pojani, Dorina, and Dominic Stead, eds. 2017. *The Urban Transport Crisis in Emerging Economies*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. 442 pp. €118.99 (e-book). ISBN 978-3-319-43851-1

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DOI: 10.1177/0739456X17707812

Transportation researchers and instructors in Canada and the United States have a tendency to learn from policies and practices prevalent in developed economies similar to their own, partly because the spatial and social characteristics of North American cities are different from those in the densely built cities of Europe, Asia, and Africa. A quick read through *The Urban Transport Crisis in Emerging Economies* illustrates a remarkable convergence in the transportation challenges faced by cities around the world.

Developing economies demonstrate a much more urgent need to resolve the social equity challenges inherent in transportation planning: providing viable public transit services for the urban poor; considering women's safety when walking, cycling, or taking public transit; and offsetting the negative externalities of motorized transportation. In some cases, these challenges have inspired innovative solutions, but in others the problems seem insurmountable. The chapters in this volume could be used to compare policies, institutional arrangements, and social equity concerns across countries, which gives them a broader readership than merely transportation planning students and researchers.

In this volume, editors Dorina Pojani and Dominic Stead identify lessons on how to achieve international urban sustainability, a topic they emphasize in their introduction and comparative overview of the case studies in the book's conclusion. The book is organized into twelve case studies, each about twenty pages in length including maps, tables, and graphs. Each chapter discusses a specific country's urban land-use patterns and spatial structure; trends in transportation use and mobility; urban transportation problems; urban transportation governance, decision making, and financing; proposed urban transportation solutions and implementation issues; and other country-specific issues.

Many developing cities have experienced the same problems that Canada and the United States have: a rapid growth in car ownership, increased health effects due to pollution, and sprawling development. Car ownership in countries like China, India, Mexico, and Russia has skyrocketed, contributing to substantial increases in traffic congestion and commute times. Traffic fatalities have rapidly increased in many countries, including pedestrian and cyclist fatalities: in

Brazil, the public dismisses high levels of pedestrian fatalities as “the inevitable cost of development” or “fate” (25). Air quality concerns have grown with increasing car ownership, motorcycle, and other two-stroke engine vehicle use in Brazil, Nigeria, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Air pollution levels in large Indian cities are among the highest in the world. Chinese cities have seen a resurgence in cycling, including very successful bike-sharing programs, after the devastatingly high levels of air pollution of the early 2000s.

Other familiar challenges to comprehensive transportation and land use planning are the lack of institutional strength and cross-agency collaboration. For example, weak transportation planning capacity in Nigeria is related to prioritization of road-based infrastructure, the dominance and fragmentation of the informal transportation sector, and the inability to attract and retain qualified professionals in urban transportation. In Russia, poorly integrated land use and transportation planning can be attributed to a silo mentality at the federal and municipal levels that is “largely a legacy of the Soviet era” (209), turf struggles over budgets, and poor coordination between municipal infrastructure and transportation departments. In Vietnam, different agencies have produced conflicting plans. Nigeria has seen an exponential growth in informal services since formal, state-run public transport operations collapsed, which has in turn been linked to nonexistent or stagnant subsidies, fare regulation preventing fare increases, and growing operating costs. In their chapter on Indonesia, Susilo and Joewono discuss the lack of financial autonomy of TransJakarta, one of the largest bus rapid transit (BRT) systems in the world for transit coverage. Although the system served sixteen million passengers when it opened in 2004, poor management, poor institutional coordination, and a lack of comprehensive transportation and land use planning have contributed to declining cost recovery.

As Pojani and Stead point out in their introduction and conclusion, social equity and gender constraints to travel are exacerbated in developing countries. Brazil's contrasting gated communities, favelas, and other peripheral neighborhoods have contributed to very different mobility patterns among social classes: low-income residents rely upon shorter trips

made by foot or bicycle, while high-income residents make more trips, typically by car or the increasingly popular BRT systems. A similar spatial pattern is seen in Mexico. Spatial constraints are most glaring in South Africa, where the apartheid regime contributed to longstanding residential segregation; formerly racially divided, bus services in Cape Town have only recently become viable in outlying working-class areas. Some cities have taken measures to include low-income residents. In Medellín, Columbia, the Metrocable cable car system was designed to improve access to hillside *barrios*; the low-income residents of these areas were invited to provide input on how to spend the public budget on upgrades to the city, including public transportation. These improvements have increased access to jobs for the poor and improved social cohesion in the city, and the cable car model has since been adopted in other Columbian cities such as Cali and Manizales. In Russia, enduring cultural support for equitable distribution of services has contributed to political resistance to fare increases and a high number of fare exemptions for disadvantaged groups: an estimated 40% of public transit users in St. Petersburg are eligible for exemptions or discounts.

Gender constraints to travel are enormous in many developing countries. Public safety is a major concern for all transit users in Mexico City, with sexual assault being a significant issue for women; Metro and BRT authorities have introduced women-only seating areas on buses and trains at peak hours, and federal bus authorities introduced special buses exclusively for women. Strict cultural and religious norms prevent women from cycling in most public places in Iran, and traveling by bike is unsafe for both sexes in Cape Town. Traveling by public transit in India is so unsafe for women that a number of solutions have been introduced: female taxi drivers and train conductors have been introduced in some cities, security cameras installed in vehicles and stations, and smartphone apps launched that assign safety scores to public spaces. Nevertheless, the risk of sexual assault persists. In Turkey, bikesharing is alleviating the gender bias in the bike-friendly cities of Konya and Kayseri.

Of particular interest in today's sharing economy are the thriving informal transportation solutions in many of the cities profiled. They offer flexible options for the low-income population in peripheral areas. Informal solutions include autorickshaws and bicycle rickshaws in India, where this

“intermediate public transport . . . both competes with and complements (i.e. feeds) mass transit services” (89). Most operate illegally as part of the informal economy. As in North American cities, technology and social media have combined to offer solutions faster than legal frameworks can be revised. Didi Taxi, a Chinese taxi service similar to Uber, allows both drivers and passengers to maximize convenience and minimize wait time. Indonesia's Go-Jek mototaxi service operated illegally, but was considered to fill in gaps in regular public transport service. It was banned in 2015, but a major public outcry resulted in the decision being reversed just one day later. Some services operated informally for years before they were eventually regulated, including the *dolmus* in Turkey, which eventually developed regulated routes, schedules, fares, and vehicles. Mexico's *peseros*, *combis*, and minibuses are flexible and dynamic, but have for the most part developed independent of government; their *colectivos* have been supported by World Bank financing, and can penetrate the inaccessible but densely populated peripheral low-income settlements. Russian cities are downsizing their tram and trolleybus services; in their place, a number of private sector solutions have arisen, originally informal but more recently regulated.

There are a number of ways the case studies could be used in teaching transportation planning: students could conduct a comparative analysis across cases concentrating on a particular aspect of planning (e.g., institutional arrangements and coordination between different levels of government). Another exercise could involve students using a chapter's discussion of a municipal transportation strategy to begin a more in-depth analysis of the city's transportation initiatives. A tremendous strength of this volume is the discussion of social equity and gender constraints on travel in every country, which facilitates using these case studies in courses on social justice in planning. The book also acknowledges culturally specific barriers to effective planning, which are often glossed over in comparative work but have remained a significant constraint when planners attempt to apply policy lessons from international case studies to their own context. By focusing on developing economies, this edited volume offers a more comprehensive overview of the challenges to planning sustainable transportation than is typically seen in this discipline.