

*The Geography of Transport Systems.* By Jean-Paul Rodrigue, Claude Comtois and Brian Slack. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). [Pp. 284.] \$ 51.95. ISBN 0-415-35441-2

This book is a nice synthesis of concepts, methods, conventional as well as contemporary issues related to transport geography. The companion website of the book “Transport Geography on the Web” was initiated in 1997 to provide online educational materials of this discipline. Based on the impressive popularity this online tutorial has gained over the last ten years, the authors continued to develop it into the present book.

The book’s ten chapters are well illustrated with informative data, figures, and tables, which can be further organized in four parts. Chapters 1-3 comprising the first part discuss the spatial and economic nature of transport systems, setting out background and framework for the book. Chapter 1 takes a holistic view of transport geography as related to other disciplines, and introduces the definition, concepts and dimensions of this interdisciplinary field. A retrospect of the evolution of transport systems is also provided. Chapter 2 examines transportation systems as networks in their commercial environment, and elaborates the relationship between transport supply and demand. Chapter 3 investigates how transport systems are related to economic development, spatial organization and location factors.

The second part introduces two essential components of transport systems: transportation modes and terminals. Based on an overview of major transport modes, Chapter 4 discusses both modal competition and cooperation (“intermodalism”). Chapter 5, on the

other hand, examines the functional and spatial character of transport terminals.

The third part introduces transport systems at different spatial scales. Chapter 6 is concerned with intercontinental and inter-regional transportation. An introduction to international transportation follows the discussion of globalization and international trade. Issues on commodity chain and logistics in inter-regional freight transportation are then addressed. Chapter 7 focuses on transportation in urban areas. The relationships between the urban transport system and the subjects of urban form, urban land use, and urban mobility are examined, and some emerging urban transport problems such as automobile dependency and congestion presented.

The last part consists of Chapters 8-10 addressing contemporary concerns over transport systems. Chapter 8 deals with environmental concerns including energy consumption and pollution accompanied with transportation. Different development strategies to sustainable transport are discussed. Chapter 9 investigates transport planning and policy issues. A distinction is drawn between policy and planning, and the major features of their respective processes examined. Chapter 10 concludes this book by presenting the main issues and challenges faced by contemporary transport geographers.

The book is written with an innovative style in that each chapter is attractively capsulated into a series of stand-alone yet correlated topics of concepts and methods. By this means, most relevant materials are organized to address specific issues conceptually, while practical methods or tools are introduced accordingly to assist in tackling the noted issues. This modular structure is particularly friendly to students and teachers for

educational purposes.

The book brings together a comprehensive and insightful selection of topics which not only includes conventional dimensions that have been the long-established subjects of interest to transport geographers, such as networks, modes, terminals, and urban transportation, but also introduces a variety of up-to-date issues in this field, including: intermodalism, security, congestion, and environmental pollution. Additionally, readers can easily find the definitions of many frequently used terms in the field, ranging from space/time convergence, hinterland, transport corridor, light rail, to containership, logistics, and environmental impact assessment.

Another novelty of this book that needs to be highlighted is that it introduces the geography of transport systems with a particular emphasis on its global context, which distinguishes this book from numerous textbooks in this field. This is perhaps due to the authors' particular research (area) interests involving East and Southeast Asia and North America. The history of transport systems are reviewed at a global level (Chapter 1); globalization and international trade are discussed, as they have given rise to containership and transformed modern freight transportation (Chapter 6). Many contemporary issues such as environmental impacts have been identified as a global problem (Chapter 8). Transport systems of developing countries are introduced throughout this book.

Some supplemental comments can also be made. As compared to the concepts part of this book which is detailed and complete, the methods part is weaker in its thoroughness and

usefulness. This part could have been enhanced by providing readers with more numerical or empirical examples, more references to relevant studies, and even specific tasks or problem sets, in order to make this book more practical and self-contained educational material.

Although this book has briefly addressed the multidimensionality of transport geography in the opening chapter, it remains unclear how geographers, economists, engineers, planners and politicians view and treat transport systems differently. A better interpretation of the difference and complementarity among the disciplines built around transportation would have been worthwhile in terms of helping readers better understand the essential role transport geography plays in transport systems.

Nevertheless, this book provides a comprehensive and valuable introduction to the field of transport geography, which we would recommend for use as a textbook for undergraduate transport students and non-transport professionals. It could also be of interest to professionals seeking a quick and systematic overview of this field.

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