

Book Review:

Eran Feitelson and Erik T. Verhoef (eds)

Transport and Environment. In Search of Sustainable Solutions¹

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Transport and Environment is a collection of papers that aim at “bringing together contributions from various disciplines to the study of the broad field of ‘Transport and Environment’” (p: xiii). The focus of the book is “the search for practical solutions that can advance the sustainability notions” (p: 5), and the emphasis of the book is on “technology measures and spatial (or planning) policies” (p: 9). All this sets the context in which this book should be judged against.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on policy aspects, the second on technological aspects, and the third on spatial aspects with each part containing four chapters. The chapters/papers, all interesting, and of high quality and importance, stand on their own with no direct relation between them. This means that there is no advantage in reading the book as a book rather than as a series of separate papers that are picked according to the reader’s interest.

The first chapter also serves as an introduction to the book, and sets the context of the book. The rest of the chapters follow this context, described above, mainly in terms of sustainable transport but not as much in terms of the environmental aspect of transport. Transport and

¹ Feitelson, E., and E.T. Verhoef (eds.)
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2001
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295 p.

environment issues per-se (i.e. air-pollution, noise, climate change etc.) are not the centre point of the book despite the book title. In some of the papers the impression is that a section which specifically discusses environment issues was implanted in the paper to fit in with the book title.

It seems that perhaps 'Sustainable Transport' would better describe the collection of papers in the book. Despite the frequent overuse of the term 'sustainable' it seems justified here. Although there is direct relation between sustainable transport and transport and environment the papers in the book mainly deal with the first. The latter can easily be inferred by the reader but is not the subject of most of the papers. Even when considering the book as a book on sustainable transport, in some chapters even this is not the main issue discussed. The second chapter can serve as an example. The chapter "is a first attempt to provide an empirical basis towards broad, evaluative and comparative research for advancing the field of policy analysis" (p: 32). Although this is done through examining a study on "sustainable freight transport for the Netherlands" (p: 12) and a description of the study is given, it does not contribute to transport and environment or sustainable transport debate and research. This is not to say that the subject, evaluating policy analysis studies, is not important or not interesting; indeed it is important and the paper fulfils its aim described above.

The first part of the book, dealing with policy aspects provides a comprehensive insight into transport policy issues in general, and some insight into sustainable transport policies. The second part, named technological aspects, does not provide much information on the potential of new technology to effect transport impact on the environment. This is a missed opportunity since too often technological innovations are mentioned in passing only and are not given much attention in the transport policy, economics and planning literature, perhaps because of their long term scope and high uncertainty. Two chapters in this part are devoted to Underground Freight Transport (UFT), an important and innovative concept, but its environmental aspects are hardly mentioned in the chapters and the two chapters do not contribute to the understanding of the environmental implications of UFT more than each chapter on its own. The second paper on UFT is concerned mainly with the implications of UFT on logistics issues. Out of the 19 pages describing the body of the paper (without references and conclusions) only one and a half is devoted to the environment or sustainability aspect of UFT. Again it is important to note that the paper is of high quality and importance but its concern is mainly outside the subject of transport and environment.

The third part, spatial aspects, gives attention to sustainable transport policies and issues at different spatial levels ranging from the street level to global level. This is an interesting and useful approach showing the diversity in scale of sustainable transport matters and policies. As with other papers in the book the main shortcomings of this part are the absence of environmental issues per-se, and even sustainable transport is not always in the centre of the paper. An example here is the paper on "land use impacts on passenger transport: a comparison of Dutch scenario studies" (p: 231). Although any discussion on land use and transport has implications on the environment and is related to sustainable transport these are not in the centre of this paper.

In conclusion: The book is enjoyable and interesting to read and in each individual chapter comprehensive with useful references to the subject. However, it did not really meet the expectations to provide information about transport and the environment. The collection of interesting papers would probably better fit under a different subject or perhaps in different publications.