

## Book Review

**L. Giorgi, and A. Pearman (eds.)**  
**with A. Tandon , D. Tsamboulas and C. Reynaud**  
***Project and Policy Evaluation in Transport***<sup>3</sup>

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This book is a compilation of papers presented in a seminar on “Policy and project evaluation: context, theory and methods”, held in Brussels in 2000 and which was organized by the Interdisciplinary Center for Comparative Research in Social Sciences with support from the European Commission. In addition to the introductory chapter, written by two of the editors, the book contains 7 papers. These are roughly divided between 3 papers, which describe the “European scene”, and 4 papers, which review approaches and methods of transport evaluation. Needless to say, in a book of this nature some overlap between chapters is largely unavoidable. In general, however, I find the book to be well organized and the chapters quite informative and well written.

The introductory chapter tries to provide a common ground for the subsequent 7 chapters. It does so, by raising three questions that, in light of the seminar where these papers were presented, the authors judge crucial for transport evaluation. First, what are the institutional underpinnings and context of European transport policy analysis and policy-making; Second, how relevant is evaluation theory for present-day transport policy, where by “theory” they mean value laden judgments in policy analysis and the seemingly impartiality of quantitative

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methods; Third, how useful are commonly used methods like Cost Benefit Analysis (COBA), or Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) for contemporary transportation analysis.

No doubt, these are very important and timely questions. Are these actually new questions? Not really as long ago similar questions were raised in the fields of urban planning, regional science and transportation planning and even in transportation policy analysis (see TRB reports from the 60s and 70s). But each generation must confront new institutions, new perceptions of social and economic needs, and recently introduced innovative technologies, all of which require new answers to these “old” questions about values, morals and ethics. To what extent does the book actually provide answers to these questions? The introductory chapter does not clearly spell this out. The authors also claim that “one book cannot alone cover all relevant issues in depth” (p. 3) and, therefore, another book is under preparation by some of the authors. This is somewhat puzzling since, one can think of a number of examples where a single book has provided a quite insightful analysis of major economic, social and policy issues.

Turning to the first part of the book (Chapters 2 through 4), it deals with the European Union (EU) institutions, which have significant effect on transportation evaluation and policy-making practices in the EU. For reasons of space limitations I will only make few comments, germane to these chapters. In general, I find this part of the book to be quite useful to anyone who is interested in the institutional makeup of the EU and its impact on policy evaluation. But the discussion in these chapters does not confine itself to transportation policy alone, and rightly so, since transportation is just but one of many policy issues the EU faces, and these issues are interwoven and cannot be easily separated. Transportation affects, and being affected, by concerns regarding the general economy, employment, the environment and the spatial structure of cities and regions. Being important as they are, all these three chapters repeatedly examine these issues. For example they all contain lengthy discussions on aspects of regulation, the environment, the historical evolution of the EU institutions, and the EU enlargement and integration. Some editorial work here could have improved the overall presentation and clarity of the arguments. On the other hand, the implications for transportation evaluation and policy-making do not receive the attention they deserve. I sure would like to hear more on issues such as the development of EU common policy of road pricing, airport charges or a European single aviation policy.

The second part (chapters 5 through 8), which deals with approaches and methods of project evaluation, can be further divided between conceptual and analytical approaches for transportation project evaluation (chapters 5 and 6) and review of actual methods of analysis (chapters 7 and 8). The first, chapter 5, is a long and general treatise on frameworks for policy and project evaluation. The discussion is neither related to transportation nor to the European arena, though both have major idiosyncrasies, which necessarily affect transportation evaluation methodologies. Some of the figures (5.1 and 5.3 in particular) are quite intricate and rather than simplifying what, by its very nature, is a complex issue, make the key points of the discussion tough to grasp. In contrast, the subsequent chapter (6) is easy to follow, as it is much more focused on transportation, provides many real-world examples, mainly from the USA experience, and raises practical issues such as data, multiple goals and the cost of government intervention. It is a well-written chapter.

Chapter 7, in my opinion, is the most relevant one to the stated fundamental nature of the book – evaluation in transport. It constitutes a very good survey of methods currently available for transportation project evaluation ranging from traditional COBA to MCA and to MCA with uncertainty and risk. The author provides references to available reports on assessment methodologies and decision support systems like EUNET and the CODE-TEN project, developed specifically for the purpose of providing comprehensive tools for transport valuation in the EU. Some data on environmental impacts of transportation are also provided.

The last chapter (8) focuses on the issue of evaluation towards sustainability, a rather controversial and highly charged issue among transportation and environmental planners. Unfortunately, the chapter is long on environmental and global warming issues and short on transportation. Since, at present, practically all transportation evaluation programs, whether privately or publicly financed, require a detailed environmental component, a more focused discussion on transportation could be very useful. For example, how to establish and then evaluate tradeoffs between environmental sustainability and economic development impacts? The latter, in many cases, are seen as the *raison d'être* for transportation projects implementation.

In summary, I think this is a quite useful reference book, especially for those interested in transportation project evaluation issues and practices in the European Community. It does not contain, however, original theories, innovative methods of analysis or new empirical findings. Rather, it provides useful reviews on the state of the art of transportation evaluation and policy making. Perhaps, the second book alluded to by the authors, will provide these highly needed ideas to allow the development of improved evaluation schemes and policy analysis methodologies.