Journal of Transport Geography 65 (2017) 200–201

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Transport Geography

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jtrangeo

Book review

City-Hubs: Sustainable and Efficient Urban Transport Interchanges, by Monzón A. and Di Ciommo, F. (Ed.), 2016. Boca Raton: CRC Press (Taylor & Francis Group). (£129 (hardback); £90.3 (e-book). ISBN: 9781498740845).

This edited volume is closely associated with an EU research project (from the years 2012 to 2015) funded by the 7th Framework Programme. Led by a Spanish Research Institute, 27 selected case studies across nine European countries (Spain, UK, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Czech Republic, Hungary, Greece, Finland) were involved as major sources for empirical evidence.

The book is well structured and inter-connected in three major parts, which consist of nine chapters- starting from theoretical concepts and practical examinations, followed by a proposed business model and a rigorous validation process. A number of chapters (most probably work packages) were contributed to by different co-authors. Some of them co-contribute to a number of chapters. Presumably for that reason some minor repetitions across chapters occur. Holistically though, the publication is dedicated to designing and operating seamless, smart, clean, and safe intermodal public transport systems.

Part 1, discusses a wide range of interchange concepts, firstly it (Chapter 1) introduces the project with an overall view to the interchange vision, methodology (and cases), process, and key aspects under investigation (governance, services, user needs and expectations). Chapter 2, through literature review, offers a good comprehension of intermodality regarding roles, barriers, recommendations, challenges, and solutions (interchange principles and goals). Chapter 3 explores interchanges as a "place" opposing to the concept of "non-places" (Augé, 1995), identifying a typology of interchanges (through a number of criteria e.g. functions, logistics, local constraints, place size, local impacts, and stakeholder involvement). Instead of regarding a hub as being associated with unpleasant transport functions, a hub in itself can be a "key" place. Chapter 4 presents a four-step city-hub life cycle to promote an innovative business model for interchange management and governance, namely identification (policy goals and needs, stakeholders, functions, objectives); validation (business models, financial plan, financial performance, ownership and management); deployment (roles, responsibilities, urban economic impacts, interaction between interchanges and city); monitoring and assessment (performance, socio-economic and environmental impacts, user feedback).

Based on conceptual understanding (Chapters 1 to 4), Part 2 presents the elements involved in efficient interchanges before proposing a city-hub model through empirical examinations of selected case studies. Chapter 5, based on stakeholders' interview findings, details a successful interchange which consists of five groups of elements, namely access/egress and the local area; transport and transfer; facilities and retail; travel information and intermodal services; and scaling of services. Chapter 6 explores user experience through travellers' attitudinal surveys (exploring satisfaction, trip habits, and socioeconomic characteristics) based on a list of observed variables generated from literature review. Systematic assessments were followed by using tools (e.g. Classification and Regress Tree Models; Importance-Performance Analysis; Principal Component Analysis)/processes, resulting in key identified factors in common and planning guidelines for efficient urban transport interchanges. Chapter 7 presents a city-hub model bringing together the identified processes and elements. Lastly, Part 3 further benchmarks the city-hub model through six validation case studies from which good practices are extracted. Chapter 8 cultivates with instrumental suggestions from a cross-cases analysis of European interchanges, followed by a brief conclusion presented in Chapter 9.

Improving interchanges is not a newly identified issue, from 2001 onwards, the European Policy Framework had emphasized the importance of improving interchanges for increasing public transport use. Given that intermodal uses remain very low, the authors noted that efforts made earlier do not seem to have evident effects. Although this book is not a pioneer on this subject, it makes a useful and comprehensive contribution by drawing together key concepts and methods from a number of preceding European projects on interchanges (e.g. GUIDE, MIMIC, LINK, ORIGAMI, CLOSER, INTERCONNECT). A business model of interchange stations (the EU HERMES project) is critically adopted to link together various identified processes, elements in the life-cycle of designing and operating transport interchanges.

Instead of being limited to specific mobility concerns, the comprehensiveness of the city-hub vision is explicit in its interdisciplinary approach to a wide spectrum of elements and issues, including governance (stakeholders, management, finance and business strategies), technological innovation, social concerns (inclusiveness and accessibility), urban land use planning and environment. A key message from this model is to enable evaluating policy and plans that could identify needs at the early stage, leading to better outcomes at the later stages.

The transferability of creating such a business model through a systematic process is definitely international and goes beyond Europe. This book is particularly instrumental for China where undergoes a large scale of public transport investment in various modes and the interchange practices need much more improvements (Hickman et al., 2015) such as their out-of-town location (poor accessibility), long queues, long-distance transfer, poor financial performance, vast scale and wayfinding difficulties, information deficiency and disintegrated ticketing systems. A number of perspectives in this book appears particularly critical such as financial sustainability, governance, management, and user experiences.

Although the book covers a wide range of surface transport modes in metropolitan central areas, air and water transport modes are not included. Moreover, a couple of emerging issues are worth further investigation and discussion. Firstly, the importance of "aged friendly" is highlighted but no samples were made of younger users (below 18 years old in general except for 26 years old in Ilford and Kamppi interchanges) and older users (beyond 65 years old). Secondly, potential conflicts arise among various priorities and concerns, such as how tightened security check processes might lead to a reduced comfort and lengthy transfer time. The growing dilemma in balancing security checks for ensuring safety and comfort and

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2017.09.014

Available online 21 October 2017
0966-6923

time saving is not duly discussed.

Yet, the development of interchanges in the dynamic world requires continuous dialogues between stakeholders and actions reacting to changes, challenges and opportunities. Recent technological advances such as automatic (driverless) cars, online hauling services (Uber alike), dockless and shared bikes bring about "*Disrupting Mobility*" (Meyer and Shaheen, 2017) that has made mobility patterns more and more complicated thus more challenges for integration. Although, the concluding words of the authors rightly remarked that "interchanges are not static entities, and therefore need to enhance their performance by updating their business model with innovative actions and quality assurance plans" (p. 206), it is still unclear how the business models could ensure a satisfactory answer to the central question of this book "how the public transport network can be made competitive with cars" (p. 202). At the end of the day, questions remain: who are the stakeholders discussed here and to what extent the competitive business models could ensure all stakeholders are not excluded from the whole process. For this question, the final outcomes would depend on and vary with different ideologies and contexts through the dynamic governance and implementation processes.

The book is definitely worth reading- a timely and useful publication to address the issues of urban interchanges by proposing a holistic and interdisciplinary "business model" approach. On the whole, this book is less academically driven but more a good reference for stakeholders mentioned in the books e.g. urban planners, transport operators, urban designers, business groups who can comprehend key concepts and adapt principles/methods/processes for generating their customized business models for different contexts and needs.

References

Augé, M., 1995. Non-places: introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. Verso, London & New York.
Hickman, R., Chen, C.-L., Chow, A., Saxena, S., 2015. Improving interchanges in China: the experiential phenomenon. J. Transp. Geogr. 42 (0), 175–186.
Meyer, G., Shaheen, S., 2017. Disrupting Mobility: Impacts of Sharing Economy and Innovative Transportation on Cities. Springer, Cham.

Chia-Lin Chen
Department of Urban Planning and Design, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, EB 510, Built Environment Cluster, 111 Renai Road, Suzhou Industrial Park, 215123, Jiangsu Province, PR China
E-mail address: chia-lin.chen@xjtlu.edu.cn