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Book review

Planning for Public Transport Accessibility: an international sourcebook. By Curtis, C. and Scheurer, J. (2016). London: Routledge. £ 76.50 (hardback) £ 24.49 (e-book). ISBN: 978-1472447241.

In the setting of internationally growing public transport accessibility dilemmas, and solutions, this 310 page publication adds to the solutions-pile by providing unique hands-on guidelines for evaluating and understanding spatial public transport accessibility. As the title suggests, this book is partly aimed at accessibility planners as a comprehensive sourcebook for accessibility planning in different settings worldwide. However, Curtis and Scheurer also explicitly address and include a variety of stakeholders such as public transport professionals, researchers and even well-informed and interested citizens.

As stated in the introduction (p. 2), this new narrative successfully addresses a gap in capturing and comparing complex spatial accessibility opportunities and challenges faced within different policy restrains. The authors demonstrate how a new generation of GIS-based accessibility tools can be used to inform and integrate land use development and public transport in the settings of the ongoing global movement toward sustainable mobility.

Preceding this publication, the authors have developed and used the tool SNAMUTS (The Spatial Network Analysis for Multimodal Urban Transport Systems) in an international research project aimed at analysing and comparing public transport accessibility in 23 cities with different prerequisites (e.g. public transport modes, governance, geographical and policy constraints) on four continents (Australasia, Asia, Europe and North America). The results of this project are thoroughly presented in a pedagogic and easy to follow layout aimed at bringing the reader insights into how these different cities are performing when it comes to spatial public transport accessibility, by offering a systematic and illustrative accessibility profile for each of the participating cities.

The authors introduce the readers (*Chapter 1*) by reminding us why public transport accessibility is important, providing a brief history and overview of contemporary accessibility challenges, such as their own main objective "*A lack of strategic overview*" (p. 2). They also shed light on the complexity of public transport development across disciplines and within different developmental stages of urban public transport systems. Considering their inclusion of citizens as a target-group of this publication, this brief introduction and overview seems well in place. And although the introduction has merit, I do think a short paragraph on the importance of accessibility beyond economical, spatial, or temporal efficiency, such as accessibility-related outcomes (e.g. well-being) or the role of accessibility in the prevention of social exclusion, would have contributed to the layman's understanding of the significance of accessibility.

Chapter 2 offers a brief but thorough introduction to the SNAMUTS-tool regarding its theoretical foundations (Space syntax theory and Multiple Centrality Analysis methodology, p. 9) and the different indicators included in the methodology. The authors claim to deliberately use layman-terms in order to avoid excluding practitioners and citizens from a thorough understanding of the concept, and this actually works well enough, given that those interested (e.g. citizens) have some basic understanding of geographical information systems and/or statistics.

The remainder of the book is divided into six key themes (one for each chapter and cluster of cities defined within that theme) where Curtis and Scheurer, aided by SNAMUTS, provide their readers with indicators for key aspects of accessibility systems focusing on the spatial accessibility of the transport network alongside spatial opportunities for accessing these networks (simply put, is it well integrated with other systems and/or easy to get to and from?). An accessibility profile is offered for each of the cities analysed. This profile determines overall spatial accessibility based on information assessed by each of the indicators included in SNAMUTS (e.g. network coverage, resilience, betweenness centrality, nodal connectivity). The authors also provide illustrative maps for each indicator, helping the reader visualise the output.

The key themes, based on key characteristics of the cities included (such as density, urban growth, planning traditions and public transport supply) are presented as follows; Continuity and Change in Australasian cities (*Chapter 3*), Stagnation and Aspiration in North American cities (*Chapter 4*), more with less? - efficiency and accessibility outcomes in European cities (*Chapter 5*), Eclipsing the car? - redirecting resources to provide sustainable alternatives (*Chapter 6*), Public Transport Dominance - rapid growth of high capacity public transport rail systems in wealthy Asian cities (*Chapter 7*), and Polycentric and multimodal interfaces - wider urban regions, cross commuting and geographical overlaps in the Dutch Randstad (*Chapter 8*).

This well thought through layout enables the reader to explore, evaluate and compare accessibility between and within thematic contexts and at the same time provides an overview of diverse accessibility approaches worldwide, including insights into how very complex accessibility planning and evaluation can be. This is an important contribution to the field of research as well as for practitioners as it covers such various aspects of interest. Furthermore, the identified key themes made me realize just how much effort Curtis and Scheurer have put into organizing the studies and interpreting and aggregating the outcomes leading up to the themes and reflections presented in each chapter.

The final chapter of the book (*Chapter 9*) summarizes the overall findings and reflects upon answers to introductory questions such as "What structures and types of urban form can optimize accessibility?" or "How should we invest in public transport infrastructure?" (p. 3) leading to the conclusion that a "*one size fits all-approach*" (p. 291) does not provide a realistic accessibility-optimizing perspective. This is also what I consider the top contribution of this book. Helping the readers realizing the complexity, different perspectives, historical prerequisites and other important geographical or policy-based constraints or prerequisites that need to be taken into consideration when evaluating and comparing accessibility

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within and between different geographical areas is essential for a successful implementation of the outcomes and methodology presented in this book. What is more, the authors do actually provide an array of accessibility attributes (starting at p. 291) that have proven helpful when designing for greater public transport accessibility, reminding us that, although there probably doesn't exist a full secret recipe for success, there are actually certain key characteristics that can help in improving accessibility planning.

Finally, as Curtis and Scheurer themselves point out, an advantage with the SNATMUS tool is its ability to differentiate between, but also link together and compare, aspects of different dimensions of accessibility; the land use dimension, the transport mode (network)-dimension, and the temporal dimension. Splendid and unique as this is, I believe that if our aim is to reach a fully comprehensive understanding of public transport accessibility, the readers also need to be reminded somehow that the fourth dimension of accessibility (the individual dimension or, in other words, the travellers' prerequisites, expectations and experiences) is (yet) not covered by this methodology. Having said this, I still consider this book an important and well-needed pioneering contribution for accessibility planners worldwide.

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