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Book review

Inequality in Transport by David Banister £9.99 Kindle. https://www.inequalityintransport.org.uk

The essence of David Banister's *Inequality in Urban Transport* lies in his use of John Rawls' theory on rights and justice, and Amartya Sen's capability approach to conceptually and empirically understand inequality in urban transport. The book is divided into four parts and eight chapters: Part 1 is on thinking about inequality, Part 2 deals with evidence of transport inequality, Part 3 covers the wider perspectives on inequality, and Part 4 outlines the possible next steps. In the introductory chapter, the author discusses whether there is rising inequality; whether government policies are targeted towards redistribution of income and wealth, and how the distribution process works in a democratic system.

The author frames the issue under the sustainable mobility paradigm and urban transport justice. He emphasizes that the question is about the nature and extent of injustice, including one's freedom to move around the city. He contrasts individual versus collective interests, especially to emphasize whether the interests of poor are being served or not. As per Rawls' approach, justice is not defined as providing everyone the same (accessibility), but rather about reducing inequality of opportunity. The content of the book sits, on one hand, in the backdrop of transport inequality and justice literature, and on the other, in relation to climate change and low carbon transport, energy efficiency etc. This is an important step considering there is a point of intersection between low carbon development and sustainability, i.e., whether delivery of low carbon development would affect mobility of the marginalized population.

The book is unique and important in many ways. It presents a historical account of transport inequality in the context of Britain. Inequality is presented both conceptually and empirically. The author uses datasets from Great Britain's National Travel survey from 2002 to 2012. Data is presented on the increase in miles-travelled over time by traditional public transport (bus, metro, rail; for a time period of over 200 years), and more recently by car and airlines (over the last four decades). A detailed database shows increase in the speed of movement with increasing distance travelled, in line with the rise in economic growth, and also, in comparison with inequality. He makes comparisons between the 5% poorest and the 5% richest in the form of travel, distance and travel time. He shows that only the 20% richest in the population make 63% of long-distance journeys, and raises question about the large investment in high-speed rail. He makes a similar comparison using travel via airlines. The richest 10% fly 7 times more than the poorest 40%, and make 60% of all trips. While it is generally challenging to access data on socio-economic status vis-a-vis the transport sector, the author presents detailed data, to demonstrate which part of society has achieved improved mobility, which is then compared with investment in transport. The author very carefully then co-relates both inequality and mobility to one's (both at the individual and collective level) capacity to participate in the society, which brings Sen's capability approach in to the discussion. While the author presents empirical evidence from the UK context, the framework is extremely relevant in other contexts too, specially in the emerging economies context and can help to bring out evidence on transport injustice through transport policy, provided necessary data is available. Such an analysis is extremely relevant at this point in time especially if used as evidence by the policy makers, since many emerging economies aspire to be amongst the developed economies through urbanisation.

In the opening chapter, the author puts forth his position on inequality: wealth grows faster than economic output, and slower economic growth leads to increasing inequality. Such an analysis would tell readers what kind of investment in the transport sector would lead to a more equal society. With the current trend of private sector investment, and low carbon infrastructure in the transport sector in light of climate change, policy makers would benefit from such analysis. This is, as pointed out by one scholar,[1] in line with the phenomenon of more publications on automated vehicles than studies on transport justice in last couple of years. However, the author explains what kinds of questions are not answered by transport policies related to automated vehicles, such as transport inequality and justice.

To conclude, the book provides a very useful and timely framework to evaluate inequality in transport. To me, the essence of the book lies in the use of Sen's and Rawls' framework on transport inequality. While in many contexts, planning culture may not consider Sen's and Rawls' frameworks as part of the Planning discipline, the analysis put forth in the book clearly shows how such frameworks are important in measuring inequality, and also why professional (transport and other) planners should learn about these approaches too. There could be many potential future studies that replicate this framework in other contexts. Students, academics, professional transport planners and urban professionals would find the book very useful in learning how to deliver more equitable transport development.

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[1] Greg Marsden on Twitter.

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