Journal of Transport Geography 79 (2019) 102446

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Transport Geography

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

Book review

Transport Justice Designing Fair Transport Systems by Karel Martens. 2017. New York Routledge £40.99. ISBN 978-0415638326

This is a medium-sized paperback book by established researcher Karel Martens. It is written in dense academic prose, interspersed with numerous (27) black-and-white illustrations and a few (5) tables and a couple of 'boxes' which provide an engaging format for issues that go beyond the main discussion.

The aim of the book is to set-out an approach for transport planning based on the concept of justice. It navigates a carefully-balanced course between theory and ample real-world examples, which I found useful as a researcher interested in the field but with little engagement with the theoretical underpinnings of transport justice research to date. This dual approach is illustrated in **Part I** (*Introduction*), in which Chapter 1 (also called *Introduction*) commences with a fascinating case study of Los Angeles, in which a court ruled that the local transport authority must invest in the bus system (used predominantly by low-income citizens) rather than capital-intensive new rail projects which would primarily benefit the relatively well-off. The point is that Transport Justice is not a merely theoretical field: it has real-world implications, something that comes through clearly throughout the book.

After an explanation of how justice is (and more often is *not*) accounted for in dominant transport planning paradigms in Chapter 2, a series of chapters in **Part II** (*Philosophical Explorations*) explore some philosophical underpinnings of transport justice. Despite this section of the book being the one I am least qualified to review - I found it the most interesting. Chapter 5, for example, goes into the details of what justice means, building largely on principles first set-out by John Rawls, and lucidly explains how these can be applied to transport justice. Building on this theoretical foundation, Chapters 6 and 7 discuss lack of accessibility and the definition of 'sufficient' accessibility, respectively, vital topics in the field.

Part III contains the most ambitious writing in the book in its attempt to develop *A New Approach to Transport Planning*. For me it was also the most disappointing. The mention of "designing fair transport systems" in the title of the book had led me to expect ideas about policy, technology and infrastructure options that researchers and practitioners could use in this 'new approach'. Instead, Part III continues to be largely theoretical. The first of the two chapters in this final part (the book has 9 chapters in total) sets out 'rules' for transport planning based on justice. After a discussion of ways of measuring fairness (including accessibility measures and Gini indexes applied to transport variables) the approach is reduced to 10 steps, outlined in text boxes in Fig. 8.5. After the fascinating and wide-ranging philosophical explorations earlier in the book, I was surprised at how narrow and linear these rules were.

Of course, Martens does not expect them to be followed like a recipe and provides a strong discussion of how the approach should be applied 'in the wild'. However, from a practitioner's perspective I wonder if a more simplistic (and easy to remember) set of rules or principles could be developed, that included wider issues such a climate justice.

The final chapter (*Case Study*) applies concepts and methods discussed in the previous chapters to the city of Amsterdam. While I was grateful for some concrete application of the rules, I found the choice of city (in a wealthy country with relatively low levels of economic inequality) strange, given the breadth of preceding chapters.

One notable omission was the lack of mention of climate change: the book emphasises the importance of environmental justice and transport is a major emitter (Creutzig et al., 2015), so I was expecting this to be covered in some depth. Climate change is clearly a major (perhaps the largest) cause of environmental *injustice*. The poorest people on Earth contribute least to the problem, yet are most affected by its impacts (White-Newsome, 2009), suggesting that there is great scope for further work in the field of Transport Justice exploring how climate change intersects with and amplifies existing inequalities.

A minor gripe I have is formatting: Fig. 2.1 has a prominent vertical line that overlies and interferes with the text in the text boxes and there are no scale bars or base maps for context in the Chapter 9. Whether or not such issues affect the overall experience of reading *Transport Justice* is a personal issue: the book should primarily be judged on the contents outlined above, which were eye opening for me.

In conclusion, I think the book will be of interest to transport planners and researchers new to the field of Transport and Justice. However, the book is limited by its selective coverage of topics (most notably climate change) and locations (the focus is almost exclusively on Western cities), and the lack of vision in the proposed 'new approach', which I found reductionist. Therefore, I recommend this book not as a definitive guide to Transport Justice, but as a vehicle to motivate more evidence-based, geographically universal and technologically aware research in the area.

References

Creutzig, Felix, Jochem, Patrick, Edelenbosch, Oreane Y., Mattauch, Linus, van Vuuren, Detlef P., McCollum, David, Minx, Jan, 2015. Transport: a roadblock to climate change mitigation? Science 350 (6263), 911–912. http://science.sciencemag.org/content/350/6263/911.short https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aac8033.

White-Newsome, J., 2009. Climate change, heat waves, and environmental justice: advancing knowledge and action. Environ. Justice 2 (3), 197–205. https://doi.org/10.1089/env.2009.0032.

Robin Lovelace,
Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom
E-mail address: r.lovelace@leeds.ac.uk.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2019.05.011

Available online 18 June 2019
0966-6923