Book review

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility

UN-Habitat. Earthscan Publications, Abingdon, UK, for and on behalf of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), Nairobi, Kenya, 2013, ISBN 978-0-415-72318-3, \$47.95, 317 pp.

The pressure for changes in urban and transportation planning has been increasing every single day in nearly all corners of the globe. This is clearly shown in the report entitled *Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Mobility*, recently released by UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The focus of the document is on the need of moving from the traditional transportation planning to mobility planning, while aiming at sustainable patterns of development. Although several authors have already emphasised this aspect, only a few have managed to combine so many policy and planning elements and instruments into a single document as this report.

The text starts with an overview of the following interconnected events: rapid urbanisation, hyper-mobility, and health and climate hazards associated with motorised transport. They are all a consequence of the dependence on private motorised vehicles, as discussed in the introductory chapter and restated several times throughout the report. Car dependency is not the only topic discussed in the introduction. The importance of accessibility, for instance, is discussed right at the beginning of the chapter, which brings the topic into the spotlight, as one could expect in a discourse aiming at sustainable mobility.

The book still contains another nine chapters devoted to the analysis of 'global trends, conditions and policy responses with respect to urban mobility'. Each of the first three chapters following the introduction has a specific focus. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss passenger transport, whereas chapter 4 discusses freight transport. This arrangement is particularly interesting, first, because goods transport is a topic frequently neglected in the discussions about sustainable mobility, despite a general agreement on the role played by this segment of transportation in urban traffic; second, because most of the studies about urban freight transportation are treated separately from passenger transportation, as if they did not take place in the same physical and institutional environment.

Chapter 5 somehow combines the problems diagnosed in the previous chapters with the opportunities for corrective intervention, shown in the

next parts of the report. This is done while looking at the interrelations between mobility and urban form, in order to show that the improvement of accessibility is often strongly dependent on a reconfiguration of the spatial attributes of the city (i.e. urban form, population density etc.). The chapter also highlights the identification of spatial scales of intervention for mobility planning and urban growth, namely neighbourhoods, districts/corridors and regions.

The general framework built in chapter 5 sets the scene for the discussion of the details regarding the social, environmental, economic and institutional dimensions of sustainable mobility, conducted in chapters 6 to 9. All these aspects are developed from the beginning of the report, but a detailed review is saved for those chapters. Affordability, equity, safety and security are some of the topics related to the social dimension of urban mobility. Regarding the environment, among the topics of discussion are oil dependence, greenhouse gas emissions and human health concerns. The chapter on the economic dimension starts with a description of the economic characteristics by transport mode and context, followed by a discussion about the required transition 'from economics of mobility towards economics of access'. Finally, the last chapter of this group provides an interesting overview of institutional and governance frameworks for urban mobility conditions. As in most of the book, the discussion always shows and highlights the differences of cases in developed and developing countries.

The final chapter combines the key findings of the book with policies and strategies aiming at sustainable urban mobility. In summary, the book is an important contribution to the subject, not only because it shows several examples of successful and unsuccessful initiatives, but also because it provides prescriptive recommendations for the improvement of sustainable urban mobility. In the particular case of the recommendations, a point acknowledged by the authors should be noticed: the responses to the suggested policies are context-sensitive; that is, they vary within each region and even within countries. Although this is a very important remark for such a complex problem, it does not diminish the importance of the contribution provided by the book. On the contrary, it makes the publication even more useful to practitioners and policy-makers who deal with the subject and must keep in mind that no magic solution will solve local problems without proper adjustments to the context. The report suggests good general guidelines for tackling urban mobility issues. The details of the actions, however, must be dealt with locally, on a case-by-case basis.

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