

works for analysing spatial behaviour, decision making and concrete activity. Linking these classical concepts with the expanding opportunities given by new IT tools and computerised technology for assessing spatial activity and behaviour, as they are presented here, is extremely promising for the advancement of transport related geography.

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**Balkrishan Vaidya, Geography of Transport Development in India, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2003, ISBN 817022957X, pp. 465 (hbk) \$32**

As the world's second most populous country, and moreover, one with a rapidly growing demand for transport services, one might expect there to be a voluminous literature on India's transportation system. Yet this is not the case. Surprisingly, India's transport geography has received scant scholarly attention. Precisely for this reason, *Geography of Transport Development in India* is a welcome addition to the literature. Edited by Balkrishan Vaidya, the book comprises 29 chapters detailing the origins, nature and evolution of India's transportation system. The authors are all Indian scholars, something which is reflected in the impressive level of empirical detail that they bring to their individual contributions.

The chapters are organised into three main sections. The first broadly examines transportation systems—notably, rail and road—at the national level. Particular emphasis is placed on the development of transport networks across India, their socio-economic linkages, and contemporary policy challenges. The second section examines the “metropolitan transport system” through a series of case-studies of various Indian cities. The choice of metropolitans is wide-ranging, with all of India's largest urban centres covered, including Chennai, Calcutta, Delhi and Mumbai. Finally, the third section takes a regional perspective, focusing largely on transport developments at the state and sub-state level. Again, the approach is case-study based, with each chapter focusing on a specific Indian region. Overall, the scalar organisation of the chapters into three sections is a useful one. It draws attention to the similarities, as well as the differences, of the dynamics of transport development at the local, regional and national level.

The overwhelming impression to emerge from the individual contributions is of a transportation system facing acute challenges. Demand for transport services is growing rapidly. Yet the supply of transport infrastructure has failed to keep pace with this demand. A

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combination of poor planning, inadequate resources and limited political will have constrained expansion. The result is a series of negative consequences for economic growth, the environment and social equity. Usefully, a large number of the authors offer policy prescriptions for improving the status quo, many of which make insightful reading for policy-makers.

‘Geography of Transport Development in India’ does a good job of describing the development of India's transportation system at a number of spatial scales. The level of detail is impressive. The reader is served-up with a wide-range of data, and indeed, the chapters collectively provide a useful statistical compendium of India's road and rail network. These data are accompanied by an equally detailed description of network evolution, policy issues, and evaluation of the wider implications of current developments for economy, society and environment. Yet the collection is not entirely descriptive. A number of chapters follow the rich quantitative tradition within transport geography to statistically analyse, for example, network accessibility and efficiency.

While Balkrishan Vaidya needs to be congratulated for his efforts in bringing together a diverse set of contributions, it ought to be noted that the book is not perfect. Thus, it is a shame that the authors do not go further in conceptualising the evolution of India's transportation systems in terms of broader shifts in governance, economy and society. What is more, the contributions overlook a number of more recent developments affecting transportation. Despite the image of a jet aeroplane on the book's dust jacket, for example, there is little discussion of the implications of the expansion of internal airline flights for India's transport geography. Similarly, recent pollution control measures in the commercial and private vehicles sector receive inadequate attention from the contributors.

Yet these criticisms should not detract from what is otherwise a detailed, highly informative and well-researched collection of chapters. Above all, *Geography of Transport Development in India* serves well as a reference text, bringing together statistical data, contextual description, and so on, from a large number of experts

in the field. Indeed, for anyone contemplating research into India's transportation system, the edited book is an excellent starting point. More broadly, the book will appeal to policy-makers—both in India and elsewhere—concerned with transportation issues in a developing country context.

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**Birgit Kleymann, Hannu Seristö, *Managing Strategic Airline Alliances*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004, ISBN 0 7546 1327 5, x + 206 pp., (hbk) £47.50/\$79.95**

The 'Ashgate Studies in Aviation Economics and Management' series of books, edited by Dr. George Williams and Professor Tae Oum, provides those interested in the study of air transport with an ever-expanding collection of highly specialised manuscripts dealing with a broad spectrum of issues within Air Transport. *Managing Strategic Airline Alliances* by Birgit Kleymann and Hannu Seristö is the latest addition to the series, concentrating on providing a detailed examination of primarily the management side of what is becoming one of the biggest issues in air transport, the airline alliance. Broken into 11 chapters (the authors point out that no pun is intended given the current state of the industry!), the book makes a natural progression from an overview of the characteristics of the industry and alliances in particular, through discussion of the objectives of the various types of alliances, to a more in-depth analysis of management issues regarding alliances.

The first chapter does an excellent job of covering the basics of airline alliances, addressing such topics as types of alliances, scopes of alliances, and levels of integration. The core of the book devotes chapters to the management issues surrounding alliances including marketing, governance, financial benefits, and competition from both outside and within the alliances. The book's final two chapters are devoted to examining the successes and failures in airline alliances as well as a look into the future based upon the research that formed the foundation for the previous chapters. This is a truly distinct book in that it primarily takes a management approach to understanding airline alliances.

The book is without doubt a specialised text targeted towards practitioners in the air transport industry (especially managers) or those who conduct research on alliances both in air transport in particular or more widely. This is not to say that the text is not accessible to others interested in the industry, as the book is well written and presents its information in a straightforward, easy to follow manner. While the chapters are linked together

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through the study of airline alliances, they also stand independently so that readers can gain maximum benefit from individual chapters that suit their interests. As with any good research-based text, this one provides a very good bibliography at the end of each chapter allowing the reader to pursue further topics of interest.

One of the highlights of the book is chapter four: 'Alliance Life: Talking to the Practitioners'. This chapter highlights what practitioners in the industry think about their alliances, both in public and privately. The authors use correspondence, interviews, and press releases to gain a better understanding of how those in charge of creating and running the alliances in airline management feel about alliances. It was almost disappointing when the chapter concludes because of the insight gained through the inside view of how the alliances are created, operate, and managed. It would be great to see this chapter expanded into a separate text.

Air transport geographers and transport geographers in general will especially be interested in chapters two ('Alliancing Objectives'), three ('The Dynamics of Interdependence'), five ('Competing with the Alliance: Strategy Options of Independents'), and 10 ('Success and Failure Factors of Airline Alliances'). These four chapters, along with the others, provide a strong academic research foundation and do a good job of analysing their subject matter from a management standpoint. The door is left open for geographers to add their own distinctive perspective to each theme to further understand the dynamics of airline alliances. This is not to say that the authors overlook the geographic aspect of airline alliances. The latter half of chapter three is devoted to analysing the dynamics of interdependence in recent alliance strategic moves through the lens of geographic scope. In chapter five the authors go as far as to mention directly the various geographic strategies in which independent carriers may engage. This is in contrast to a passage in chapter six where the authors write, with regard to shifts in airline marketing: "Looking at the markets in terms of geography is perhaps becoming less important, but they should be viewed more and more in terms of reason for travel, demographic features, and travel purchase patterns".