

DAWSON, JONATHAN AND IAN BARWELL

1993 : **Roads are Not Enough : New Perspective on Rural Transport Planning in Developing Countries,**

London : Intermediate Technology Publication, 79 + VIII

The growth of transportation network is considered as an important means by the development theorists and policy makers in the wider process of social and economic development as it facilitates the geographical and social mobility in the traditional social systems. The construction of all weather roads was put on top priority in the earlier development plans of most of the underdeveloped countries of the 'Third World'. The book under review suggests that the 'highway and car' approach will not be able to meet the totality of important transport demands of the rural communities in the developing world and put forward a new approach to the analysis and understanding of the rural transport patterns. The book is a part of the series commenced by Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) Established to generate awareness about intermediate technology in the developing societies.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter simply introduces the theme of the book and delineates the major objectives of the present work as follows (a) 'to trace the evolution of transport theory and policy and to chart the emergence of the new 'need-led' approach (b) to describe the methodology and findings of a number of recent studies following the line of this new approach and (c) to examine the implications of these works for policy makers and to suggest a number of areas of intervention which could usefully be explored and to complement the development of rural road networks with a view to reducing the scale of the transport burden which currently imposes so heavily on time and energy of the rural poor'. The subsequent chapters deal with these issues in a systematic manner.

In the second chapter the evolution of transport theory and policy in last few decades is traced. The authors argue that the conventional rural transport models adopted by most of the developing countries focussed more or less exclusively on roads and motor vehicles. The limitations of this model are identified by the authors as "the lack of agreement on the role

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played by road and motor vehicles or on their impact; the cost of maintenance of the road infrastructure was recognized as being very high; and most seriously of all, large sections of the rural community were seen to be largely untouched by motor vehicles" (p.5). As a result a number of studies conducted by social scientists in third world countries in 1980's adopted a new methodological approach in rural transport analysis. The major emphasis of this approach was to take the household as the unit of analysis.

The third chapter takes a note of community and household studies focussing on transport needs of the rural population in developing countries like Tanzania, Ghana and Philippines. The authors analyse the findings of these studies in a comparative frame work and take into account the variables like distance to key places, means of transport used, travel patterns, disaggregation of household transport tasks and presented a wider picture before the readers about the transport burden whose existence was recognised by many social scientists in general but no serious attempt was made to quantify them. This gives a clear picture of the problems related to the transport burden of rural population in the developing world.

In the fourth chapter, the authors examine the range of options to address the rural transport problem. They suggest a thorough reappraisal of the role and scope of policy in the field of rural transportation which should involve three key developments in strategy thinking. These are "(a) recognition that the range of initiatives and policies which could be adopted is considerably greater than generally been exploited to date; (b) broadening of the definition of the problem beyond 'mobility' to encompass the wider concept of 'accessibility' and (c) acknowledgement that policies appropriate to reducing the rural transport burden must be location specific and must respond more closely to specific physical cultural and socio-economic characteristics and needs of the target area. Such an approach calls for a move away from 'Project based planning' towards 'area based planning' methods and for a more open minded and imaginative response to rural transport which takes local factors into account" (p. 39-40). The authors have discussed at a length three possible ways in which the mobility of rural households can be enhanced in order to fulfil their transport needs namely, greater use of intermediate links of Transport, development of local transport infrastructure and expansion of local rural transport services. They have also suggested certain measures to remove constraints for the adoption of intermediate means of transports (IMTs) in developing countries like Africa where people are not aware about the existence of a range of IMTs. These constraints may be removed by measures like education and awareness production, supply affordability and import policy. In authors' view, the development of rural transport infrastructure will have a central role in a comprehensive strategy to enhance rural mobility. There are three key aspects in the development and sustainability of appropriate rural transport infrastructure viz. (a) path and track network; (b) low cost road

construction (cl)labour basd construction and maintenance methods. The holistic approach entails the rational planning of interventions not only on measures to improve mobility by making* travel faster, cheaper or less burdensome but also incorporates the option of 'non-transport' policy measures and interventions to increase accessibility by reducing or obviating the needs for rural people. These interventions may be of two types: the location of infrastructural facilities in rural areas and storage and credit provisions.

In the last chapter the authors conclude their argument as follows. "This holistic approach entails the rational planning of interventions, and the allocation of resources, in response to the real accessibility needs of communities in particular areas. The interventions will include a mix of measures to enhance mobility and to provide facilities which will reduce the need for travel and transport. The balance of the mix will depend on the local conditions prevailing in the area. This area based planning approach can provide an entry point to more comprehensive; rural development planning responsive to local needs." (P.75).

The authors have presented their views and arguments in a lucid manner. The chapters are organised in a systematic way. The book may be proved very useful for the researchers, planners and teachers engaged in development research and planning in the Third World countries.

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