

Reading reflections

USP 570

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Week 9

- Present and future

At the end of this book (Levinson and Krizek 2018 Chapter.14), the authors give the reader some advice. Firstly, “Do not harm” point out the several typical mistakes of the past. Some policies “interfere with the healthy functioning of networks and neighborhoods. Many have equally detrimental effects.” Such as low-density development, zoning monoculture, minimum parking requirements, and etc. Secondly, “Evidence-based practices” emphasize positivism and empiricism, which “base decisions on facts and logic, not ideology, hunches, fads, or poorly understood the experience.” In the third section, the authors also notice the counter-argument to positivism. Because of the lag time, confounding effects, and the complexity of society, the evidence-based research about transportation and land use have many limitations. In the fourth caution, the authors repeat their value of incrementalism for the “path dependency resulting from political, institutional, and physical systems.” At the end of this book, the authors state their thoughts about how the future life, work, and travel could influence the transportation and land use field.

- The future with AVs

In the APA report, Crute et al. (2018) introduced the concept of Autonomous Vehicles (AVs) and how they work. This emerging technology may bring both benefits and challenges to urban and communities. The potential impacts on land use include parking, sprawl, and other redevelopments. The report suggests keeping eyes on the parking standards and requirements, to bolster transportation demand management, to reconsider the right-of-way, and to continue to develop transit.

- Discussion:

Levinson and Krizek (2018) summarized their values and expectations in a prose style. This chapter reflects the contradictions between incrementalism and strategic planning in the transportation and land use field. The incremental, empirical methodology and epistemology are good at given conditions, are good in the middle section of one historical stage. For example, although the public often votes against high density in many cases, at least scholars reach a consensus on compact development. Why “land use regulations that reduce development densities” is a mistake? Because today we realized and anticipated some bad results of the sprawl that based on the previous observation and evidence. Supposing now there is only one-tenth of the population as before, or we successfully achieve immigration Mars, will we still insist these opinions? The human’s rationality is limited and expedient, is subject to the context constraints. The human instinct of getting higher mobility and occupying more living space is stronger and permanent. Why the land use density and transit

share are still not ideal despite many efforts for the past few decades? Because we still live in the auto era. The travel cost is significantly less than that in the last era. That is the “confines of mature Systems” mentioned by Levinson and Krizek (2018).

The authors believe “while the coefficients within the equations will change, the equations will remain the same.” I believe the changes are not merely about quantities or parameters, are about the distributions. One hundred years ago, the automobile dominated the street because it released human instinct rather than restricting it. Many troubles at the old age gone with the wheel and new troubles emerged. Now when walking to the node of history, we need to put down some granted experiences and mindset.

Crute et al. (2018) give a comprehensive prospect for the AVs era, including rethinking the parking standard, right-of-way, and improving transit. But these approaches are hoping the new technology to solve the old problems belong to the current age, rather than propose some strategies towards a new age. It is similar to say, in one hundred years ago, “By the newly invented automobile, we have the opportunity to completely solve the problem of horse dung everywhere on the street.” It was correct for the faithful empiricist, but it only answered a small part of the questions. We need some revolutionary thinking to match a revolutionary technology, even if most of them proved to be wrong one hundred years later.

References

- Crute, Jeremy, William Riggs, Timothy Stewart Chapin, and Lindsay Stevens. 2018. “Planning for Autonomous Mobility.” PAS Report 592. American Planning Association.
- Levinson, David M, and Kevin J Krizek. 2018. *Metropolitan Land Use and Transport: Planning for Place and Plexus*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315684482>.