

makes ours 'a privileged generation' which can hope to 'embark on a new and exciting phase of growth' (pp. 252–257). There is a whistling-in-the-dark theme that intrudes repeatedly into pages that diagnose the world's ills in terms that seem belied by any Pollyanna-like prognosis.

This book describes itself as 'no ordinary atlas'. It is extraordinary for attempting to map and analyze 'a living planet at a critical point in its history'. Although its picture-book style may seem just what is needed to get the attention of the leader of at least one of the superpowers, it is also possible that this format will stigmatize the book's message as more avant garde than vital, more arty than profound, more profit-seeking than prophetic.

Although I tend to be sceptical of this book's contention that the Chinese understand ecosystem vulnerability so well that they can be set up as a model for other nations to emulate, I would feel more assured of a happy future for the grandchild I acquired on the day I sat down to compose these paragraphs if we could suppose the leaders of all the world's nations would read and ponder at least the one-page introductions to the seven chapter-like portions of this atlas. They, especially, need to share the vision set forth in this book, of 'a green world, in which all people will enjoy the rights of a new ethic — of conservation, and of concern'.

WILLIAM R. CATTON JR
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington, U.S.A.

Rural Transport in Developing Countries, I. Barwell, G.A. Edmonds, J.D.G.F. Howe and J. de Veen, vi + 145 pp., 1985, Intermediate Technology Publications. London (copyright by International Labour Organisation), £12.50

This book describes nine case studies on the transport situation in developing countries, mainly coming out of the work of the ILO Technology and Employment Programme over the last decade, and it complements recent books by ILO, ITDG (and World Bank) on labour-intensive road construction, low-cost vehicles and feeder road programmes.

The main objectives of the editors are to 'improve understanding' of rural transport needs and how they are met, and to 'contribute to the development of practical policies' — the first purpose is better met than the second. The strength of the book lies in the specific case studies, the details of which build up the picture of the existing poverty of rural transport systems and their utilisation, the vast gaps between demand and supply, and the 'inhibiting' effect poor transport has on economic growth. Details such as that, in Bangladesh, the cost of travel to obtain credit may absorb 25% of its value; in Kenya, women make 30 times as many trips as men to collect water and fuelwood; and in North India, 74% of rural households have no vehicle, even a bicycle, but 30% indicate no need because their holdings are so small.

The studies are divided into:

- I. (Mainly micro) surveys of rural transport patterns (Malaysia, India, Nigeria, Kenya);
- II. Brief investigations of seven transport modes in

- Samoa, South Korea, and the Philippines (unfortunately a number of the photos are of poor quality);
- III. Three broader studies of policy and planning implications in regions of Tanzania, Bangladesh and Kenya.

The edited case studies naturally vary in interest and quality, from those of Kenya and Bangladesh which provoke and examine issues of wide relevance, to those of Philippines (detailed findings from a weak sample), India (a dated and limited survey from which to assess 'rural transport in India'), and Nigeria. The latter study produces the unexplained finding that 'off-road' settlements have six times as many farm-trips as 'on-road', towns (2½–3 trips per capita per day); and the (to me) counterintuitive finding that vehicle speed is the first attribute sought by farmers, with reliability and cost the last. The Kenya study in contrast is a detailed and convincing survey which, *inter alia*, emphasises headloading, and demonstrates clearly that the prime transport need is for frequent, small loads over short distances — highly significant for designing 'appropriate' technology and policies.

Questions of wealth and access to resources are understated, entering the chapter on policy implications as a final factor after discussions of networks, modes and trip characteristics; although the studies in Philippines, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Kenya graphically demonstrate that initial purchase prices and lack of credit are the biggest practical hurdles to access to more efficient transport. The editors give little attention here to the socio-political implications of transport changes, the implicit idea being that basic transport needs can be addressed through identifying and developing appropriate vehicles and networks without slippage favouring the dominant rural classes. Correspondingly the two sections describing movement patterns and modes are overall the most satisfactory; and they also introduce relevant policy topics such as support for small-scale manufacturers (India), and a methodology for participatory AT development (the *chee geh* in South Korea).

The last section is less satisfying, precisely because it is addressing the broadest political economic questions. Though ventilating aspects of the control and direction of transport policy-making, the implications are not followed through. Thus, for example, recommendations are made for government intervention in transport provision and in developing small-scale modes without assessing their political feasibility. Whereas most developing countries employ rhetoric supporting equity and rural development, actual investments favour urban over rural, roads over 'off-road', motorised over non-motorised, etc., generally reflecting capitalist market priorities. This contradiction is reflected in the proposals put forward in the Tanzania study for state intervention and co-operative activities to overcome clearly identified local deficiencies. These rather optimistic and idealistic proposals starkly contrast with the Bangladesh analysis of how benefits are actually skewed towards traders, bigger farmers and the rural elite. The final chapters would also have benefited from broader concepts of access, seen here more in terms of physical mobility than factors governing people's use of resources and the reach of services.

The conclusions also highlight two weaknesses in the original surveys which detract from the general applicability of their findings. The conclusion that 'the majority

of transport movements . . . are unrelated to agricultural marketing . . .' (p. 134) reflects a narrow view of the rural economy and a simplistic categorisation of trip-purpose in peasant systems where non-monetised exchanges and 'informal' contacts predominate.

Secondly, the studies (with the partial exception of Kenya) lack any analysis of gender differentiation which is fundamental to policy-making and to seeking appropriate solutions. Who (in Africa) actually perform most off-road headloading? Who (in South Asia) are relatively immobile under cultural-religious norms? Who (everywhere) control transport investments and new technologies?

If this review is critical, it is because much of the best work in Third World transport emanates from ILO and ITDG. Leaving aside the limited conclusions, the book is worth purchasing by anyone in this field for the (abbreviated) case studies which otherwise are not easily accessed, and it could profitably supplement texts for rural development courses.

MIKE McCALL
*Twente University of Technology
Enschede, Netherlands*

Rural China Today, Frank Leeming, 201 pp., 1985, Longman, London, £8.50

The book focuses on rural life in China as it revolves around the organization and operation of the food and commodity production system. It provides an analysis of the complex balance between the potential for disorder in this diverse land of nearly 1 billion persons and the need to maintain stability through state control. This underlying conflict is examined in the contrast drawn between life in rural China under Maoist policy and that of today, with its new innovations, particularly enterprise, trade and diversification.

The initial chapters provide background to the nature of agriculture, and other rural activities and the organization of the production system. They illustrate the Maoist thrust on basic food production, self-sufficiency and egalitarian re-distribution. Chapter 5 introduces recent trends toward diversification, production for commerce, and responsibility and enterprise in production at the commune and family levels. However, the book points out that it would be wrong to see these trends as embracing free enterprise systems wholeheartedly, since they are constrained by public ownership of all land, large commitments to the state plans, and the prohibition of private employment of labour.

The latter part of the book focuses on regional differences, special resources and commodity production systems. These discussions provide detailed insight into the past problems and current potentials in selected major regions of China. It also highlights the models of rural development in China, 'high output poverty' and 'low output poverty' in the north China plain. Problems of land reclamation, and major irrigation works are noted. The critical element of success in the new policies being trade, and the infrastructure required, are also dealt with. In contrast, rural industrialization in the densely populated areas of Jinshan and Shanghai in the south-east is

discussed as an important diversification trend and rural problem. The problem of 'low output poverty' of mountainous areas under staple food production is assessed relative to the potential for increasing production under diversification of agriculture and extraction of other resources, e.g. forestry, grazing and collection of wild produce.

The discussion of China's forest resources is of particular interest as it is not well documented in western literature. The balance between afforestation and deforestation is discussed. Contrasts between the periods of afforestation at present and after liberation are made with deforestation under Maoist policy of land reclamation. Problems of ownership and management are focal to forestry in China and recent trends toward conservation and afforestation under local management and individual ownership are encouraging.

Analysis of the loess plateau of central China with its aridity and erodible soils is useful in illustrating the problems of the drive for self-sufficiency in staple food production. It stresses the need for local adaptation of management plans and production systems in China.

The text finishes with a review of staples production, grain, cotton, sugar, and reviews the economic significance of these crops and their relation to other production. It also reviews and assesses the regions and the system, looking at problems and opportunities in China's search for stability and prosperity.

In summary, I found the book comprehensive in its discussion of rural production systems and exceedingly well documented. Some readers may find that the book lacks insight into the lives of the rural people. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this is not possible, due to restrictions on travel and contact in China. I feel, however, that the examination of the production system as it represents a focus of rural life, is an important contribution. It is not, however, a particularly readable book. The extensive illustration of points made with many case studies and illustrations frequently detract from the continuity of the discussion. The discussion of development models, as they apply in China, is particularly useful for students as it provides a simple conceptualization.

A number of my Chinese colleagues visiting from the agricultural university in Beijing reviewed the book with me and generally felt, as I, that the book is a useful and fair evaluation of rural China and should be recommended to those interested in understanding recent changes in rural China.

JOHN FITZGIBBON
University of Guelph, Canada

The Waveney Project: the Role of the Catalyst in Rural Community Development, M.J. Moseley, Social Work Monograph No. 36, 1985, University of East Anglia, Norwich, £2.95

The important part played by voluntary action within rural communities has been part and parcel of life in the countryside for a great many years. More recent is the idea of fostering that voluntary activity in a conscious sense by the employment of what the French have graphically