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### International business travel in the global economy, J.V. Beaverstock, B. Derudder, J. Faulconbridge, F. Witlox (Eds.)

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**International Business Travel in the Global Economy, J.V. Beaverstock, B. Derudder, J. Faulconbridge, F. Witlox (Eds.). Ashgate, Surrey, UK (2010).**

The eruption of Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland this April stranded hundreds of thousands of passengers all over Europe and elsewhere in the world, but also offered a rare opportunity to reflect on the relatively uninterrupted provision and growth of air transport service around the world. The sheer scale of this industry, as suggested by the massive travel and logistic chaos that ensued, highlight the centrality of this industry to the global economy. *International Business Travel in the Global Economy* provides an up-to-date account of the current state of business-related air travel, as well as the industry's important historical trends and the broader sociological context under which such changes took place.

Business travel accounts for a disproportionately large share of revenue and profit to transport service providers, and is therefore an important topic. However, few studies on international travels focus squarely on business travellers because these individuals are inherently difficult to identify: they do not always travel in business cabins (p. 79) and it is increasingly difficult to quantify the duration and function of business trips as travellers building extra time to allow for flight delays or for other leisure activities (p. 69). Scholars of transport studies, especially air transport specialists, geographers, sociologists, and to a lesser extent, marketers of products and services to international business travellers, would find this volume both informative and insightful. Entrepreneurs of new airline ventures, especially those in increasing numbers in the deregulated market within the European Union (Fan, 2010), should also take a read of the volume.

After providing a broad overview in Chapter 1, the edited volume is organized into three parts. Part 1 compiles the latest and historical statistics on the provision of scheduled air transport from the perspectives of international business travellers as a collective breed, and provides a stylized overview of the air transport industry. Part 2 describes the sociological context within which changes described in Part 1 took place, and to many scholars of transport geography, this section can indeed be enlightening as well as refreshing. Part 3 focuses on the business travel decisions, constraints and alternatives from the perspective of an individual business traveller.

In Part 1 of the volume, Chapters 2–5 provides key statistics on several major trends in international business air travel. For instance, Table 2.8 (p. 22) shows how the transatlantic airfares of first and economy-class cabins diverged in real terms in the past 50 years, with first-class fares growing five times over these years while economy fares declining to less than half of its value. While business-class cabins were not installed until 1978 (p. 13), business-class fares in 2008 were in fact 50% higher than first-class fares 50 years ago in real term – underscoring the economic importance of air transport services to international business travellers.

Beyond the mere contemporary and historical statistics on international business travel, Part 2 explores the reasons for business people to travel amidst a growing prevalence of video- and teleconferencing, as well as the broader sociological changes in which the increase in international business air travels is embedded. Chapter 6 qualitatively introduces the increased reasons for business travels in the context of multi-national enterprises, and these are supported by statistics from in-depth case studies in Chapters 7 and 8. Moreover, Chapter 7 provides a sociological explanation on both the divergence of airfares in different cabins over the years and the increased business-related international travel. Reflecting on the US experience, Chapter 7 notes how employment can be divided into three broad categories: routine production work, in-person services, and symbolic-

analytic services ('knowledge brokering, also referred to as the creative class). While globalization poses a threat to the first two categories of employment in developed countries, it vastly increases the demand for international travel by symbolic analysts. Chapter 8 discusses some of the corporate mobility policies faced by business travellers.

In Part 3, Chapters 9–12 examine the rationale for business travels at the individual level, vis-à-vis leisure travel. For instance, Table 9.3 shows how for Singapore, business travellers comprise only 25% of all international visitors, but account for 35% of all visitor expenditure. Chapters 10 and 11 use several in-depth industry studies to examine the choices and communication alternatives for international business travellers, while Chapter 12 focuses on the advent of video conferencing as a valid substitute for at least some business trips, possibly suppressing some of the recent growth of air travel in at least one Nordic country.

Overall, the overriding strength of the edited volume is its collection of statistics on international business travellers, and how the growth in international business travel both contributes to increased globalization and is in turn accentuated by the latter. While each chapter is written independently of one another, the reported results are internally consistent. Two notable areas that are not well covered is the specific travel choice behaviour exhibited by international business travellers, and corporate travel policies that shape the behaviour of these travellers. The importance of schedule convenience in choosing specific flights for business travels has led airlines over the years to increase both the number of non-stop service and the frequency of service to key destinations (e.g., Brueckner and Flores-Fillol, 2007), yet little is presented on this. The recent renaissance of rail travel, especially in highspeed inter-city rail, has reportedly led to a significant decline in air travellers on certain city pairs (e.g., Park and Ha, 2006). Then as now, corporate travel policies remain a prime determinant of how often and how business travellers decide on their flight options. Recognizing this, all major airlines and many recognized hotels offer deep discounts to companies with frequent business travellers – a discussion on the current state of the inner working of these incentives would be enormously insightful for managers of international business travels.

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