

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Puja Sangar

Tel: (650) 724-4211

Fax: (650) 736-1784

Email: [puja.sangar@stanford.edu](mailto:puja.sangar@stanford.edu)

# **Globalizing L.A.**

## **Trade, Infrastructure, & Regional Development**

**Steven P. Erie**

How do city-regions successfully compete in the global age? Mixing history and policy analysis, Steven Erie offers a fresh and compelling account of the improbable rise of Los Angeles, explaining how a region with no natural harbor and a metropolis situated a distant 20 miles from the coast managed to become the world's ninth largest economy and a leading trade and transportation center. *Globalizing L.A.* uses a treasure trove of unexplored primary source materials—interviews with key decision makers, public archives, and oral histories—to trace the development of the region's global gateways: the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Today, these are the world's third busiest port system and fourth busiest airport.

Erie argues that public infrastructure was a vital yet underappreciated factor in Los Angeles's and Southern California's rapid growth and transformation into a global economy. The book highlights the unheralded role of local political institutions and public entrepreneurs in shaping development strategies that have contributed to L.A.'s growth and globalization. Beginning with the fierce battles over railroad and harbor development in the late nineteenth century, Erie chronicles L.A.'s emergence as the nation's leading trade center and chief gateway to the Pacific Rim. Up until the 1990s, as he argues, L.A. behaved much like a city-state where powerful, semi-autonomous development bureaucracies and entrepreneurial leaders provided the farsighted strategic planning that made infrastructure mega-projects possible.

Today, however, Southern California—as elsewhere—faces daunting challenges, pitting the forces of globalization and the economy against community and environmental resistance. *Globalizing L.A.* offers in-depth analyses of recent epic battles over key infrastructure projects, such as the expansion of LAX, creating a new

international airport in Orange County at El Toro and building the landmark Alameda Corridor rail link. Erie dissects the strategies and effectiveness of supporters and opponents of these trade “mega-projects”. The book considers these and more recent challenges—such as new post-9/11 security concerns—to assess their effects on Southern California’s global competitiveness. There is also growing concern regarding the nation’s infrastructure. Public infrastructure spending has sharply declined, threatening competitiveness. In contrast, fast-growing economies such as China’s are massively spending on ports, airports, and highways to underwrite trade and development.

Yet, the growing U.S. infrastructure crisis hardly registers with the trendy new strategists of regional development who tout the “Latte Index”—the density of Starbucks and other cultural amenities—as the winning formula to attract and keep the so-called “creative class.” Erie criticizes such apolitical, painless remedies, arguing instead that cities and regions still grow, prosper, and globalize the old fashioned way—with timely infrastructure and other public investments and with active local government leadership and involvement. The book also takes issue with new economy enthusiasts touting the computer and internet as the major portals of global commerce. As Erie argues, in a just-in-time globalized economy, high-tech industries also require convenient access to international airports such as LAX to transport people and goods.

By emphasizing the catalytic role of public capital investments and infrastructure, Erie seeks to reshape contemporary policy debates concerning the key ingredients for regional competitiveness and success. The book also contributes to the growing literature on mega-projects and regional development. *Globalizing L.A.* is a provocative account of the growth of one the world’s great cities and regions, its innovative governance, infrastructure and trade formulas, and the daunting 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges it faces.

*Steven Erie is Director of the Urban Studies and Planning Program and Professor of Political Science at UC San Diego. His first book, Rainbow's End: Irish Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics (UC Press, 1998) received the American Sociological Association's Robert Park Award for the best book in urban sociology and the American Political Science Association's award for the best book in urban politics.*

336 pp.

\$55.00 (cloth)            0-8047-4680-X

\$21.95 (paper)            0-8047-4681-8

*To schedule an author event, please contact Puja Sangar by telephone at (650) 724-4211 or by email at [puja.sangar@stanford.edu](mailto:puja.sangar@stanford.edu).*