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Book review

New Mobilities Regimes in Art and Social Sciences, S. Witzgall, G. Vogl, S. Kesselring. Ashgate, Farham Surrey (2013). ISBN: 9781409450924.

New Mobilities Regimes in Art and Social Sciences presents an eclectic set of twenty-four essays about mobilities created in response to and alongside art practices. The book brings a new dimension to the field of mobilities that questions how the effect of mobility on identity, culture and society can be represented visually and discursively, and demonstrates how art is often used as an intervention to prompt new knowledge making. This second point is particularly illustrated by Amtoft and Vestergaard (chapter 17) in describing their use of a campervan to travel around and elicit interaction about automobility and the contextual landscape through presentations, feedback and concept design. The underlying emphasis of the book is to demonstrate that art as a practice can add a new dimension to the social analysis of mobility. However, the text itself is often juxtaposed with the visual image (e.g. photography), where text and image both act as evidence rather than the text interpreting or evaluating the image. Thus the reader is often expected to generate their own meanings from the images.

The book tours through many aspects of mobility that include the experiences of refugees; boarder lands; mobile working; cycling; and practices surrounding digital technologies. The introductory chapters position the world of visual art practice, interpretation and meaning, as well as providing an overview of key mobility debates, and anchor the diverse mechanisms of presented in the remaining chapters. However, the book would have benefited from a short reflective Epilogue or concluding chapter from the editors that could have pointed future opportunities for this type of cross-disciplinary approach, rather than the loosely connected Epilogue by Dennis that considers the future of mobility post peak oil.

The more interesting chapters deal with migration and contested lands (including borders). Tolstokorova (chapter 7) explores the tactics deployed by female migrant domestic labourers in order to maintain their cultural identity and sense of purpose. Here the spoken narratives of migrants are thematically organised to present a critical evaluation that illuminates the tensions between social status and the ability to display identity, and the impact of migration on relationships back home. Continuing the theme of female labour migration in chapter 10, Karamustafa provides a commentary to complement the video stills from 'Unawarded Performances' (an arts-sociology collaboration). Here the narrative demonstrates being at home is sacrificed for economic survival, but at a high risk. Another video about risk is explored in chapter 15, but in this instance mobility has been contain and restricted. Biemann's video takes on the Palestinian refugee camps to demonstrate how life contained in this zone is mediated both locally within the community and by international interventions. Immobility and risk also emerges in the discussion by Heuck and Yoo (chapter 13) that reflects on life lived in a geographic zone between North and South Korea that supports their installation. However, this zonal in-between life is as much a touristic experience and interpretation as it is a real experience for those who have created their homes and businesses there, and the implications of living between two Koreas.

Many more chapters are about more prosaic mobility practices (but not without their own risks). For instance, Lanzinger (chapter 4) and Huchler and Dietrich (chapter 5) explore and interpret work related im/mobility by producing images and selecting narratives. The practices of teleworking and air crew both are shaped alongside technologies, and both negotiate the tensions of home-work boundaries. Jensen (chapter 20) takes the once prosaic activity of cycling to demonstrate how it has emerged as a contested and highly political act in thinking though urban design. Cycling is explored by Jensen as an emotional experience shaped by the atmospherics of the urban context, while also forming part of political strategy to maintain flow and economic prosperity.

Cycling can be fun as well as a necessity, and it is probably these more joyous moments of mobility that are sadly lacking in much of the discourse across the book, but hinted at by Jensen. Playfulness emerges in Sheller's discussion of digital technology and the city, where the use of augmented reality as a method of digitally changing the landscape on the move and digital gaming bring play into the area (chapter 23). However, playfulness and art are not without meaning and can move people to think beyond the spectacle to deeper reflections of social interactions and behaviour, as well as, as Sheller notes, to consider the ethics of mobility.

Mobility and immobility are experienced in multiple ways and there is often a tension between the expectations of mobility's potential and what is actually experience, as raised by Bærenholdt (chapter 21). These claims thus raise a challenge for researchers/visual artists to explore how knowledge about mobility is captured and represented, and how the fragments of realities are re-assembled to create particular readings. In terms of this book, the multiplicity is evident, and the assemblage of these artistic and sociological fragments reflects the mobility tropes set out in chapter 2. However, it is worth questioning whether there are alternative ways of viewing this mobile world, and does a more artistic representation leave interpretation more open than a sociological one?

The book prompted me to consider how the arts can be brought effectively into collaboration with other disciplines, not only to draw out new perspectives or understanding about the experiences of mobility, but to consider how art or art practices can be utilized particularly in re-presenting concepts and issues to a number of different audiences (lay, academic, or political), as well as the methodological approaches to using art practices for eliciting and archiving mobility narratives. This point is particularly pertinent for changing disciplinary paradigms, developing innovative

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academic practices, and considering research impact in a funding world where cross- or trans-disciplinary teams are encouraged.

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