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Book review

The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities, Peter Adey, David Bissell, Kevin Hannam, Peter Merriman, Mimi Sheller. Routledge, Abingdon (2013). £140, ISBN: 978-0-415-66771-5 (hardback); £140, ISBN: 978-1-315-85757-2 (ebook)

The editors of this work have succeeded in their stated objective, a compilation of the best of mobility research, introducing topical questions and exploring possible future directions for the discipline. The Handbook contains a varied range of essays on Mobility as it applies across a range of contexts, illustrating the broad scope of this discipline.

The reader is guided through seven sections (these include *Genealogies, Philosophies, Approaches; Qualities* and *Materialities*) each of which opens with short summary of the overarching theme and its constituent parts. Any chapter can be read as discrete and free-standing but it is likely that many readers would choose to follow particular interests as these are represented in different contexts. For example, Tim Cresswell's chapter on *Friction* offers an examination of the effect of war and 'sanitised' or frictionless warfare that relies on new technology such as drones; at a different scale, *Soldier*, a study by Woodward and Jenkings of individuals who prepare for, and engage in, combat, presents a complementary account of the mobilities of war. Equally, Clare Holdsworth's chapter *Child* explores an apparent 'objectification' of children when their mobility takes place within a family; this can be contrasted with a study (found in the chapter on *Video* in the Methodologies section) of child passengers on parents' bicycles where the child, far from being objectified is instrumental in promoting the safety of the adult rider. Some essays provide novel perspectives on familiar themes, illustrating the claim made in Mimi Sheller's essay that mobilities research has resulted in a 'disciplinary matrix of highly productive collaborations and conversations that span many other disciplines', and this handbook bears testimony to the accuracy of that claim. The gamut of topics runs from the tangible to the intangible, from the manufacture, and meaning, of the seemingly ubiquitous Hawaiian pizza through to the pathways taken by an invisible virus as it travels through populations.

There is a degree of artificiality in deconstructing the concept of Mobilities into any of its constituent parts, and a major challenge must have been the management of the quantity of material that makes up this handbook. While each section flows without apparent contrivance to cover concepts drawn together under a particular theme, it is interesting to note that some chapters would not seem out of place in sections other than the ones in which they are sited. An example of this can be found in the inclusion, in the section entitled Events, of Stephen Graham's essay on *Disruptions*, which deals with breakdowns in infrastructures. Meanwhile, Section Three of the book, entitled Spaces, Systems and Infrastructures touches only briefly on Disruption (as it is found in a queue), suggesting that while the theory of mobilities may be regarded as a seamless whole, the expediency of book writing and publishing exerts its own tyranny.

The book is well-written and all contributions are well supported with data drawn from a range of sources. There is a novelty and freshness to some of the contributions, both in terms of style of writing and of the subject. One section in Allison Hui's chapter on *Enthusiasms* takes the reader into the arcane world of the bird spotter and the nature of their mobility: Hui defines this mobility as one where passion and inspiration are manifest.

As this review is intended for the audience of the Journal of Transport Geography, it should be noted that the wide eclecticism of this book has not been won at the cost of traditional transport subjects: room is given to an exploration, across a range of contexts, of the ways in which the study and practice of mobilities links to different transport types and means of access to mobility through these. The history and geographies of transport are examined in two separate chapters, and essays on roads, railways, cyclists, drivers and passengers provide an illustration and analysis of some more common types of mobility. However, the general coverage of these topics is not commonplace, and Peter Merriman's chapter on Roads is a skilful synthesis of many of the themes that run through the handbook.

A section on Methodologies carries a salutary warning that mobile methodologies should add to an existing repertoire rather than replace those that already exist. Notwithstanding this reluctance to dispense with the old and familiar ways of doing things, the need to consider the replacement of an order that already exists is the theme of the final section of this book. John Urry presents a simply titled Epilogue. Is this an epilogue for the book, or for our mobile world as we know it? Urry argues that as oil is central to western civilisation, the future of oil must be the future of modern society. Disruptions in oil supply caused by extreme weather events and conflict in those parts of the world where oil is found illustrate the vulnerability and fragility of our oil dependent societies. Urry concludes that we are left with the prospect of an 'utterly unsustainable civilisation based on the mobilities of people requiring oil'. We are implicitly reminded that it may be time to consider alternative mobilities.

On the trail of alternative mobilities, it should be noted that if there is a criticism to be made of this book, it is that Walking, which is covered in different chapters (for example, Rachel Aldred's essay on *The Commute,* Tim Edensor's exploration of *Rhythm and Arrhythmia* and Lisa Parks on *Walking Phone Workers*) is not afforded a chapter of its own. In keeping with an underpinning theme of the book, it might be argued that Walking is not a discrete act but one that embodies and underlies other actions; however, Walking is a more broadly accessible and egalitarian form of mobility than any other and thus deserves at least one chapter dedicated to exploring some of its unique properties.

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