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Book review

Mobility, J. Whitelegg, Straw Barnes Press, Church Stretton, Shropshire, UK, £6.99 (E-book), (2015), ISBN: 978-0-946309-02-3

John Whitelegg's new book '*Mobility*' provides a strong, articulate and persuasive challenge to the notion that more personal mobility, measured as the distance travelled daily, is a positive feature of modern society. Instead, he questions the centrality of the mobility paradigm that has grown in strength and dominated Britain and other developed countries since the mid 20th century. He makes the case for a lower mobility society where accessibility to local services and facilities replaces mobility as a key policy objective. He argues that time budgets, fiscal prudence, equality, accessibility and health should matter more than mobility. However, the reality of life in 2015 in economically developed countries is that the spatial structuring of employment, facilities and services is firmly embedded and requires high levels of personal mobility, and that without it people can suffer economic hardship, isolation and social exclusion.

The book starts by examining and criticising the mobility growth paradigm that we are locked into. Whitelegg questions national and European policies that accept and promote the growth of mobility and advocate it as important for the success of wider economic objectives. He stresses the impossibility of endless economic growth and ecological and resources limits to growth. He condemns the European Commission's 2013 'Smart, green and integrated transport' Horizon 2020 document for its failure to recognise the sustainable transport discourse which emphasises traffic reduction, demand management, planning for cities of 'short distances' and modal shift from cars to walking, cycling and public transport and from air travel to electronic communication. It also neglects decarbonising transport and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Whitelegg questions whether increasing our daily territory from 20 km^2 based on walking to 1000 km^2 based on higher speed car transport is a 'good thing'. Personal mobility varies enormously depending on spatial form, urban density and the location of activity sites.

Chapter 2 examines the consequences of mobility growth. Economic arguments have overridden those around health, quality of life, climate change and local economic resilience and Whitelegg draws an analogy with the 19th century arguments opposing the abolition of the slave trade. He cites criteria for school crossing patrols and reduction in 'green man' pedestrian crossing times as examples of cars being prioritised over people. He identifies 8 negative consequences that result from higher levels of mobility and these are dealt with in the rest of the book.

Chapter 3 exposes the enormity of the annual 'car crash' global death toll of 1.24 million people and 50 million injuries in crashes involving motorised road vehicles and including pedestrians and cyclists. This global toll is increasing sharply with motorisation in developing countries but is largely ignored by society as a whole. Whitelegg identifies complacency in developed countries where death tolls have reduced due to road safety policies. He lauds Sweden's Vision Zero policy and calls for lower speed limits and a shift in investment from cars and roads to pedestrian friendly streets and sustainable modes.

Transport related air pollution and ill health are examined in Chapter 4. Whitelegg highlights particulates and nitrogen dioxide from diesel vehicles. He condemns the indifference of governments to the scale of the traffic related air pollution problems. He advocates policies to promote sustainable modal choices more and contrasts Freiburg's 28% bike share with Manchester's 2%. He calls for diesel buses and taxis to be replaced by alternative fuels and for low emission zones, car sharing, congestion charging and road pricing to reduce the air pollution from road vehicles. Zero air pollution from traffic sources is Whitelegg's ultimate target.

Chapter 5 explores fiscal impacts. Whitelegg describes mobility as a 'very expensive commodity'. In the UK, he questions billions of £ spent on high speed rail, London CrossRail and numerous bypasses and motorway widening projects to promote and encourage mobility. The external costs of greenhouse gases and climate change, congestion, road transport deaths and injuries, and health damage from exhaust emissions are passed on to society as a whole and ignored in assessing the costs and benefits of investments and policies. Annual transport subsidies in the EU total almost 300 billion euros with a further estimated 650 billion euros for external costs. Whitelegg's evidence shows that total costs of transport to the community reduce with a higher proportion of trips made by sustainable modes.

Energy consumption by transport is examined in Chapter 6. Transport's total energy consumption and its 22% share are increasing with global population growth, rapid economic development and car ownership growth especially in China and India. It is surprising that Whitelegg does not place greater emphasis on the imminence of Peak Oil, which is largely ignored by governments, and the economic and mobility consequences of dearer, less flexible alternative fuels. Whitelegg's own research demonstrates that transport can be decarbonised whilst accessibility objectives can replace society's obsession with mobility.

Transport is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions and in the EU transport produces 25% of CO^2 emissions. In Chapter 7 Whitelegg links mobility, lifestyle and climate change and explores the vision of a zero carbon transport future. He advocates 'Climate Justice' for developing countries, with developed countries paying financial compensation to enable them to develop economically with lower carbon economies.

Whitelegg examines obesity and inactive lifestyles based on car dominated personal mobility in Chapter 8, but this is somewhat remote from the core theme of the book. Links between increased mobility and greater inequality are analysed in Chapter 9. Connections are now more often recognised between low income and low personal mobility and decreasing accessibility to increasingly distant services, facilities and employment. The dramatic erosion in children's independent mobility is another consequence. The mobility paradigm favours men over women. Poorer people and many older people suffer increasing social isolation and exclusion. However Whitelegg notes that the UK free off-peak bus pass for pensioners has reduced inequality. Chapter 10 examines community disruption and the adverse traffic impacts of most new

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developments on community life. Whitelegg supports traffic calming and pedestrian priority policies to improve community life.

Freight transport innovations, including containerisation, have cut transport costs so much that distance is no longer considered as a constraint. Whitelegg needs to couple this together with differential wage rates and lower or no trade barriers, which have enabled globalisation of raw material assembly, manufacturing and trade. Decoupling of economic growth from increasing freight ton kilometres remains elusive. Freight transport subsidies, including unallocated externalities, encourage unnecessary freight movements. Perhaps the growing recognition of 'food miles' and reversion by some to eating local seasonal foods should be explored further in this analysis as one means of lowering freight transport use. Whitelegg supports Dalkmann and Brannigan's policy framework needed to deliver a sustainable transport system based sequentially on Avoid, Shift and Improve.

In Chapter 12, Whitelegg questions the huge boom in air travel, which continues the freedom and opportunity themes associated with justification of car ownership and use. He points to the noise, air pollution and climate change as external impacts of air transport, but needs to explore why and how deregulation has created lower cost and price air travel and unleashed huge latent demand. Why have arguments in favour of telecommunication replacing air travel failed to materialise?

Chapter 13 examines the rapidly changing mobilities in China and India. The huge share of global population in these two countries and their rapid economic expansion in the last 3 decades justifies a separate chapter. Their replication of mobility trends in developed countries demonstrates the scale of the problem in trying to change the prevailing mobility paradigm.

Whitelegg's concluding chapter reiterates the book's aim of promoting the abandonment of the mobility paradigm and its replacement by what he calls the accessibility paradigm. He hopes that sorting out mobility, transport, urban design and public health is a paradigm shift that will happen. This new book promotes a new urban design and transport planning philosophy for a sustainable future. It provides many persuasive arguments, but it also illustrates the enormity of change required in people's behaviour and governments' policies.

Whitelegg is perhaps over ambitious in exploring so many different themes related to mobility and Chapters 8 and 10 could have been omitted. Focussing on fewer themes in more depth could have for example strengthened the case for pricing and charging for hidden transport externalities. Whitelegg throughout refers to many thought provoking references, well beyond the usual reading list of many policymakers, planners and transport professionals. A few errors need correcting, for example the Liverpool to Manchester railway opened in 1830, not 1834 and the cost of London CrossRail is £16 billion not £15 billion.

I strongly advise policymakers, planners, transport professionals and students to read this important new book on mobility. It will open many eyes to the wider ramifications of the mobility paradigm, and strengthen the long and slow process of challenging and changing current transport behaviour and embedded spatial structures of developed societies and economies.

Richard Knowles
University of Salford, UK
E-mail address: r.d.knowles@salford.ac.uk.