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Book review

Challenging Consumption: Pathways to a more Sustainable Future. Davies A.R., Fahy F., Rau H. (Eds.), 2014. Routledge, Oxon, (£90.00 (Hardback); £29.99 (Paperback), ISBN: 978-0-415-82074-5)

Challenging Consumption is based on the CONSENSUS project, a five-year long, interdisciplinary study, examining the relationship between consumption, environment and sustainability. The work took place between several institutions within Ireland and thus focuses on intersection of consumption and the environment in the Irish context. The book overall, focuses on the social impacts of consumption choices, and critiques the current use of rational-choice models such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), which are used frequently in the sustainability literature. Additionally, the book calls for greater focus on systemic changes to consumption policy and research, as opposed to concentrating on the individual consumer. The book is divided into four parts, *living, moving, dwelling* and *futures*, however this review focuses on part two, *moving*. The section on *moving*, consists of a brief introduction and summary by editor Henrike Rau, followed by a Barbara Heisserer's chapter on sustainable commuting options for employee's at a large firm in Ireland. The second chapter in the section by Mike Hynes examines the social implications of telework.

Rau's introduction to the section recaps the policy context in Ireland leading up to the current transport and sustainability challenges experienced today. The challenges the transport sector faces include increasing demand for private vehicles and thus increasing emissions from transport. Transport policy continues to follow a traditional rhetoric, focusing on infrastructure, information and incentives (the three Is), based on rational choice theory. He argues that current rational theory models fail to consider the social, cultural and material influences associated with transportation. Rau suggests the chapters in the *moving* section address a modal shift in the way we think about transport by taking a more sociological approach.

In Barbara Heisserer's chapter she reviews dominant approaches to transport behaviours. This review indicates a strong focus on the economic perspective, citing rational-choice theory for transport behaviours, as well as socio-psychological research on norms, attitudes and values (Jackson, 2005; Schwartz, 1977; Stern, 2000). What is most interesting about the chapter is the argument for reconceptualising transport as 'consumption of distance'. Heisserer argues reconceptualising transport as consumption of distance 'integrates' the socio-cultural, material and societal aspects of transport currently missing from transport policy research. She further argues wider consumption research recognises the interconnected relationship between consumption and production for other goods and services, however transport consumption does not.

The research for this chapter applies practice-theory to the act of transportation due to its daily involvement with other people, i.e. travel to work, travel to school, travel of children and other family members. Heisserer takes a multi-method approach using large-scale quantitative data from the Irish census and data collected from the CONSENSUS project, which included surveys and in-depth interviews on commuting practices of employees at a large firm in Ireland. On top of that qualitative data collected to understand the social aspects of transport.

Applying practice-theory and materiality to this data indicates transport is an interconnected network of practices that involves not only daily transport to and from work, but also other family needs such as safe travel for children, and running errands after work. This view perceives behaviour as a co-constructive process, where values, beliefs and actions shape and are shaped by practices (Hards, 2011; Southerton et al., 2011). In addition to the interconnected relationship of transport emerges the notion of freedom and independence associated with owning a car and the negative connotations with having to rely on the schedules of other drivers or public transport.

The second chapter in the *moving* section by Mike Hynes, focuses on the social implications of telework on the individual. Hynes takes a multi-method approach to understanding the social and policy implications of telework. The literature review examines Ecological Modernisation (EM), the thought that by transitioning to sustainable consumption and production practices can lead to significant economic benefits. Existing policies and practices are considered shallow forms of EM, or measures that are consistent with dominant theories of development. Deep EM consists of radical changes at the institutional level as opposed to working within the confines of existing social structures.

Hynes questions whether or not telework is deep EM, arguing that it has been presented as a radical measure for sustainable transport policy, however there is still very little understanding of the social and environmental implications of telework. The research by Hynes indicates telework is isolating for teleworkers, with little support from employers in the way of increased home energy costs. There is a constant struggle to separate home and work life when working from home, yet teleworkers enjoy the autonomy working from home allows. Hynes also finds that telework leads to a displacement of consumption, not only in the additional energy consumption within households but also increased shopping during the day. For instance, one interviewee mentions running a few errands during lunch breaks while working from home.

Although the chapter indicates some of the social implications of telework, it is unclear what the environmental implications are from this displacement of consumption. The chapter would have benefited from a discussion on the environmental effects of increased energy use at home during off-peak times and how that compares to the energy usage in traditional work settings. Furthermore, for wider audiences, such as students, the social and environmental impact of the unbundling of consumption practices, such as altering shopping times from after work to during the day might be unclear.

Overall the reconceptualisation of transport as consumption of distance is a novel and interesting idea. Further exploration on this concept could lead to some interesting research, as well as discussions for policy makers and students. The chapters on *moving* could benefit from a stronger link between the research presented and the proposed concepts.

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