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Book review

High Mobility in Europe: Work and Personal Life. Gil Viry and Vincent Kaufmann (Eds.). 2015. Basingstoke, UK, and New York, US: Palgrave Macmillan. (£65.00 (hardback). ISBN 978-1-137-44737-1

Transport to work is most frequently viewed through a localised lens, concerned with traffic flows, urban congestion, and other externalities. Similarly, research examining hypermobility is usually associated with leisure travel and tourism. The traditional treatment of these themes is being challenged by mobilities research, through the blurring of work-leisure distinctions and growing awareness of the routine travel across national boundaries for work purposes. It is from this point that Gil Viry (University of Edinburgh) and Vincent Kaufmann (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) depart, with their edited volume *High Mobility in Europe*. Made up of ten chapters, the book details a longitudinal research project which depicts high mobility as a contemporary, socio-spatial phenomenon and empirically focuses on travel for work purposes.

The structure of the book is rather similar to that of a doctorate thesis, with an introduction to the topic (Ch. 1), a justification and presentation of the methodology and methods (Ch. 2), followed by seven thematic 'findings' chapters (Ch. 3–9), and a concluding chapter (Ch.10). Various members of the research team author these chapters, and present different analyses and aspects of the data. Three appendices (with a small typographical error in numbering on the contents page) provide additional methodological material (e.g. questionnaire, sample and weighting) for, one can presume, replication and rigour purposes. There are 38 figures; maps, photographs and graphs, and 35 tables presenting the empirical data in a range of formats. In a book rather congested with tables and graphs, chapter 9 '*Travel time use and place attachment among highly mobile people*' (by Stéphanie Vincent-Geslin and Emmanuel Ravalet) provides a respite with photographs taken by research participant revealing aspects of their everyday mobility. Some of these images are of relatively low quality, but they are successful in bringing the reader into the lived experiences of the photographer/research participant.

The data presented in this book arises from a longitudinal survey and qualitative interviews focusing on four European countries; France, Germany, Spain and Switzerland. Thus while the findings are not representative of all of Europe per se, they offer unique and comparative insights. The research is focused on the 'mobile characters of contemporary life'; the long distance commuters, the overnighters and those in long-distance relationships for work-related reasons. As their starting point(s), Kaufmann and Viry identify three interconnected themes; considering mobility as a total social phenomenon, conceptualising mobility based on an actor's mobility potential, and analysing mobility as a social and spatial assemblage. They go on to define mobility as "a double-sided socio-spatial phenomenon that includes both social change *and* movement in geographical space" (p.9), organised around three dimensions; the range of possibilities, mobility potential and movement.

In the introductory chapter, Kaufmann and Viry propose *reversibility* (spatial and temporal, existential and relational) as a conceptual space for thinking about the nature and intensity of high mobility and in particular between the initial and the new state. A second term, that of *'potential receptiveness'* is also put forward by the authors, which comes to mean "the range of possibilities offered by a territory in terms of mobility projects" (p.10). In total, ten 'research questions' are presented, somewhat deceptively, as three larger bullet points perhaps to indicate thematic relevance. These are:

- Is high mobility practised at specific life stages (transition into adulthood, early career) or is high mobility a long-term practice? What social factors drive people to continue or stop being highly mobile? What are the underlying mechanisms leading to these changes? Are Europeans increasingly highly mobile?
- Is mobility built gradually, in relation to its activation, that is, via high mobility experiences? Or is mobility developed in a specific family and professional context? How do highly mobile people use travel time and develop place attachment?
- What impact do high mobility practices, and changes in these practices, have on career success personal life and family development? Does high mobility delay or hinder starting a family? Is high mobility positively associated with career success, or does it insure against downward social mobility?

These questions come across as at once broad and highly specific. While this bank of questions might have informed the depth of research presented in this book, in the interests of simplification, it may have served the authors well to distil these ten into 3–4 digestible questions situated at the core of their work.

Some particularly interesting findings include that; high mobility is often a short-lived episode (p.31), young people are more likely than older people to view their high mobility as an opportunity (p.50), exposure to mobility in childhood "can facilitate proficiency and comfort in high mobility practices in adult working life" (p.81), there is a gender differential in balancing the demands of parenthood and high mobility (p.174) and long commutes by car were perceived as 'empty' and 'useless', with participants expressing more negativity towards the car than other modes (p.190). The authors do a good job of highlighting the pervasiveness of high mobility across the four countries, and new trends emerging from their longitudinal data. For instance, in 2007 between 11 and 15% of working people between 25 and 54 participated in high mobility (daily long-distance commuting, overnighting and long-distance relationships). By 2011, these figures had changed to 9–16%, with decreases in high mobility in France and Spain, but increases in Switzerland and Germany. The transitory nature of high mobility is stressed by the authors (in particular in chapters 3, 5 and 8), who highlight the impact of the economic climate, and personal context (i.e. family, professional, residential) on mobility practices, and present a range of empirical data that expose these trends.

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In sum, *High Mobility in Europe* is a strong contribution to the transport/mobilities literature and provides critical insights into changing mobility practice and the intersection of work and personal lives. The book is rather data-heavy, but this is to be expected since it is presenting a research project. It is well written and will be of interest to scholars across multiple disciplines (and sub-disciplines) including, but not limited to, transport geographers.

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