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Book review

Transit Life, David Bissell. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA (2018). (£74.00 (hardback); £25.00 (paperback). 9780262037563)

Transit Life is a research monograph by David Bissell about the transformative potential of commuting, and the impact it has on people, places and societies. Acting as a guide to illuminate the taken-for-granted, surprising and significant role of commuting in people's everyday lives, this book is undeniably a triumph. Meticulously researched, vividly written, and theoretically rich, Bissell's Transit Life is sure to become a classic within mobility studies. It persuasively argues for the importance of commuting in society and for an exploration of its a/effects. For those familiar with Bissell's work, this is unlikely to be surprising. A central figure within the mobilities turn, Bissell's work has significantly helped advance the rethinking of mobility, movement, stillness and immobility over the last decade or so. In Transit Life, we can see the culmination of much of this work/thinking, consolidating various strands of Bissell's research and writing into one masterfully crafted volume.

Bissell adopts an ecological approach to understanding commuting, which marks an important contribution to the field. In doing so, Bissell manages to attend to the commute in an impressively comprehensive fashion, inviting us to consider and sense how commuting is "entangled in a complex web of relations with other people, places, times, ideas and materials" rather than "imaging individual commuters as atom-like particles" (Bissell, 2018: p.xix). Bissell further explains that these ecologies of commuting are variegated and mutable, and that conceptualising everyday journeys in such a way has important implications for thinking about the politics of mobility. Here, Bissell argues, politics is concerned with the multiple relationships of enablement and constraint and an ecological approach provides a richer appreciation of these. Bissell's approach captures the interconnectedness of commuting practices and demonstrates the importance of links between diverse practices, sites and people.

The ecologies of commuting offered by Bissell also invites other ways of knowing the commute, which is a key tenet of Transit Life. Bissell argues that statistical knowledge forms the majority of what we know about commuting, yet it only has the ability to tell us about certain elements of commuting, struggling more with the nitty gritty of commuting experience. Drawing valuably on performative thinking throughout Transit Life, Bissell considers the transformative relationality between movement and bodies, and how commuting affects what we can do, what we can sense, how we perceive things, the experiences we have and, ultimately, who we are. These changing capacities, he argues, then impress back onto the practices we move with and places we move through. We leave our mark upon each other and Bissell engages with this nitty gritty throughout Transit Life.

To do so, Bissell joins the commute in Sydney, Australia. Immersing himself in the transit lives of diverse commutes, varied commuters and a range of transport professionals, Bissell gifts the reader a real depth of study, rich in detail and complexity. Commutes of all different modes, of different geographies, of different commuters are enrolled together in a fascinating analysis of Sydney's transit life. Bissell's application of his ecological and performative approach to Sydney's transit life results in the development of six aspects of commuting, which provide the focus for subsequent chapters.

The first aspect, Transit Skills, explores the skills that may be involved in different ways of commuting, how habit helps to develop these skills, the significance of place, and ways in which commuting skills may break down. Next, Transit Dispositions focuses on the complex atmospheric and social settings of the commute, investigating how people relate to and affect one another in commuting spaces. The temporalities of commuting are explored next in Transit Times, revealing the interplays between a series of temporal dynamics and how the commute is often a malleable practice, affecting work, family and community life. The following chapter on Transit Spaces, draws on social theories to explain how spaces are differently produced and their different affects. Here Bissell discusses the engineering of bodily experiences by stakeholders of commuting spaces, and the potential digital technologies have to transform commuting experiences and spatial sensibilities. This is followed by an exploration of Transit Voices, in which Bissell analyses the agency speaking and writing about commuting have and how these practices have different capacities to transform commuting lives. The final empirical chapter, Transit Infrastructures, explores how commuter infrastructures emerge and the need to understand this infrastructure as always in formation. The scope of Transit Life is equally impressive and intoxicating.

Bissell's exploration of the above six elements is extremely insightful, drawing richly on different theoretical influences to help us make sense of these experiences. Yet the writing is not dense or impenetrable. In fact, Transit Life is a pure joy to read. Bissell crafts this expertly, writing about complex ideas in an accessible and entertaining way, which takes seriously the everyday and taken for granted he seeks to study. In doing so, he constructs a welcoming introduction to and advancement of theoretical ideas concerning mobility. The empirical material, in particular, is dealt with deftly. Delicate, honest and sensitive, Bissell gives space to the research encounters in Transit Life, allowing the reader to dive deep in to the world of commuting and commuters with him. The result is a book that pops and fizzes with insights, stories and reflections from research encounters in important and meaningful ways.

Transit Life is a book about mobilities unlike any other. It illuminates these taken for granted daily journeys in ways, which surprise, inform, entertain, and convince. I feel fortunate then, to have read David Bissell's superb book, in the midst of a transformation of my own commuting practices, developing a new habit of bus-commuting after being hit by a car during my previous practice of cycle-commuting. Bissell's ideas within each of the six elements of commuting resonated strongly with own commuting experience in ways I found infinitely important, fascinating and captivating. Transit Life compels readers to see commuting as much more than just footnote in people's lives; it plays a complex and significant role in the everyday, and has vast transformative potential. As such, the book would appeal to a wide

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audience, from postgraduates and experts interested in commuting, mobility and space, to undergraduates beginning to explore the importance of the everyday and travel, and even to the public intrigued to find out more about one of the most significant practices of contemporary life. Bissell's exploration and evocation of commuting in Transit Life are simply superb and it is a necessary read for those interested in mobilities.

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