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Geographies of Transport and Mobility: Prospects and Challenges in an Age of Climate Change

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Geographies of Transport and Mobility combines the extensive knowledge and experience of its authors, drawing on research from the fields of transport, planning, behaviour change, sustainability, retail and tourism with the aim of providing a comprehensive exploration of the challenges for personal mobility in the twenty-first century. Initial scepticism surrounding the sheer scale and complexity of such a task soon gives way to reassurance as the reader is guided, most skilfully, through a justification for the text and its intended intellectual contribution. Principally, the text offers a novel examination of how the way that we travel, and ultimately live out our lives, has been intricately shaped by complex social and economic processes. In addition, it provides a critical evaluation of the role that geographers have played in the fields of transport and mobility and the challenges and opportunities for the discipline in contributing to sustainable place-making and the future of mobility practices.

The book is divided into three logical parts, the first of which acknowledges the necessity of exploring historical developments in transport and mobility to understand contemporary practices. Yet prior to delving into this area of research, the authors use chapter 1 to highlight, very effectively, three key contexts that are essential in establishing the focus of the text. Firstly, in differentiating the academic and popular meanings of transport and mobility, a useful framework emerges for understanding how study and policy in this area have evolved. Secondly, the book is anchored around the key relationships that are crucial in exploring mobility, from individual behaviour and social practices to the infrastructure of places. Thirdly, it is argued that transport and mobility must be viewed as dynamic and developing concepts which are shaped by broader societal processes.

With these arguments in mind, chapter 2 charts the evolution of personal mobility throughout the 'long mobile [twentieth] century' (p. 13) and illustrates the radical and comparatively rapid shifts that took place in mode and extent of travel, and lifestyle, in both the UK and North America. From the rise of Metroland in the UK to the landscape of freeway interchanges in the United States, the discussion cogently distils three important trends, including the importance of understanding culture and the psychology of place in influencing attitudes to mass transit; the non-linear influence of mobility on lifestyle and their continuous and mutual (re)production of effects; and the differences of negotiating and coping with significant changes in practice over short timescales. Arguably, these discussions lay a sound foundation for the turn toward the role of planning in chapter 3, in which a succinct discussion critically explores the advent of transport planning and changing, from 'predict and provide' to attempts at integrated approaches. Crucially, there is a recognition not only of the rise of environmentalism and the importance of global climate change in this sphere, but also of the geographical challenge of planning at scales which often vary significantly from those of environmental processes and risks.

There is no doubt that these initial discussions more than adequately equip the reader for part 2 of the book, which seeks to explore the ways in which researchers have theorised on issues relating to transport and mobility. Chapter 4 introduces what is perhaps one of the most poignant topics discussed in the book: the recognition that whilst transport geographers have been innovative and fruitful, and have developed links with neighbouring academic subjects, the field of research largely resisted the pervading cultural turn in human geography and has only recently come to the fore within the sub-discipline. The reader is engulfed in a vibrant discussion on the very way in which new knowledge is produced in this field, with an epistemological and methodological gulf between more 'traditional' positivist approaches in transport geography and the interpretivist new mobilities paradigm which has emerged in recent years. Chapters 5 and 6 explore these divides further through the lenses of everyday travel and tourism and leisure travel, illustrating the differing foci of research

into travel behaviour and mobility as well as the value of understanding changing patterns of consumption and the role of smart technologies.

Armed with a good appreciation of both the historical context and academic sphere of transport and mobility, the reader is well-prepared for the final part of the book, which explores how we value mobility in a world concerned with climatic change and resource security. Chapter 7 paints a brief and accurately bleak picture of the intractable policy area of sustainable mobility, highlighting the difficulties in shifting attitudes and behaviours towards travel, the absence of a legal basis for sustainable development, and the attrition of sustainable planning through systems of governance. This is explored further in chapter 8, which presents a compelling set of arguments on the role of behaviour change for sustainable mobility, emphasising the power that the 'citizen consumer' has attained in society but cautioning on the identity and purpose of behaviour change as a concept. In so doing, the authors pose excellent questions around the degree of change that could be delivered through this approach, the dangers of promoting critical disengagement and an overemphasis on the cognitive processes of the individual and, most importantly of all, 'whether consuming and moving as much as we do actually delivers the lives we want' (p. 125). Chapter 10 takes this thinking further through exploring the question: what are places for? Accordingly, garden cities, transition towns and new urbanism are all examined as attempts to reinvigorate the importance of human connections, a passion for specific places, of certain values and lifestyles. Yet undoubtedly the most important observation is kept until last. With most people able to recognise the components of a good place to live, and with so much potential for positive developments in transport and mobility, to what degree is the lethargy in positive place-making the result of a social norm fuelled by corporate power? The recommendations that conclude the text offer a measured and mature reflection on the issues discussed above and offer direction for geographers in developing research in this area.

Overall, the book is very well written and the authors have demonstrated exceptional skill in clearly defining the remit and intellectual focus of the text while carving out a critically engaging narrative throughout all three parts. A very strong argument is made for the role of geographers in this area of research and the contribution to the literature on transport and mobility is significant, especially in asking key questions on the role of behaviour change and future transport policy. The authors' aim to make this text accessible and useful to advanced level undergraduates and researchers in geography, anthropology, psychology, sociology and transport studies is certainly substantiated and it will surely make a valuable contribution to the literature.

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