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Mobilities, Networks, Geographies

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From 2006 onwards, the exact year with the first edition of this book saw the light of publicity, many things have happened. It is no accident that an urgent updating of Mobilities, Networks and Geographies would be of paramount importance for those scholars who retain concern on the rise and evolution of mobilities. In normal conditions, the classic theory insists in claiming that capitalism opens the doors to a world of asymmetries. At some extent, citizens in developed nations are legally and technically allowed to travel, to connect with others while in the periphery immobilities remain as an important aspect of lifestyle. As authors put it, ‘ordinary people’ in rich countries are encouraged to travel, forming networks and circuits while they keep emotional distant from their neighbors.

“People can travel, relocate and migrate and yet still be connected with friends and family members back home and elsewhere. So, increasingly, people who are near emotionally may be geographically far apart: yet they are only a journey, email or a phone call away” (p. 8).

Paradoxically, at the same time travels, roads and the dispositifs of mobilities create networks and technologies which are oriented to foster movement, the near neighbor becomes in an stranger. In this mayhem, the current book took pains to explore the dichotomies of mobilities where a more global network assumes further risks and challenges. The common thread argument of this work is not limited to tourism and leisure, but signals to other un contemplated forms of mobilities. In dialogue with Marc Augé, who vaticinated the evolution of mobilities would erode the sense of place, Larsen, Urry & Axhausen argue that mobilities has historically produced a lack of connection or engagement which undermined the sense of community, the social cohesion, if not, destroying authentic sense of places for the multicultural spirit. The imposition of placelessness has been resulted from the invention of modern metropolis where individuals distanced from the mobile anonymous crowd. Over centuries relative not only lived physically near but also formed a strong networks of interactions, which not only weakened by action of modernity but also once they moved to live in other cities even countries. This moot-point validates the assumption that further mobilities calls for the decline of social bondage.

As the previous argument given, those chapters which form this must-read work discusses varous interesting themes and topics, which ranges from mobilities and networks to the challenges of mobilities to situate as a consolidated option in the years to come. After all, social science failed to develop coordinated efforts and methods to understand mobilities to date, as authors add. Originally aimed to construct an epistemological bridge between social science and cultural analysis, this book grapples with the needs to remedy the caveats of social science at the time of defining mobilities, while it juxtaposes the paradoxical situation of capitalism. It enumerates five modes of mobilities, which deserve our attention,

Psychical travels. It connotes the movement of lay people for working, leisure activities, or simply by escaping from genocide and slaughters.

Psychical movements, rather, toys with the idea that capitalism enacts a good-exchanges circuits, where commodities and persons are interchanged. Those objects produced in Hong Kong and delivered to be consumed in Buenos Aires is one of the example of mobilities of this sort.

Imaginative travels. This is exactly the most difficult definition to grasp. Basically authors define as imaginative travels to those itineraries imagined and packaged in computer screens and media entertainment.

Virtual Travels: this represents a fertile ground for all consumptions achieved exclusively from the internet and virtual world.

Communicative travels refers to the networks that daily facilitate the closely-emotional interaction of relative and families which are geographically dispersed.

Starting from the premise that the mobile society rests on “network capital”, authors eloquently suggest the world of mobilities activates a set of face-to-face relations which escapes to the physical proximity. In this

book, Larsen, Urry and Axhausen hold the polemic thesis that in this type of contemporary society where contact -with friends- is remotely assisted by technologies – scheduled visits are emotionally more significant. In a nutshell and in sharp contrast with MacCannell and Augé, who suggest modern expanse of mobilities gradually erodes the social scaffolding, authors opt to go in the opposite direction. For their viewpoints, the co-presence with this distant loved Other demands cultural obligations and moral engagement which are orchestrated through the use of technology. In so doing, face-to-face interaction sets the pace to new forms of relations and communication as well as ways of traveling and possessing the territory. The goals of this book is threefold:

- Developing a credible method to study the formation of maps and networks through the articulation of mobilities.
- Deciphering a new type of hospitality in view of the new technologies introduced over the recent decades.
- The anthropological sense of reciprocities, far from corrupting, the new technologies activate.

Last but not least, at least for this reviewer, authors present a more than interesting diagnosis of mobilities as an epistemological project that interpellates the material asymmetries of capitalism, or the best the gaps between have and have-nots. Likewise, the world of mobilities is fraught of contrasts, in which case, they remind that individuals who are part of global networks are often encouraged to move while others are constrained to immobilities. However, one of the limitations of cultural analysis seems to be its lack of interest for the history of capitalism. As we have widely demonstrated in *Mobilities Paradox*, a critical analysis, the theory of mobilities fails not only to explain the center-periphery dependency, which was brilliantly examined by Marxism, but also glosses over the fact that mobilities serves as an ideological discourse to cement the unquestionable authority of nation state. The history witnesses how nomads and semi-nomad ethnicities were cruelty disciplined to the immobility of nation-state, while at the same time an externally-fabricated notion of leisure and mobilities was offered to the rank-and-file workers. While the capitalist system developed a false sense of movement, to discipline the subjectivities, the real nomad groups were historically exterminated (Korstanje 2018). It is safe to say that the world of mobilities seems not to be pretty different than the plot of *Matrix*, where Neo is plugged into a *Matrix*, which emulates an imagined dream world while at the bottom the human bodies, which served as sources of energy, lays immobile.

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NOTES

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