BOOK REVIEWS

Uncovering the Implications of (Air) Mobility for Asian Cities

Max Hirsh, *Airport Urbanism: Infrastructure and Mobility in Asia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 216 pp., 80 black-and-white illustrations, 20 color plates, $25 (paperback), $87.50 (hardback)

Globally, air travel has increased exponentially over the past thirty years. Nowhere has this increase been as impressive as in Asia, where growing international trade, rising incomes, and the relaxation of migration and travel restrictions have led to a radical expansion of Asia's flying public. Max Hirsh's *Airport Urbanism* is an inspiring, eclectic, and original investigation of the implications of this expansion for infrastructural and urban systems in Asian metropolises. The author advances an interdisciplinary methodology that rests on the observation of everyday practices of air travelers in space, cross-fertilized with the examination of the discourses and plans of airport officials and designers, and enriched by background information on migration, urban policy, and evolutions in aviation. Hirsh places his work in juxtaposition to studies of urban geography and planning, advancing instead an ethnographically informed approach to urban research, drawing on the concept of "everyday urbanism"[1] and the notion of "site-specific ethnographies."[2]

Through the study of airport-related infrastructure, *Airport Urbanism* attempts to demonstrate both the complementarity and the contradictions arising from the relation of geographic mobility, increasingly exemplified by flying, and social mobility, supported by policies facilitating transborder migration and movement—enacted in China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries to bolster the urban epicenters of their economies with influxes of workers and tourists. The outcome provides a valuable understanding of how expanding mobility may interact with architectural and urban form beyond its most recognizable physical expressions, such as new airport terminals and rail links, on which most scholarly analyses of global air mobility have focused. In the conclusion, Hirsh broadens his analysis to advance a broader critique of the treatment of Asia's emerging mobile class in other arenas of urban policy such as housing and public space; this critique appears legitimate but is less grounded in the empirical material and thus rather untimely.

The work is at its strongest when using the framework of discordant sociospatial mobility to expose the mismatch between the iconic transport projects, built or projected to serve the needs of an elite flying clientele, and the

facilities actually used by most travelers. Hirsh terms the latter the "nouveaux globalisés": burgeoning segments of Asian societies whose financial resources or citizenship privileges are limited but marginally sufficient to allow them to enter the ranks of transnational air travelers.

The incongruities of providing for the movement of these travelers to, from, and through airports are illustrated in four main chapters. Hirsh describes, for example, how the exclusive train line designed for connecting air passengers seamlessly and comfortably to the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) remains half-empty, while travelers such as Filipino domestic helpers and mainland Chinese tourists use a multitude of cheaper and more spread-out solutions, including a network of buses and a suburban train line intended for residents of a new town adjacent to the airport. Meanwhile, international travelers to the booming special economic zones of the Pearl River Delta (PRD), such as Shenzhen, are also forced to travel through HKIA, as China's politics of national security restrict the ability of local PRD airports to serve international destinations. These travelers check in for HKIA flights in banal, inconspicuous terminals installed in repurposed buildings or integrated into shopping centers, before boarding fleets of ferries or buses streamlining cross-border movement. Such instances, the author notes, are illustrative of the "contradictions between the migration and security policies of Asian nation-states, the logistical demands of transnational economic flows, and the cosmopolitan aspirations of urban policymakers" (137).

Masterfully alternating between astute academic prose and delightful journalistic accounts of everyday encounters in airport halls, check-in facilities, and cityscapes—while richly illustrating his observations with photos of these spaces and their users—Hirsh convincingly argues for a better integration of the needs of Asia's expanding flying public into urban policy, design, and scholarship. The use of various disciplinary lenses contributes to the work's originality but may not squarely satisfy all fields. Scholars of mobility may miss a bolder engagement with the constellations of power and socio-cultural dynamics framing access to air mobility, while urban geographers or planning scholars may regret the lack of explicitly spatial analysis and of references to urban planning rationales. Nevertheless, the strength of *Airport Urbanism* lies precisely in the association of traditionally separate study paths, pointing the way for more transdisciplinary analyses of the interaction between global mobility and the urban realm.

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1. John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski, eds., *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999).
2. Johan Lindquist, *The Anxieties of Mobility: Migration and Tourism in the Indonesian Borderland* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

A Molecular Examination of How We Talk about Transport

Laura Bang Lindegaard, *Congestion: Rationalising Automobility in the Face of Climate Change* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015), 214 pp., $54.95 (hardback)

Readers without prior experience with conversation analysis (CA) are likely to find Laura Bang Lindegaard's book *Congestion* a challenging read; I certainly did. While the project is innovative and could prove influential for future studies at the intersection of mobility studies and discourse analysis, the book itself remains staunchly grounded in its own discipline. Grasping its approach and jargon requires substantial work on behalf of the reader, and there is not always the sense that the author aimed the text at a wider audience.

Congestion examines how automobility is reinforced through what being part of a car-dominated social environment feels like: a preference and a freedom rather than a lack of choice. Rather than being based on tools of direct oppression, automobility operates through webs of Foucauldian governmentality, with transport users organizing their own conduct according to the rules of automobility, rendering themselves governable through practices and, crucially, utterances. The data for the study comes from Horslunde, a car-dependent village in Denmark where Lindegaard conducted research before, during, and after a 2010 government-led initiative to promote sustainable energy practices, including sustainable transport practices.

The first part of the book presents the author's theoretical and methodological approach (the two, the author explains, being inextricably linked). Lindegaard describes this approach as ethnomethodology, bringing together two methodological approaches. The first, CA, examines interaction in its social contexts. The second, membership categorization analysis, examines the ways in which people use practical, social knowledge to explain their own, and other people's, membership in particular categories (e.g., "car owner"). In the process, Lindegaard weighs in on an interesting CA debate: whereas some scholars are suspicious of data collected from interactions initiated by research (as opposed to data derived from naturally occurring conversation), she appreciates the merits of this form of data collection. Her ethnometh-

odology involves focus groups she orchestrated, and her analysis considers the contributions of both her research participants and herself as the moderator.

The aim of the work presented in *Congestion* is to combine the study of governmentality with ethnomethodology. As a result, the two topics are given in-depth treatment in the review of existing literature, while automobility and climate change receive limited attention. This is partly a reflection of the author's clearly stated intention to focus on automobility as a problem of governance rather than one of, say, space or economics. Nevertheless, she could have provided more background information to clarify whether automobility is just like any other problem of governance or if there are social, cultural, infrastructural, or affective dimensions specific to it.

In the main part of the book, Lindegaard convincingly demonstrates the importance of the exact ways in which people talk about transport practices. They do so not as passive subjects of governments and corporations but as transport users who actively render themselves governable within the system of automobility. In the context of transport system governmentality, the speech through which subjects rationalize their actions plays a central role in how they conduct themselves. The close examination of such speech is a fascinating endeavor. Being a tough text to read does not detract from the fact that there is much a qualitative transport researcher can learn from what we might describe as a molecular analysis of transport-related speech. Lindegaard offers a meticulous, fine-grained account of the conversational devices—verbal and nonverbal—to which we resort as we account for our everyday transport behaviors and the moralities they are entangled with.

For example, a fascinating section entitled "The Inevitability of Cars" is devoted to how Julie, a resident of Horslunde, reflects on how car travel has persisted as part of her household's daily life over decades. Julie's husband drives to work, since "[they] do, you know, have the car … it would be stupid if he took the bus, right" (122). Julie's account can be read as a localized expression of the way automobility presupposes itself and thus makes the system difficult to be outside of.[1] While to many mobility scholars Julie's contribution may appear to echo accounts of car users from any number of research studies, in Lindegaard's hands this data acquires significance that would otherwise remain invisible. Equally poignant is the way in which participants' rationalizations of their travel behavior negotiate the attempts of the local authority to intervene and influence it.

Research on sustainable mobility attracts a diverse audience from a range of academic disciplines and fields of practice. While *Congestion* may not have broad appeal across all of these groups, those readers who work with discourses on sustainable transport are likely to benefit from this rigorous work.

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1. John Urry, "The 'System' of Automobility," *Theory, Culture and Society* 21, nos. 4–5 (2004): 25–39.

Thinking Emotionally about Studying and Volunteering Abroad

Neriko Musha Doerr and Hannah Davis Taïeb, eds., *The Romance of Crossing Borders: Studying and Volunteering Abroad* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 302 pp., $90 (hardback)

While many forms of border crossing, like tourism, trade, and migration, have been embraced by mobilities researchers and academics in other inter/disciplines as important fields of inquiry, the matter of students studying and volunteering abroad has been largely quarantined in the professional domain of international educators. In *The Romance of Crossing Borders,* Neriko Musha Doerr and Hannah Davis Taïeb seek to bring studying and volunteering abroad in from the cold, arguing that these popular phenomena constitute a fruitful and understudied domain for examining the construction of modern subjectivities, economic and political processes, globalization, and the power relations that underpin contemporary modes of travel. In this edited collection, contributors attempt to do so by drawing international education into conversation with affect studies—an ambitious transdisciplinary approach that underscores the need for scholarship that probes the illusive yet potent nexus of mobility, politics, and affect.

The Romance of Crossing Borders has a three-part structure. The first part, written by Doerr and Taïeb, offers a genealogy of study abroad that boldly positions contemporary practices as heir to the eighteenth-century European elite's grand tour rite of passage and colonial travels. Readers curious to learn more about the kind of knowledge that a critical study of international education might yield will find ample inspiration in Doerr and Taïeb's valuable discussion of study abroad's many "legitimating discourses," which range from a sentimentalized concern for personal growth to national security and US global power, world peace, and economic globalization (35). In this sweeping overview, Doerr and Taïeb politicize and denaturalize today's rote acceptance of student travel while unraveling a consensus that has effectively insulated

study abroad from the kind of critique that other forms of mobility have long generated.

Part 2 includes five "case studies" of affect and study abroad, introducing the reader to the emotional experiences of American students studying abroad in Mexico, South Africa, France, Spain, and Japan. Instead of putting into practice the analytical moves introduced in part 1, the contributing authors in part 2 treat the question of affect in study abroad as a matter of how individual students *feel* about mispronouncing words in Spanish, failing to "go native" in Paris, or living with host families in Japan. Rather than following the theoretical understanding of affect as something that is nonlinguistic, collective, and beyond conscious control but that nonetheless undergirds political processes and relations of power, affect here becomes clearly demarcated emotions that students are capable of accurately identifying and disclosing to the researcher (who also tends to be their inquiring teacher). Similarly, authors treat affect as something that educators can access and manage through distinct pedagogical exercises so as to achieve desired educational outcomes. This approach to affect illustrates how emotions impact learning but does little to examine how affect both emerges from and advances the sociocultural, economic, and political conditions that constitute student mobility. Following the logic presented in part 1, the reader is left wondering about the relationship between individual affective experiences and a ritualized form of mobility imbedded in class formation, imperial legacies, and US foreign relations.

Part 3 offers just two case studies of affect in volunteering abroad, but these chapters succeed in moving out of the narrow realm of pedagogy to instead provide important critiques of voluntary schemes as sites of emotionally charged experiences that emerge from historically informed power relations. A chapter by Cori Jakubiak, for example, describes how an innocent desire for emotional intimacy draws volunteers into colonial relations of power. The volunteer's romanticized fantasies of rescue and humanitarian good are bound up in inescapable historical, political, and economic conditions. To speak of the traveler's affective experience of mobility is to therefore examine how politics and power are experienced and perpetuated in intimate and perhaps unconscious ways.

Literature on international education has long been defined by a preoccupation with pedagogy rather than political or cultural critique. *The Romance of Crossing Borders* more often than not fails to offer more than an academic rebranding of the same preoccupation. Yet interspersed between practical curricular suggestions and discussions of individual students' emotional journeys, the scholar of mobility studies is sure to see the worthiness of Doerr and Taïeb's quest to have studying and volunteering abroad accepted as legitimate fields of intellectual inquiry. More broadly, mobilities researchers will be drawn to the unrealized potential of studying travel through the lens of affect. The question of how socially constructed affect might bind students to

study abroad's troubling "legitimating discourses" continues to demand answers, and mobilities researchers might have the methods.

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A Convincing Argument for Seeing Mobility Persuasively

Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder, *Communicating Mobility and Technology: A Material Rhetoric for Persuasive Transportation* (London: Routledge, 2017), 178 pp., 19 illustrations, $149.95 (hardback), $54.95 (ebook)

Suggesting that the current internal combustion engine (ICE) model of automobility is unsustainable, Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder argues that new transportation technologies must be persuasive in order to be successful. He develops the concept of "kinesthetic rhetoric," based on Aristotle's term *kinesis*, "movement within limits" (17), to evaluate the persuasiveness of technologies of movement in four areas: design, interface, logistics, and navigation. While Pflugfelder draws on interdisciplinary sources, he writes with technical communicators and rhetoricians as his primary audience. Nonetheless, an analysis of techniques for bringing transportation technologies into more persuasive alignment with the needs of a broader public should appeal to many *Transfers* readers. Chapters describing the four elements of kinesthetic rhetoric (chapters 3 to 6) and the final chapter (in which Pflugfelder applies his analytical framework in conjunction with actor network theory to a specific case study) hold the most value to a wider audience.

For instance, chapter 3 focuses on the element of *design* through many examples, including the Trabant, a fiberglass-bodied car that made sense in the closed environment of East Germany but quickly became irrelevant when the Berlin Wall fell and a broader variety of materials and designs became available. Pflugfelder draws on the Greek notion of *hyle,* or "matter" (43), to show the material persuasion of nonhuman actors in a given context: "materials persuade as their matter impacts design—just as how the wood of a tree becomes the specific wood in a carpenter's workshop, able to be used in a specific project" (52). The next element explored is from the perspective of the driver's seat: *interfaces*. In chapter 4, the author focuses on the role of metaphor in driver experience, such as the eco-friendly icons used in gas-electric hybrids that urge users to modify driving practices for maximum fuel effi-

ciency. This chapter also considers the hand brake in Ford's Model T—which Pflugfelder suggests served as a metaphor for "the potential for speed" depending on whether it was in first or second gear (76)—as a way of illustrating the relevance of interfaces throughout the history of the automobile.

Chapter 5 advances thinking about transportation technologies in terms of *logistics,* the process through which users make choices based on design and interfaces in the practice of navigation. Pflugfelder reframes John Urry's discussion of being "locked in" to suggest that many of us have choices but are actually persuaded by habit (91). While the argument that technologies of movement are persuasive is compelling, the suggestion that most logistics are a matter of choice may not resonate with the interdisciplinary scholar. Concepts such as locked-in decision making, path dependence, and skeuomorphism have long helped us make sense of the ways material infrastructures, technical standards, and culture structure experience and influence future possibilities. Chapter 6 considers the last element of kinesthetic rhetoric: *navigation.* Tying the ancient world to one of tomorrow, Pflugfelder turns to the myth of Athena inventing the horse's bit (an interface for communicating with the horse) and suggests imagining what the bit might look like for driverless cars. Explaining that user experience is important in making transportation persuasive, we might ask how much control users must be given over autonomous vehicles to persuade them to ride in them (113).

In the final chapter, Pflugfelder brings his analysis of kinesthetic rhetoric together with an actor network theory approach to make sense of a failed autonomous electric personal transportation vehicle (EPTV) project—he had been involved in the attempted development of a "pod car" on a university campus in the Midwestern United States (121). He attributes the failure of this project to a vehicle design created within a mechanical-engineering mindset that lacked a broader vision: a dashboard interface consisting of a single giant red "stop" button that suggested imminent danger; a logistic that asked users to attend to multiple interfaces at once; and finally a navigation practice where "users were *designed for* … but not *designed with*" (139–145, emphasis in original). Pflugfelder's approach recognizes the agency of human and non-human actors but ascribes the most persuasive role to technical communicators, suggesting the EPTV could have been more persuasive had it been given a greater role at the outset. While this case illustrated the author's argument, it would have helped to see a case where an ICE alternative has been persuasive and how attendance to design, interface, logistics, and navigation resulted in desired outcomes.

What Pflugfelder's book reveals is that when we think about whether transportation technologies are persuasive, we create the possibility for intervention. While a rhetorical approach to understanding transportation technologies may not immediately appeal to the interdisciplinary readership of

Transfers, the argument that there is more we can do to move toward post-ICE automobility is persuasive indeed.

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Putting Disruption in Perspective

Christo Sims, *Disruptive Fixation: School Reform and the Pitfalls of Techno-Idealism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 232 pp., $27.95 (paperback), $80 (hardback)

Christo Sims's *Disruptive Fixation* examines the movement of business-minded "innovation" agendas and technologies from the world of high tech to public education. Sims traces how these concepts and their promises of increased social mobility migrate between social spheres. This book is the result of three years of ethnographic fieldwork, including two years at the pseudonymous Downtown School, a highly lauded, philanthropically funded middle and high school in New York City. Billed as a "school for digital kids," the Downtown School had an ambitious, progressive plan to teach an "innovative" curriculum that pushed "what kids are really interested in today, social networking [and] video games," as pedagogical tools, aiming to instill skills in "systems thinking," "design thinking," and "twenty-first century competencies" (49, 51).

Via this case study, Sims examines the "cyclical processes" through which these philanthropic interventions produce a "countercurrent" that thwarts actual change from happening and that, ironically, fuels a desire for future change. Echoing the language of Silicon Valley entrepreneurship, he calls this cycle "disruptive fixation." The pedagogical and technological reforms touted by the school's leaders and backers are thought to break with and thus "disrupt" the ineffective models of the past, to disrupt old patterns and make room for successful, lasting change. However, as in Silicon Valley, claims of "disruptive" reform are often not as radical as they hope to be and, as Sims shows, often lead to a retrenchment of old values and patterns by the reformers themselves.

In addition to providing incisive observations of the everyday operations of the Downtown School and its interactions with funders, the city, neighbors, students, and parents, Sims contextualizes its progressive, innovation-focused

mission and preoccupation with digital technology within a broader history of attempting social change through techno-spiked education reform. Sims notes that public education is often a scapegoat for society-spanning issues like income inequality or fading civic participation and is repeatedly subjected to reforms destined to fall short of their goals. At the Downtown School, as with other reform projects, promises of social mobility for underprivileged children are loudly proclaimed. Simultaneously, however, those promises are undermined because reformers often refuse to engage meaningfully with education experts and end up remaking old mistakes and faulty systems. Sims signposts how these reformist efforts isolate and depoliticize dense sociopolitical issues though repeated cycles of "problematization" and "rendering technical" (15). These cycles translate complex dilemmas into simpler issues that reformers claim can be solved with their favorite technologies.

Sims identifies "entrepreneurial reformers," a slight spin on Howard Becker's "moral entrepreneurs," as the lead actors in reformist cycles. "Powerful people who are generally not experts in the worlds they seek to philanthropically transform" carry concepts and values from one sector to another, pushing for changes they genuinely believe to be helpful and that, not coincidentally, often "more closely approximate the reformer's own self image" (14). While the sectors they target, like public education, are stigmatized as failing and out of touch, entrepreneurial reformers are lauded as creative and optimistic and are endowed with ample resources thanks to partnerships with charitable foundations and amenable local governments. At the Downtown School, Sims notes, "the most influential of these entrepreneurial reformers accrued their wealth, power, and expertise in high-tech industries, and, as such, they were especially optimistic about the philanthropic potential of new media technologies and the innovative work cultures of high-tech designers" (14). Identifying these actors and their motivations allows Sims to trace imported concepts like "failing forward" and "systems thinking" not only as they enter the operating philosophy of the Downtown School but also as they manifest in the disruptive fixation cycle more broadly.

Even as these progressive reforms repeatedly fall short of their stated goals, the entrepreneurial reformers who spearheaded these projects routinely move on to parallel projects, often with the same foundation support. Not unlike their counterparts in Silicon Valley who bounce from start-up to start-up, reformers working in education tend to gain credentials from failed efforts and can emerge from unsuccessful projects with burnished reputations and valuable contacts. At the Downtown School, Sims notes how "sanctioned counterpractices" (19) and "the as-if character of figured worlds" (11) allow reformers and those who work with them to maintain a sense of success even as their projects deviate markedly from their stated goals. The failure of previous projects to deliver on their grandiose promises is attributed to the institutional entrenchment of schools and the inadequacies of their hired staff.

With new targets in their sights, reformers continue pitching similarly utopian projects and peddling new media technologies as guarantors of upward student mobility.

Sims's book is a welcome addition to the current literature on how the high-tech sector exports business models and ideologies across society. Highlighting how these ideas travel and shift, *Disruptive Fixation* provides both invaluable empirical observations from the field and a coherent theoretical framework for understanding these knowledge and culture transfer cycles.

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Narrating the Sea

Charlotte Mathieson, ed., *Sea Narratives: Cultural Responses to the Sea, 1600–Present* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 281 pp., 5 illustrations, €93.59 (hardback), €74.96 (ebook)

The sea moves—its waves and tides are constantly moving, and it has moved ships that set out to trade, "discover," explore, colonize, enslave. Culturally, the sea has been articulated in narratives that address and discursivize its elemental violence, its existential dimension for human populations, and its fluidity as a contact zone and a medium of mobility between different cultures. Based on the Travel and Mobility Studies Network's "Sea Narratives" symposium held at the University of Warwick's Institute of Advanced Study in early 2014, this collection examines cultural responses to the sea and seafaring mobilities from the early modern era to today by focusing on the narratives that have been drawn out in various media, from written texts to material and visual cultural forms.

The ten essays that *Sea Narratives* presents are both historically and topically diverse—from early modern French accounts of Atlantic crossings (Michael Harrigan), Napoleonic captivity narratives (Elodie Duché), and South African race activist Solomon Plaatje's maritime travels (Janet Remmington) to sea narratives in Irish literature (Roberta Gefter Wondrich) and sea stories from Daphne du Maurier (Gemma Goodman) and A. S. Byatt (Barbara Franchi), to Russian narratives of the Arctic (Eva-Maria Stolberg), contemporary Indian cinema's maritime themes (Sayandeb Chowdhury), and the trope of the "tolerant coast" (Isaac Land), the notion that coastal regions and cities are often perceived as more liberal spaces (e.g., California, Land's case study).

Framing these case studies, the editor's introduction is helpful in structuring the volume's individual contributions and their research results. Mathieson discusses the development of a "maritime humanities" and summarizes the collection's overall argument that "the sea stimulates innovative modes of narration that … foreground the *process* of narrating the sea as central to their representation" (3, emphasis in the original).

Naturally, any such collection must be eclectic, but this does not necessarily imply that the essays are directed at specialists in their respective fields only. Plowing through a broad range of topics, the book's chapters are linked by the conceptual questions raised in the introduction, even as they develop their own distinct arguments and methodologies for studying how the sea has been and can be put into narrative form. Harrigan opens the collection by convincingly demonstrating that the "ocean narrative is ultimately a repository for a multiplicity of other narratives within the circuits of early modern maritime communications" (35). Duché then foregrounds the advantages of a "holistic perspective on the visual, textual and material culture of the sea" (49). Remmington argues for the ongoing productivity of Paul Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic, despite its shortcomings. Stolberg investigates how science, technology, and popular culture are combined in nationalist narratives. Wondrich discusses the usefulness of Margaret Cohen's (qua Bakhtin's) chronotope model of the sea narrative. Goodman shows how the sea has been used as an imaginary escape from restrictive gender roles for English women. Franchi shifts our perspective to environmental themes and concerns that become increasingly salient in sea narratives. Chowdhury demonstrates how world cinema proposes that "the sea itself can turn into an apparatus of erasure" of human life (232). Finally, Land complicates the genre of the sea narrative by examining "the history and influence of ideas about the coast" (240).

Some of the contributors, like Chowdhury, neglect to offer a media-specific analysis and thus fail to address how narrative interacts with other forms of expression. In other cases, such as with Land, the significance of the sea recedes behind an emphasis on the coast. Nevertheless, the volume succeeds in presenting the vast possibilities for maritime literary, cultural, and historical research. It should be read as opening up a diverse archive of sea narratives for further scholarship rather than presenting an in-depth study of a more circumscribed object. *Sea Narratives* draws on different disciplines, languages, and literatures, and its topics include the role of race, class, and gender, as well as environmental dimensions. However, because of this attempted breadth of scope, the absence of slavery narratives and the Middle Passage is all the more problematic. The book seems to be largely framed by an unacknowledged focus on the realm of the British Empire (with six of nine contributions in this area) that might have been addressed at least in the introduction, which ends on how the "refugee and migrant crisis" (18)—a somewhat problematic phrasing—turns the sea into a "space of death"; yet

again, the ocean appears as a deathbed as much as a contact zone. Despite this somewhat fundamental shortcoming, the reader is offered many important insights into the various forms of sea(faring) narratives—insights that will be relevant for further explorations in the oceanic humanities and the study of maritime mobilities.

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Interrogating Modernity in the Margins of Central Asia

Till Mostowlansky, *Azan on the Moon: Entangling Modernity along Tajikistan's Pamir Highway* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), 240 pp., 25 black-and-white illustrations, $26.95 (paperback)

Increasingly, researchers are finding infrastructures to be provocative devices for anchoring theoretical writing on social changes and broader sociotemporal processes. Mobility studies is beginning to challenge the long-held modernist myth of progress and the presumption that technological infrastructures for moving people and goods are always advancing. In *Azan on the Moon,* Till Mostowlansky examines the Pamir Highway in Tajikistan to question this idea of a linear modernity. He takes up Shmuel N. Eisenstadt's concept of "multiple modernities" to argue that, because ideas of "modernity" are so varied and historically contingent, the term itself must be spoken of in the plural.[1]

Mostowlansky, a social anthropologist, spent four years on the Pamir Highway, or what people in eastern Tajikistan call "the road." Focusing on the town of Murghab in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO), his rich ethnographic study examines how people in the region—from diverse ethnic, gender, religious, and professional backgrounds—experience the highway and deal with the question of whether "to be or not to be modern" (xviii). The book has two core parts. The first focuses on the history of the Pamir Highway and looks at how the lived present was affected by the Soviet Union's efforts to modernize and integrate its Chinese and Afghan borderlands. In the second part, Mostowlansky considers three sites through which Murghabis experience and negotiate their relationship to modernity: regional identity, Islam, and the state.

The GBAO, from the perspective of those in Dushanbe (Tajikistan's capital), is a backwater region isolated from the rest of the country. The perceived isolation of the region and of Murghabis in particular is exacerbated by ethnic and religious differences. Most of the population living in the GBAO belongs to the Ismali branch of Shia Islam, unlike the rest of Tajikistan, where the majority is Sunni. While the Murghab district differs from the region for its predominant Sunni population, Murghabis are largely ethnic Kyrgyz and thus understood as distinct from the nation's Sunni Tajik majority. The GBAO did not, however, always have such a peripheral relation to the center. In the 1930s, the region was a site of what Mostowlansky calls "Moscow provisioning," when the Soviet state began to subsidize the borderlands of its empire by providing access to quality consumer goods, educational opportunities, and higher salaries. The building of the Pamir Highway was a part of the Soviet effort to more effectively integrate its border regions and create a cultural connection between Moscow and the GBAO. Stretching approximately 730 miles from Khorag (in Tajikistan) to Osh (in Kyrgyzstan), the road brought greater mobility to the GBAO and facilitated an increase in migration to the "center" of the Soviet empire. Although these interactions made Murghabis more aware of their supposedly "backward" position, people in the region asserted their identity by accepting some Soviet ideas and rejecting others. For Murghabis, modernity was connected not just with their intimate knowledge of "Russian civilization" but also with their being Ismaili Muslims, which they believed set them apart from other Muslims and made them "modern."

The collapse of the Soviet Union lessened the importance of the Pamir Highway. Over the past few decades, the Tajik state has neglected the road and focused its attention on a new highway from Murghab to the Chinese border. Most Murghabis, however, have not been allowed to take advantage of these new opportunities. The state has developed bureaucratic mechanisms to prevent Murghabis from accessing the permits needed to use this new route. Consequently, for many people in the region, the Pamir Highway continues to be a source of life and opportunity, as well as a site of negotiation and meaning making. Drawing on his extensive fieldwork, Mostowlansky pushes readers to rethink our conceptions of automobility—moving us away from the image of long solo drives on motorways and inviting us to consider the social interactions taking place within packed minivans. Travel on the road often involves sitting in cramped vehicles, and what may begin as a journey of a few hours may turn out to take days. Such conditions require a high level of sociability, with passengers participating in heated discussions, exchanging jokes, and dispensing advice.

Where Mostowlansky lets the reader down is in his failure to explore the impact of the Agha Khan Development Network (AKDN). The AKDN is a private network of development agencies administered from Paris but founded by the Aga Khan, the spiritual head of the Ismaili Muslim sect. An examina-

tion of the AKDN might have clarified the book's use of the term "multiple modernities" by showing how Ismaili representatives negotiate Western development discourse. Mostowlansky briefly addresses the way Ismaili institutions strategically convey different meanings to different people, but this line of inquiry could have been further explored. Other than this, the book provides fresh insight into the everyday lives of those who experience travel on the road—including Murghabis, agents of the state, commercial jeep drivers, and aspiring traders. It is a useful addition to a growing literature in the anthropology of infrastructure, questioning some long-held assumptions about roads.

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Note

1. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29.

Moving Images: The Empathetic Potential of Film for Understanding Migration

Steffen Köhn, Mediating Mobility: Visual Anthropology in the Age of Migration (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 208 pp., $30 (paperback)

In *Mediating Mobility,* Steffen Köhn conceptualizes migration through images and image-making technologies. Köhn interweaves theoretical reflection on questions of aesthetics, politics, and cinematic form with an analysis of twenty documentary works about migration—including documentaries, installations, and performances—by anthropologists, experimental filmmakers, and video and performance artists. In his analysis, Köhn is guided by what Arjun Appadurai has called an "ethics of possibility" (153) to recall attention to how images disrupt conventional notions of space and time in ways that allow us to contemplate whether "film might be uniquely suited to inscribe equality into a world that denies it" (29).

Köhn argues for film's transformative potential and importance for anthropological practice and theory: film builds empathy for migrant lifeworlds through sensory proximity and participation (which is a key objective of anthropology); cinematic techniques such as montage reveal global interconnections and inequalities; and filmic depictions of migration shape theorizations of mobility more broadly. He builds his argument through four

chapters that link specific visual practices with theoretical analysis. Each chapter centers on a conceptual debate and a set of experimental and anthropological documentaries on migration that expand and reconfigure debates about the connections between cinema and mobility.

The introduction discusses the politics of image making in the European migrant crisis and raises questions about the representations of people with little political power, such as Syrian refugees. Chapter 1, "Migrant In/visibility," establishes "visibility and invisibility as … political modes of existence" (30). Drawing on Hannah Arendt's notion of the "space of appearance" and the artist Ariella Azoulay and the philosopher Jacques Rancière's theorization of aesthetics and politics, Köhn conceptualizes how mass media representations of migrants are implicated in "concurring regimes of exposure and concealment" (42), where migrants become hypervisible as undifferentiated vulnerable groups but invisible as empathetic individuals. In contrast to these images, chapter 2, "Migrant Experience," draws on phenomenological theory to understand how ethnographic visual practices humanize migrants as empathetic individuals outside of discourses of "legality" and "illegality." Engaging the visual anthropologist David MacDougall, the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and the anthropologist Michael Jackson's theories of corporeality and phenomenology, Köhn shows how film is a multisensory medium that offers viewers intense and intimate proximity to migrant lifeworlds. He builds on the experiential dimensions of his own film *Tell Me When …* (2011), where viewers can sense the acute placelessness that characterizes the experiences of Moroccan, Nigerian, and Pakistani migrants stranded on the North African coast.

While the first half of the book focuses on the ways in which film can bring viewers closer to understanding migrant lifeworlds at a micro level, the latter half shows how film also offers the space for macro analysis. Chapters 3 and 4 engage Deleuzian notions of cinema's immanence and the "time-image" to examine how innovative filmic techniques and the spatial and temporal dimensions of migration shape contemporary thought. For example, in chapter 3, "Migratory Spaces," Köhn's conceptualization of his multiscreen video installation *A Tale of Two Islands* (2012) shows how montage is a tool for revealing uneven global interconnections. He sees his work as examining the complex postcolonial situation of two neighboring sovereign and semisovereign islands in the Comoro Archipelago, while also pointing to the way presentation and exhibition form shape how we experience interconnectedness. Chapter 4, "Migratory Times," discusses the ways in which film enables contemplation of the temporal complexities of migration, such as the concurrence of the past and present and the presence of nostalgia without memory. Köhn analyzes works like his film *Intimate Distance* (2015), which conveys simultaneous temporal copresence and spatial distance that may feature in migrant relationships. The film's grainy webcam footage of separated lovers

and relatives across Colombia, Italy, Germany, the Philippines, and Turkey is a thoughtful corrective to romanticized accounts of the collapsing of time and space in a globalized present.

This is a book that speaks to and brings together the fields of contemporary art practice, cinema studies, mobility and migration studies, visual arts, and anthropology. Köhn's thorough discussions of humanities and social scientific scholarship on the relationship between politics and poetics, art and anthropology, and migration and media highlight robust interdisciplinary connections and are useful for grasping the key perspectives in each of these conceptual arenas. The book's investment in the cinematic form's possibility to reimagine and even reconfigure power relations is an inspired idea. The reader is left with a clear sense of the empathetic potential of film for "us"—Western subjects—and its importance for anthropology. The range of documentary works analyzed in the book challenges dominant regimes of representation that obscure the humanity of migrants. However, the question of how film shifts the sociopolitical and material realities of migrants is not directly addressed, which might leave the reader ultimately questioning the transformative possibilities of film as a site for emancipatory politics. Both a skillful theorist and filmmaker, Köhn makes a critical contribution to contemporary theorizations of movement across space and time while pushing forward new directions in the highly relevant areas of media and migration studies.

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American Cycling and Its Discontents

Margaret Guroff, *The Mechanical Horse: How the Bicycle Reshaped American Life* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 295 pp., 10 black-and-white photographs, 5 black-and-white illustrations, $17.95 (paperback)

Melody L. Hoffmann, *Bike Lanes Are White Lanes: Bicycle Advocacy and Urban Planning* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 210 pp., $40 (paperback)

American cycling levels in daily traffic are among the lowest in the world. Nevertheless, the steady flow of publications about the history and politics of cycling in the United States suggests that many Americans are interested in this mode of transportation. Margaret Guroff's *The Mechanical Horse* is part

of a historical series that claims to shed light on America's national character. Based on accounts from newspapers and popular journals, Guroff demonstrates how the meanings attached to cycling have varied and changed drastically over time. Readers familiar with the history of cycling, however, will hardly find new information or a fresh perspective. All the different themes discussed—that is, the introduction of the bicycle in the nineteenth century and its role in modernization; the impact of cycling on road construction, recreation, tourism, sports, consumerism, women's liberation, and warfare; the declining social status of the bicycle and its disqualification as a means of transport; bicycle activism and the current resurgence of the two-wheeler—have been covered in various other works, often in more thorough ways.

Guroff characterizes the relationship of Americans with the bicycle as an "on-again, off-again romance" (158), but her rather celebratory story tends to overstate its impact in American society. The book's subtitle, *How the Bicycle Reshaped American Life*, is misleading. After all, since the 1920s, American cycling volumes have been much lower than in most other Western countries, with Americans using bicycles mainly for sports and recreation or as vehicles for children. There is hardly any country in the world where motoring shaped urban planning and social life to such a large degree as in the United States. Although cycling has increased in some metropolitan areas, especially among yuppies, nationwide pedaling levels have been on the decline. America is still far removed from a broad acceptance of the bicycle as a viable alternative to the car as a means of transportation. Moreover, the current populist reaction against neoliberal globalization may impede further government support of cycling promotion.

What is lacking in Guroff's book—a critical, political perspective—is center stage in Melody Hoffmann's *Bike Lanes Are White Lanes*. Drawing on case studies in Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and Portland, Oregon, Hoffmann addresses the social and racial inequalities in cycling and the associated activism, lobbying, policies, facilities, and infrastructural planning. She argues that the framing of cycling as part of a responsible, progressive, and trendy lifestyle obscures the socioeconomic and cultural differences in people's transportation needs, motivations, and choices. Whereas cycling activism was once inspired by environmental and health concerns, as well as by leftist social criticism, today neoliberal cycling policies are advanced in terms of a livable urban environment for well-educated professionals and the "creative class." City governments are building cycling infrastructure for economic reasons without considering whether it benefits all (would-be) cyclists regardless of their income and ethnicity.

The gentrification of formerly lower-class neighborhoods shows that the unequal distribution and quality of bicycle infrastructure in different parts of cities reflects the disparity between those being able to influence decision making in urban planning and those who are not. Cycling facilities and events

are mainly geared to the white middle class and upwardly mobile young people who use high-quality bicycles for leisure, sports, and commuting. The needs of immigrant workers, black and Latino communities, and other groups who cycle out of sheer necessity are often ignored and marginalized. For them, cycling is not hip and cool; instead, it is an intrinsic part of the experience of poverty, and it often leaves them vulnerable for racialized police surveillance. Furthermore, the advance of "cycle chic" in their neighborhoods may even be a bad omen for unprivileged groups, as rising property values and living costs will eventually displace them.

Hoffmann's criticism is well taken. She challenges top-down technocratic cycling policies for their one-sided emphasis on infrastructural facilities and the implied supposition that these will automatically stimulate cycling. The supposedly politically neutral technocratic discourse about the benefits of pedaling for all often overlooks the socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic factors that influence decisions about whether to ride a bike. The urban setting of cycling is not by definition neutral ground, but it involves inequalities. Hoffmann's plea for more equitable cycling policies offers a valid corrective, not only to the assumption that the two-wheeler is by definition an egalitarian vehicle but also to the celebration of the recent "bicycle renaissance" in many Western cities.

Unfortunately, Hoffmann's study lacks theoretical substance and methodological rigor, and her argument is marred by much repetition and circular reasoning. She stresses her own involvement in cycling and community activism and uses "nonpositivist" methods such as "participant-observation ethnography" (44, 47). As a result, her book, like Guroff's, reads more like investigative journalism than an academic study.

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Novel Review

Airship Comics and the Mobile Urban Gaze

Alexander Braun, ed., *Winsor McCay: The Airship Adventures of Little Nemo* (Cologne: Taschen, 2017), 288 pp., $15 (hardback)

Winsor McCay (c. 1867–1934) is one of the most well-known US comics artists, and his drawn creations arguably boosted sales of the Sunday editions of the *New York Herald* in the early twentieth century. Perhaps his most recognizable comics creation was the character Little Nemo. The protagonist of continuity comics running from 1905 to 1914 and revived from 1924 to 1927, Little Nemo was a suburban child by day, but by night, an intrepid adventurer of the urban form and of the most remote places of the cosmos. *The Airship Adventures of Little Nemo* is organized around an interesting conceit, as it groups together McCay's Sunday comics from January 1910 through April 1911, all of which hinge on themes of visits to the moon, Mars, and Earth's urban and rural spaces. Alongside *Winsor McCay: The Complete Little Nemo 1905–1909,*[1] this book might be best considered within the context of the uneasy overlap between comics and high art explored so well by theorists such as Bart Beaty.[2] With a solid reputation as an art publisher, Taschen's interest in comics should perhaps be taken as an indicator of the art world's increased attention to the form. Written from a vantage point situated at the intersection of comics studies and urban cultural studies, this review makes the case that scholars of transportation and mobility studies should also be interested in McCay's work. The trope of the mobile gaze pervades Little Nemo's travels and is elevated to a fundamental role in the artist's airship comics.

Before moving further, it is important to note that the volume serves as evidence that the discourse of high visual culture may not be capable of fully adopting comics, otherwise known as the ninth art, on its own terms. Like other key figures of the period, McCay published his comics in the full-color Sunday editions of the print periodicals that saturated early twentieth-century New York. These were not linear comic strips of three or four punctuated panels, but rather full-page spreads with both a horizontal and a vertical dimension on the page. Sadly, the Taschen volume does a certain violence to this full-page comics form by breaking up each full-page original over four much smaller pages. Overall, this publication decision reduces the vertical aspects of McCay's page design. In addition, there are instances where dialogue is buried under the crease. The visual impact of each full-page product is mitigated by having to turn the page, and the artistic properties of comics are systematically obscured (one example is what Thierry Groensteen calls braiding, i.e., visual relationships between nonadjacent images).[3]

McCay's airship images nonetheless remain compelling for what they tell us of the modern city as a cultural space shaped by and subjected to a mobile gaze. The artist's style was influenced by the time he spent working in dime museums, his passion for circuses and theme parks like Coney Island, and the spectacular nature of the modern city as a space of consumption. As Katherine Roeder makes clear elsewhere,[4] his drawings tend to recapitulate the spatial form of a modern department store window and evoke comparisons with Georg Simmel's remarks on the city as a site defined by rapid change. If the artist's comics fantasies are deeply connected to a modern way of viewing the city as spectacle, then his airship adventures privilege the urban view from above. These views are at once connected with two contexts: first, the spectacle of the city as seen by the touristic gaze; and second, the conceptualization of urban form carried out by planners, reformers, architects, and designers.

Our dreaming hero's mobile airship prompts consideration of the excessive speed, rapid change, and even terror of modern life. Yet it also effects an estrangement that shifts viewers and readers alike into an oneiric mode of viewing that approaches the creative power and bird's-eye perspective of the planning class. Albeit intermittently, McCay does intimate that space has been constructed, and even that everyday life has been colonized, in the interests of capital. For example, in the comic dating from 24 April 1910, Nemo and his companions travel to Mars and discover that all real estate and breathable air must be purchased from a corporate overlord named B. Gosh. More often, however, the city appears as an ephemeral spectacle whose design and splendor are to be appreciated from above as an aesthetic form. For instance, on 13 and 20 November 1910, the comic gives us an overhead view of Coney Island and New York City, respectively, with distinguishable buildings. On 8 January 1911, Boston appears much more like a planner's map. In the 15 January 1911 installment, Nemo wakes up after dreaming a bird's-eye view of a snow-covered Montreal to exclaim, "What a pretty sight I was dreaming I saw!"

Scanning the volume's pages, one's thoughts turn easily to the famed ballooning photographs of Paris taken by Gaspard-Féliz Tournachon, otherwise known as Nadar (1820–1910). While the introduction to the book written by Alexander Braun does not invest at any length in the cultural imaginaries of air travel, the view from the history of aviation is an undeniable touchstone. The fleeting view of the landscape from an airship is a variation of the view from the consumer rail car. In the end, *The Airship Adventures of Little Nemo* conveys a true fascination with the view from above and the fast pace of modern urban life. Overall, it offers the reader familiar with mobility studies the valuable raw material for a study of the modern city as spectacle consumed by a mobile gaze—both on and off the comics page.

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Notes

1. Alexander Braun, ed., *Winsor McCay: The Complete Little Nemo 1905–1909* (Cologne: Taschen, 2017).
2. Bart Beaty, *Comics versus Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).
3. Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics,* trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).
4. Katherine Roeder, *Wide Awake in Slumberland: Fantasy, Mass Culture, and Modernism in the Art of Winsor McCay* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).