



Book Review

Mobilities, Mobility Justice and Social Justice

Cook, Nancy, & Butz, David (Eds.). (2019). New York: Routledge. ISBN 9780815377030 (cloth) US\$160.00; ISBN 9780367585532 (paper) US\$48.95; ISBN 9780429434587 (e-book) US\$48.95. 284 pages.

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The 2006 launch of the journal *Mobilities* prompted its editors to reflect on the “mobility turn” and the impact of this development within social sciences (Hannam et al., 2006). Since then “the field of mobilities research has grown by connecting different epistemological frames, and offering new post-disciplinary approaches to complex interconnected phenomena” (Buscher et al., 2016, p. 485). The edited volume *Mobilities, Mobility Justice and Social Justice* is one such effort. Its editors, Nancy Cook and David Butz, seek to problematize the intersection of the mobilities paradigm and social justice theory in an effort to advance a new conceptual frame – mobility justice (p. 3). To engage in this effort Cook and Butz bring together scholars from a variety of fields, including sociology, geography, anthropology, social welfare, transport studies and public administration. What emerges is an ambitious and somewhat wide ranging collection of 17 chapters, organized into two key sections, covering a broad array of topics.

Part I of the volume, “Introducing Mobility Justice,” orientates the collection. In the introduction Cook and Butz set the stage by succinctly highlighting key dynamics within both mobilities research and social justice theorizing to argue that each has much to offer the other. They explicitly reject imposing a singular definition of mobility justice to drive the volume in favour of providing an interdisciplinary forum where conceptualizations of mobility justice – framed by mobile ontology across various scales and contexts, and attendant to intersectional analysis – can be explored (p. 14). This resonates with Mimi Sheller’s call in the second chapter for an expansive and robust understanding of mobility justice. For Sheller “mobility justice is an overarching concept for thinking about how power and

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inequality inform the governance and control of movement, shaping the patterns of unequal mobility and immobility in the circulation of people, resources and information.” (p. 23). Importantly, as Sheller points out, the development of this approach holds the promise of bringing together movements and groups that have been previously separated, such as “embodied movements for social justice... struggles for transport justice and accessibility... movements for migrants and Indigenous rights, de-colonial movements, climate justice and global equity all under one common framework” (p. 33). These two chapters provide an effective contextual framing for the rest of the volume. The remaining 15 short chapters in Part II are loosely organized into four sub-sections: Justice and Mobility Governance; Justice and Mobility Infrastructures; Justice and Biomobilities; and Justice and More-than-human Mobilities. Taken together the chapters cover a lot of ground ranging from familiar themes such as migration and transport justice to newer areas such as the implications of mobility justice for non-human agents. While it is not possible in the scope of this review to address each of these contributions in turn, some observations can be made.

Some chapters in the opening two sub-sections of the second section are particularly noteworthy for their effort to speak to the mobility justice theme by drawing together conceptual frames and empirical examples. Wieqiang Lin’s contribution focuses on mobility justice and aeromobility. He underscores the importance of thinking how forms of global governance, such as air rights, aeronautical expertise and aviation security, are implicated in the production of unequal structures of mobility between nation states. As he puts it “injustices also arise in the systematic way ‘global rules’ splinter the mobility rights of whole populations in different nation-states” (p. 50). Also noteworthy is Ole B. Jensen’s chapter, which draws our attention to how design choices and design forms are implicated in the production of social injustice insofar as they promote or hinder movement. He writes, “much of the dark design of mobilities is as much about blocking and restricting movement as it is about channeling and directing it through designed systems and infrastructures” (p. 119). Jensen illustrates the importance of what he terms the “borderland between mobilities design and mobilities justice” (p. 126) by presenting two empirical examples of dark design: the Holocaust (an extreme of dark design), and the “war against homeless people.” In this latter instantiation, mobility injustice is materialized in acts of exclusion.

The volume also invites us to think more carefully about method and methodology. For example, in an excellent intervention Susan Ilcan draws on extensive field interviews to chart how Syrian refugees navigate bordering practices (e.g., military checkpoints and territorial borders) during their journeys out of Syria. In doing so, she documents refugees’ active engagement in struggles for migrant justice. She calls for more ethnographic-based migration and border research that examines migrant narratives and advocacy through the frame of mobility justice. Similarly, Denver Nixon and Tim Schwanens’ chapter, which focuses on community-based initiatives

targeted at walking and cycling infrastructures in London and Sao Paulo, makes a persuasive argument for developing an expanded conceptualization of mobility justice that captures the shifting complexities of everyday urban mobility and the differing voices and needs of community members. Butz and Cook's contribution pushes the mobility justice conceptualization further by addressing the "mobile methods" approach used by many mobilities researchers. They carefully interrogate how tendencies associated with mobile methods can themselves be implicated in what Butz and Cook term "epistemic injustice" (p. 81). In these instances injustice takes place in the research process and production of knowledge when "people whose mobility experiences and representations are prejudicially discredited, misunderstood or received as unintelligible are unlikely to be served by infrastructure planning, or by mobilities theorizing" (p. 82). Consequently, Butz and Cook draw attention to how research design and research decisions have consequences for justice and ethics.

A number of interventions in the volume are attentive to social exclusion, marginalization and difference, and the way these dynamics shape and are shaped by issues of mobility and justice. This is especially true of the contributions grouped under the sub-title "Justice and Biomobilities." Georgine Clarsen's chapter provides an analysis of an Australian television series *Black As*, which documents the exploits of a group of indigenous men on a hunting trip. She characterizes their movements and activities as "an enactment of mobility justice" (p. 160) insofar as the men's actions are simultaneously an assertion of sovereignty and a refusal of a colonial project. Amy Ritterbusch's contribution turns to a case of enforced mobility, where homeless people in Bogota were violently evicted from public spaces and forcibly relocated by state authorities. As a scholar activist she not only bears witness to the state's actions, but invites a reflection on what a just mobility outcome for homeless citizens might look like. Catherine Nash and her co-authors examine how LGBTQ groups negotiate and renegotiate neighbourhood spaces in Toronto and Sydney, raising the broader issue of what mobility justice means in relation to sexuality and gender identity. Gender is also central to Andres Benz's chapter. Drawing on a case study of the Gojal region of northern Pakistan he highlights how differential access to mobility plays a role in opportunities, social well-being and livelihoods. In doing so he discusses both intra- and inter-household relations and reveals how gender norms and differential positioning play a role in these relations.

Lastly, it should be noted that the chapters in the volume's final subsection, "Justice and More-than-human Mobilities," take concerns of inequality and justice into newer areas of food and animals. For example, Anna Davies examines food mobility and justice in her analysis of a project that seeks to redistribute surplus food by pairing businesses and charities. Her analysis leads her to conclude that redistribution on its own falls short of food mobility justice, because at best it is a "band aid" response. For Davies, the development of food mobility justice entails a concerted conversation

about the nature of the global food system and its connections with food waste and poverty. She writes, “mobility justice provides a useful way to talk about different relations that structure the movement of surplus food, highlighting power differentials that shape that practice and provide a context within which current food waste and food injustice collide” (p. 260).

The volume’s strength *and* weakness is located in the wide scope of its contributions. Indeed its origins lie in sessions at the 2016 American Association of Geographers conference, and there may be some drawbacks in trying to knit together these papers into an edited collection. On the one hand, this ambitious volume speaks to the conceptual potential of mobility justice and puts many new issues onto the agenda. But on the other hand, the range of disparate topics means the links between the chapters and sections are somewhat uneven as is the depth of their direct engagement with the editors’ concern to expand conceptualizations of mobility justice. In this respect, the coherence of the collection would have benefited perhaps from the addition of a concluding chapter. Here the editors could have synthesized the connections between the chapters by considering how well the contributions responded to questions posed in the introduction, such as “what does theorizing about ‘mobility justice’ achieve for both bodies of scholarship” (p. 4). A concluding chapter could have also sketched the possibilities for future research agendas.

References

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