

Book review

Edited by Debbie Hopkins and James Higham
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Accelerating global mobility of people and cargo at the dawn of the twenty-first century comes with simultaneous awareness of the undeniable impacts of greenhouse gas emissions on climate change. With private mobility projected to grow dramatically in densely populated China, India and Brazil, emissions are projected to double by 2050.

Low Carbon Mobility Transitions, edited by Debbie Hopkins and James Higham, addresses the global challenge of meeting the goals of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement to prevent global temperatures from rising 2° before the end of the century. The highly mobile elite, although aware of the need to reduce emissions, show an unwillingness to change their habits. Regulatory inertia appears to be the greatest barrier to preventing temperatures from rising. Certainly the fact that aviation was left out of the Kyoto Protocol of 1998 and the 21st Conference of the Parties in Paris in 2015 is indicative of a void of binding global regulation.

The overall theme of the book is not action-oriented, but is instead descriptive. The book is particularly useful for understanding the thoroughly stagnant and slow-moving conglomeration of global regulations and agendas of institutionalized actors that prohibit disruptively progressive change. It examines mobility for business, commuting and tourism travel, focusing on air and automobile travel, but not freight.

Although tourism is not the central focus of this edited volume, the social consciousness of international tourists and awareness of impact on issues of grave importance to global ecology create a heightened sensitivity to the systemic nature of the embeddedness of our dependence on the freedom to drive. This volume is directed at those responsible for affecting change in policy and governance toward a lower-carbon future. It does so by emphasizing the importance and agency of

human behavior in prioritizing global health and well-being in order to disentangle a global systemic dependence on processes that continually generate more carbon in the atmosphere. A recurrent underlying theme and thread that runs through all chapters of the book is the acknowledgment of the profound embedded nature of behavioral systemic practices in politics, economics, infrastructure and culture.

The book is separated into three parts. The first part describes the status quo and importance of changing behavior. The second part identifies pivotal structures that are constraints to transition and the technological innovations that can bring about a lower-carbon future. The final section of the book describes innovations and opportunities in policy and governance as well as opportunities in the aviation industry to reduce carbon intensity. Each section is complemented by two case studies that explore efforts to reduce carbon emissions locally — in the following locations: Sydney, Australia, Cape Town, South Africa, India, Finland, Brazil, China and Japan.

The strength of this volume is that it is directed toward tourism academics and practitioners focused on the governmental transportation policy and decision making in an effort to reduce a carbon footprint. Of particular relevance is a case study on the role of tour operators in reducing emissions that contribute to climate change. Because fossil fuel emissions are the principal perpetrator of climate change, there is less focus in the book on airline impacts. The book's weakness lies in the pessimism that is embedded in the challenge that permeates the underlying tone, summarized in a central chapter by Tourism Geographer, C. Michael Hall. He emphasizes that "At the national and supranational level, opportunities to challenge the dominant approach to low carbon mobility that focusses on efficiency are extremely limited" (page 100). Path dependence explains the inertia of policy change toward low carbon mobility, despite all the arguments and evidence that automotive dependence is unsustainable.

Review of Low Carbon Mobility Transitions

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Chapters that follow reiterate this statement, suggesting that transport challenges could be resolved by local leadership that needs support at the national level. India is grappling with a huge surge in motorized vehicles in the last two decades whereas rickshaws, walking and other people-powered transport were the ubiquitous norm beforehand. Finland's dedication to reducing carbon emissions are noted as well as cultural and technological incentives for low-carbon lifestyles. Applied analyses of constraints to Scottish transport policy indicate that governance will prevent a transition to electric options any time in the near future. The book lacks an optimistic zeal of embracing alternative and innovative energy solutions and ignores the possibility of as-yet-undeveloped technologies beyond a few years in the near future. Technological change can revolutionize processes quickly, and this volume fails to engage with developing travel possibilities beyond the current decade.

The volume explores contradictions and juxtapositions between desires and reality. For example, Chinese immigrants to Australia were found to be habitually dependent on public transportation and therefore were frustrated by the lack of infrastructure there (page 80). Aviation and tourism industries continue to grow, so mechanisms for change

involving operations, prices and behavior are suggested. These include aircraft weight, fuel efficiency and also the use of algae-based biofuels. There is a gap between understanding the need for reduction in greenhouse emissions and voluntarily reducing one's flight behavior, but this book suggests an option of shaming tourists into pursuing slower forms of travel using trains instead of airplanes and cars. It concludes with an urgent statement about the necessity of transition to low-carbon societies and economies. However, the changes that are needed will rely on radical system-wide policy changes rather than looking to consumers.

Personally, I would consider buying this book if it focused more on efforts to communicate to tourists about the ethical cost of travel related to environmental impacts. Carbon offsets were barely mentioned and warrant a chapter in a book about tourism impacts on climate change. If there were a chapter focused on tourist choice in air travel and ways that tourists mitigate their environmental impacts, that would have been immensely useful.

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