

Sheller, M. (2020). *Island futures: Caribbean survival in the Anthropocene*. Durham NC: Duke University Press. 226pp, pbk, ISBN: 978-1-4780-1118-7. US\$24.95.

To what extent are current approaches to disaster recovery and development just? Can we secure sustainable futures in the (post-) Anthropocene? Mimi Sheller's book, *Island futures: Caribbean survival in the Anthropocene*, offers approaches to "just recovery" through articulations of "countergeographies, countermobilities [and] various alternative ontologies" (p. 23). These approaches connect to historically grounded conceptions of the environment and suggest creative linkages to the future, emphasizing visions for transnational solidarities that are deeply seated within radical Caribbean traditions. Against the backdrop of relentless struggles to address climate change impacts, this monograph effectively disrupts and challenges our "presentist", myopic perspectives toward disaster recovery and reconstruction.

Island futures systematically parses out the asymmetries and unsustainability of post-disaster mobility regimes that are entrenched in the persistence of coloniality and violence, and exacerbated by external disaster recovery actors who impose plans and programmes in locales. The author comprehensively illustrates the multiple ways that these international disaster recovery plans are disconnected, impertinent, and do the work of enabling and reproducing differential mobilities. Sheller asks us to reject these exploitative neoliberal capitalist structures in favour of approaches to reconstruction and redevelopment that are informed by ontologies of locally-rooted systems and traditions, toward visions of sustainable futures.

In this highly autoethnographic monograph, Sheller draws on her 20 years of expertise in the Caribbean. Although she primarily focuses on disaster recovery on the island of Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, Sheller also historicizes the wider Caribbean region's exploitations, uneven mobilities and resistances. The book is framed by the concepts of "coloniality of climate", that endures because of "both coloniality in the past and of neocolonial restructuring today" (p. 10), and the "islanding effect", that works to isolate and marginalize impacted populations by severely limiting rights to mobility.

Structured around multi-scale constellations of power, Sheller asks three fundamental questions, in context: who controls it, who has access to it, and how is it distributed? She takes time to expose and critically analyse the variances in mobility capital and network capital; that is, the milieu of capabilities, competencies, circumstances, and architectures that impact access to mobility. Contextualizing the convoluted links between governance and mobility regimes, she brings to relief the unevenness of access which "reproduce differentiated subjectivities, uneven spatialities, and unequal distributions of network capital" (p. 34), that functionally reinforce the islanding effect.

There are key discourse-threads throughout the book, captured within multiple vignettes and buttressed by the powerful intellectual work of Caribbean thinkers and others. Discussion of the logics and logistics of humanitarianism exposes the failures of external approaches to, for example, food security and water management that generate uneven network capital. These impositions and subsequent failures underline disconnections with local needs and imperatives. Instead, Sheller advocates for the use of community-based sustainable agriculture methods that have existed for centuries in Haiti and the Caribbean, to safeguard food sovereignty (Chapter 1). She underscores the resistances and commandeering of obtrusive infrastructures to service needs of the local population through the example of water-related projects (Chapter 2). On the question of the politics and ethics of mobility governance, her discussion of the "view from above" – which is bounded up in the neoliberal rhetoric attached to aeromobilities – fortifies the differential empowerment between foreigners and displaced

people in Haiti (Chapter 3). These reference points reveal multi-dimensional and -scalar nuances of uneven mobilities, as well as offer key insights into the productivities of participatory methods to reconstruction and redevelopment.

Throughout these chapters, Sheller also makes important conceptual contributions. In Chapter 4, for example, she suggests inclusive moves toward the “democratization of digital access” where she conceptualizes a kind of “infrastructuring from below” and “patching,” explaining how people may appropriate imposed and existing infrastructure to suit their immediate needs. In Chapter 5, through a mapping of her own alternating journey across the Haiti-Dominican Republic border (separated by two lakes), she analyzes the governance and mediation of mobility at varied scales, noting the conceptual and material blurring of territory and territoriality, as the lakes continually encroach the border—as if the water is reclaiming space, while diluting these distinctions.

Chapter 6 focuses on sexual power, which manifestly converges the aforementioned threads toward mobility justice in explicit terms. Taking research actors to task, Sheller points out their complicity in hiding key details in reporting and findings. She argues that, because of male/masculine dominated structures, there is inevitable propagation of inequalities that renders racialized and gendered bodies invisible. Drawing on spiritual agency as a means to negate their exclusions, Sheller also connects sexual justice to mobility justice and to environmental sustainability. The role of women is essential in recovery efforts and Sheller suggests that transnational groups should partner with women’s groups and grassroots feminist movements, to engage their localized knowledges. There are multiple intimate linkages to the scale of the body in contemplating disaster recovery that are embedded in Caribbean thought: imaginings of the female body as a site of fruitfulness, productivity, and “mother earth”. But Sheller’s book is important for also revealing how these bodies are simultaneously politicized, sexualized, exploited, and eventually abandoned.

Punctuated throughout this monograph is the author’s self-awareness of her positionality in the disaster recovery landscape in Haiti. She contrasts the privileges and skewed mobilities that she enjoyed, relative to the impacted local populace. Sheller is critical about her complicity in reproducing such inequalities. This consistent acknowledgement of her role and its implications offers readers a rich illustration of decolonial thinking in practice.

Disasters are moments that dismantle and remake mobility regimes; this book asks us to consider radical and transformational logics through “subversive” ways of “doing” disaster recovery that draw from indigenous systems, grass-roots traditions and Afro-Caribbean spirituality. While Sheller details these ontologies and their benefits, practical implementation interventions are vague – which reads like an unfinished puzzle – on the particularly temporally sensitive issue of disaster recovery. She does note however, that successes will hinge upon the dubious task of global north countries’ and companies’ recognition of their responsibilities in the current environmentally degraded landscape. Nevertheless, *Island futures* is a vital provocation and contribution toward visions of sustainable and just futures. Sitting in productive dialogue with scholarly work in disaster and mobility studies, this timely book resonates with myriad disciplinary strands, such as Caribbean philosophy and human geographies. As a valuable addition to decolonizing literatures, this book is a “must-read”.

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