

ing topics: restoration of denuded forests, conservation of water resources, traditional concepts and architecture of the area, no permission to change land from green uses to “nongreen” uses, etc. “In a section on the activities to be prohibited, hydroelectric projects are the first item listed” (160). Drew argues that “Eco-Zones are ultimately limited responses to dire systemic problems” and she demands that “the approaches taken should not omit the larger spatial dimensions of the equity and sustainability equation ... [U]rban centers such as New Delhi could be the target of Ecologically Sensitive Zones rather than the relatively benign Himalayan regions” (184 f.). Her political ecology perspective is to “critically reflect on the scalar disparities of how resources are used and who benefits from their use” (186). Drew suggests, that “the time had perhaps come to focus on self-preservation” (187).

“River Dialogues” has various advantages and disadvantages, as the author sets various accents in terms of content and style. It is a mixture of a scientifically precise analysis of gendered dynamics and disparities and inserted methodological explanations, and her nostalgic memories of emotional experiences and conversations that sometimes hinder or disturb the flow of presentation and the line of argumentation. The explicit focus on the religious significance of the Ganges is well integrated into the local and national socio-ecological discussion and continues to merit the attention of ecologists and religious scholars.

Othmar Gächter

Elliot, Alice, Roger Norum, and Noel B. Salazar (eds.): *Methodologies of Mobility. Ethnography and Experiment*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2017. 207 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-480-1. (Worlds in Motion, 2) Price: \$ 95.00

In 2006, Sheller and Urry projected the emergence of a “new mobilities paradigm” in social sciences and humanities. The paradigm called for mobility to be codified as the fundamental axis for interpreting reality, perhaps even capable of replacing other concepts such as those of society or place. The main idea behind the new paradigm – or mobilities turn, as some came to call it – revolved around the notion that mobility should be treated as a *producer* of social reality, and not merely a *product* of structures, institutions, and/or interactions. Up until then, many stressed, mobility had been perceived as a mere outcome, as mostly a consequence. The mobility of soldiers served the problematic of warfare. The mobility of priests served the problematic of pilgrimage and religion. The mobility of traders served the problematic of commerce and trade. Mobilities scholars, aligned within the new paradigm, came to fill in this gap, reasoning that mobility ought to be treated as a rightful concept of its own. These academics believed that many realities only made sense, or surfaced even, when and if on the move and, thus, mobility should be abstracted as a social spur. Mobility commenced to be conceived of as a cultural differentiator, as a form of social capital or as something that contained and expanded a continuum of ideologies that shaped practices and representations.

The rise of the mobilities turn led to the (re)invention of techniques and methods of study, specifically designed to cater for a world in flux, a world of permanent itinerancy, for the elusiveness of the moving, and the subtleties of kinetic life. In short, for a world that was now more about *routes* than *roots*.

For instance, in ethnographic research, the multi-sited fieldwork – although cutting-edge in its time, but still very much tied to a spatial logics as the suffix *sited* suggests – gave way to the mobile field, to various techniques of “shadowing” and forms of mobile ethnography. Suddenly, fieldwork was being conducted amongst ferry boats (Phillip Vannini’s works), through walking with people (Tim Ingold) or in consecutive railway journeys (James Johnson). Mobile ethnography emerged as a technique of its own, one that was doubly informed by mobility: it demanded not only the ethnographer to physical move, but also to focus on mobile phenomena. Mobile ethnography implied both a *practical* and a *theoretical* dimension of mobility. Moving was not enough anymore – as most ethnographers had always been required to do anyway. Now, it was necessary to move and *see* mobility.

But mobile ethnography is only one example amongst many other methodologies that were devised to grasp and study mobility. Two books took turns in showing this particularly well. The first, “Mobile Methodologies,” edited by Fincham, McGuinness, and Murray in 2010, put forward a number of interesting methodologies, including techniques of being/seeing there (like mobile ethnography), the deployment of new tracking technologies to analyse the worlds of movement, the usage of video and audiovisual methods, or even the constitution of autobiography as a mobile method (Fincham et al. 2010). Its twin book, “Mobile Methods,” published only one year after, reworked these ideas and introduced several new approaches (Büscher, Urry, and Witchger 2011), including the Travel Remedy Kit – a kind of experimental travelling kit to analyse behaviour in trains – the usage of time-space diaries to show the choreographies of everyday life, or even techniques to examine mobile video calls, a practice that has gone from virtually nonexistent to widespread in less than ten years. These are only but a few examples of what can be found inside these collected editions. At last, mobile methodology started to be a thing of its own – just as the concept of mobility had already been set to be.

The book under review can be seen as the latest instalment of this trajectory, a clear heir to the two previous efforts. If I am allowed a cinematic metaphor here, I would argue even that “Methodologies of Mobility” reads as the folding of a trilogy. This latest instalment, though, has one obvious, and forthright, difference that sets it apart from the two previous volumes: it is straightforwardly intended for the audiences of anthropology. Indeed, all three editors are experienced anthropologists, with an established reputation in academia, having conducted ethnographic work in the Arctic (Roger Norum), Morocco (Alice Elliot), or with tourists in different contexts (Noel Salazar). Should their curricula fail to hint at the crowd, the shout to anthropologists becomes even more clear after an initial skim through the introduction of the book, where

most of the references come from the likes of Malinowski, Lévi-Strauss, Gupta, or Clifford – names of which all prospective anthropologists must be able to recognise immediately. If anthropology had not take a mobilities turn of its own, this book pushes the agenda.

The rest of the volume then deals with the central, and by now recurrent, problematic of how can scholars, and particularly ethnographers, deal with a mobile world. Although not entirely a novelty, the book does indeed offer fresh insights, perspectives, and solutions to the puzzle of grasping the seemingly-always-elusive mobility, particularly by addressing a discipline erstwhile destined to the study of the particularities and peculiarities of cultures defined as *places*. In this book, mobile ethnography, as formulated above, appears as but an option amongst many others, placed alongside several techniques of “staying put” to study mobility (Coates’, Lucht’s, and Vasanthkumar’s chapters), the development of a “borderline ethnography” (Andersson’s contribution), methods that tackle digital mobilities (Walton), the usage of photography (Vium) as well as of records of previous ethnographic explorations (Österlund-Pötzsch), and even the occasional analysis of material life in vans (Leivestad). All in the name of, as the authors highlight, reflecting “on the ways in which mobility acquires, and requires, specific forms of methodological thinking and acting” (3). Have the authors cracked the problem? Certainly not. But good hints are to be found within their pages.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in the field of mobilities and in particular to ethnographers of movement – to all of them really, not only to the ones more aligned with anthropology. Also, my bet is that a volume such as this has the potential to become an important handbook for all graduate students chasing after mobile fields and the realms of movement.

André Nóvoa

Elmore, Mark: *Becoming Religious in a Secular Age*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016. 292 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-29054-9. Price: £ 22.95

This book charts the emergence of a concept of religion in the state of Himachal Pradesh in the Indian Himalayas, tracing its genesis to the demand for a shared history and culture that newly independent India levied on these mountainous regions as a condition for granting them collective statehood. Elmore’s argument takes as its point of departure India’s refusal to grant Himachal full statehood in 1948, deeming it insufficiently developed to manage its own affairs. That rejection inspired the architect of the contemporary state of Himachal Pradesh, Yashwant Singh Parmar, to embark on a project that would shape and articulate the people’s common identity and cultural distinctiveness as well as modernize the remote region. Elmore’s book details the ways in which those two projects – the creation of a shared Himachali identity and modernization – were deeply conjoined with one another. The quest for a suitable modernity would involve Parmar in leading his people away from what the Indian state deemed backward superstition to the authentic

religiosity that would prove they had advanced adequately enough to merit full assimilation into national life.

Beginning in the 1950s, land reforms that broke up large estates and redistributed parcels to former tenants had the greatest effect on Himachal’s temples, which often controlled agricultural production in the region. Land redistribution not only curtailed temples’ revenue but also severed their connection to the economic and material life of the people. Local deities were thereby untethered from everyday social transactions and became, instead, objects of faith (*viśvās*) and nostalgia. Filmmakers, government anthropologists, and local historians came to produce materials that “provided an operating narrative of the state that grounded the state’s authority in its local theistic practices” while “employing [those practices] … in the service of the emerging state” (95). Elmore studies how religion and the state began to interpenetrate one another to a greater and greater extent in the late 20th century, the state managing and even sponsoring religious affairs such as festivals and rituals while it provided overt support to oracular mediums and local deities. These features of Himachali cultural practice then, in turn, came to be figured according to administrative metaphors. (“The *devatā* (local god) is a policeman” is a common one.) In this ongoing process, Elmore argues the state generates normative modes of religiosity that delocalized religious practice in favor of producing a composite *devīdevatā saṃskṛti* (god-goddess culture), a phrase that evokes a timeless Himachali religion. These normative modes have authorized the state’s intervention in local practices such as animal sacrifice by declaring them barbarism rather than constitutionally protected religion. In these ways, “religion” has functioned as both the condition and the product of modernization and development in Himachal Pradesh.

The book exhibits two particular strengths. The first is the texture of the evidence brought to bear. Elmore sees the processes he describes in a vast array of historical developments and social products, from locally produced histories to oracular practices to urbanization. The second is less unqualified, lying in the author’s astute perception of the trajectory of religious change in the Himalayas under conditions of rapidly shifting forces following India’s independence in 1947. Land reform, the creeping dominance of Hindi as a language of everyday expression, the expansion of tourism, infrastructure development, transformations in ethnomedia, and the appearance of high-caste Hindu nationalism are among the factors that the author effectively narrates as he assembles a history of the spread of *devīdevatā saṃskṛti*, demonstrating the contingency, if not the fragility, of contemporary Himachali identity. In this respect, however, the author stops short of a comprehensive discussion of Himachali subjectivities in the context of the secular age his title invokes. His engagement with the persons and communities he argues are becoming religious seems often episodic. If readers come away appreciating the broad contours of cultural transformation in Himachal Pradesh and the manifold factors that have fed it, they might possess a less developed sense for the agents of those transformations and the subjects who were formed in their wake. While this