

Book Review of Maxwell, Claire, Yemini, Miri and Mygind Bach, Katrine 2022. *Nurturing Mobilities. Family Travel in the 21st Century.* New York and London: Routledge, 138 pp



BOOK REVIEW

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Nurturing Mobilities. Family Travel in the 21st Century is co-written by Clair Maxwell, Miri Yemini and Katrine Mygind Bach with the help of three Danish sociology students. The book addresses short-term (less than six months) international family travels among Israeli and Danish families. The authors investigate why families travel today and what happens when they do. A central theme of the book is class: the authors elaborate on how short-term cross-border mobility affects class formation and the families' class-related aspirations. Maxwell is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Copenhagen, Yemini is a Professor of Comparative Education at Tel Aviv University and Mygind Bach holds a BA in Sociology and MA in Global Development from the University of Copenhagen.

The book consists of an introduction and conclusion, two conceptual chapters on different aspects of 'travel' and six empirical chapters. At the end of the book, there is a commentary written by Paul Tarc and an appendix where the methodologies used in the book are explained in great detail. The empirical chapters elaborate on parents' views on family travel (Chapter 4); travel as a class-making practice (Chapter 5); travel as a way to provide children with cultural capital (Chapter 6); Danish ninth-grade students' views on travel (Chapter 7); global citizenship education via alternative modes of travel (Chapter 8); and travel and climate concerns (Chapter 9). Since the data were gathered partly during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is one of the key themes of the book. Most of the empirical chapters are based on their own empirical data; that is, each chapter analyses a different set of data. The data for the sub-studies come mostly from interviews with parents (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) and, in one chapter, from interviews with young adults and parents whose grown children no longer live at home (Chapter 9). In addition, there were focus group discussions with youth (Chapter 7) and a survey that was distributed via Facebook and WhatsApp (Chapter 8). Research data also included travel blogs and other online material (Chapter 8).

Short-term family travel is a very timely topic and, as the authors argue, there is little literature on the theme. When cross-border family mobilities are studied, the

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focus is usually on immigration (see, e.g. [Assmuth et al. 2018](#)), expatriatism (see, e.g. [Tanu 2018](#)), or neo-nomadic family lifestyles ([Germann Molz 2021](#)). International short-term family travel is, however, very common, and therefore, this book offers a welcome contribution. The authors locate their book within mobility studies and the sociology of class. In addition, the book contributes to tourism studies although such literature is not widely cited in the book.

The main theme of the book is class formation from a sociological perspective. The authors seek to understand how class differentiations are articulated via travel and how travelling shapes the families' understanding of their positionality in their home societies and in the world at large. The authors also elaborate on the consequences of travel for the families' identity construction. They claim that many middle-class families use travel as kind of a cultivation strategy; social class is constructed through travel, and parents see travel as a way to provide their children with knowledge and skills that will be beneficial for them in the future, including opportunities to learn English and to become flexible and self-confident so that they can feel at home anywhere in the world (Chapters 5 and 6). At the same time, travel provides families time to be together without other commitments. In other words, travel is used as a way to 'make families' and memories. Most working-class families in the book's data were of migrant background, and for them, travel was above all a way to sustain family relationships across borders, although the parents also appreciated the fact that their children were able to see other countries and, consequently, make comparisons with their home countries (Chapter 5).

Chapter 9 addresses a very timely and interesting theme of flight shame and people's increasing concern about the carbon footprint of flying. The authors use the term carbon gaze in their analysis of interview data with Danish people talking about their choices in terms of travelling and climate concern. The authors argue that air travel plays such a central role in the family-making of many Danish middle-class families that environmental concerns become juxtaposed against the social context of family-making. When most family members do not share climate concerns, the concerned ones may find it socially and emotionally difficult to refuse to participate in the family-making activities including flights to holiday destinations abroad. A very welcome contribution of this chapter is that it expands family-making to include adult children's relationships with their parents and adult siblings.

The book is clearly written, and short chapters make it an easy read. Instead of going into detailed theoretical discussions, the book is more of a commentary that provokes further research and discussion. The authors have chosen to look at family travel from several angles and in several empirical contexts. This provides the reader with much food for thought, but the downside is that the arguments remain somewhat superficial, and the empirical data are limited. More research is needed before convincing arguments can be made. It seems, however, that this was not the intention of the authors in the first place as they write in the conclusion: 'This book opens up more questions than it starts to answer' (p. 115).

Although the book has many merits, it has a few weaknesses too. Although class is a key concept in the book, the authors seem to see class formation in somewhat simplistic terms. The book would have benefited from a more elaborate discussion on what class means in today's societies and how the formulations of class differ in Israel, Denmark and elsewhere. Moreover, the book heavily relies on what people have said to the researchers, and their words tend to be analysed as facts rather

than as discourses. It would have been interesting to hear more about what actually happens eventually. For example, do the children learn English? Do they become flexible and cosmopolitan as the parents hope? Does it sometimes happen that the travel experience turns out to be less satisfactory than expected, and if so, how do people talk about such experiences?

The data for the book come from respondents in Israel and Denmark, the two countries where the authors currently live. The book, however, lacks a deeper justification for why it is fruitful to compare these two countries, and no other countries. It would also have been useful to elaborate in greater detail on the particularities and differences between Denmark and Israel as they are very different societies, Denmark being a Nordic welfare state and Israel being a highly stratified society in a constant military conflict.

Although the book contains some repetition, it offers a quick and interesting read. It provides a good resource for students and scholars studying families, international mobility, travel and social class. The appendix where the used methodologies are described is particularly useful for students because it describes not only how the data were collected but also how the data were organised and analysed. Such practical research-making examples are rare but extremely useful, especially for novice researchers.

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