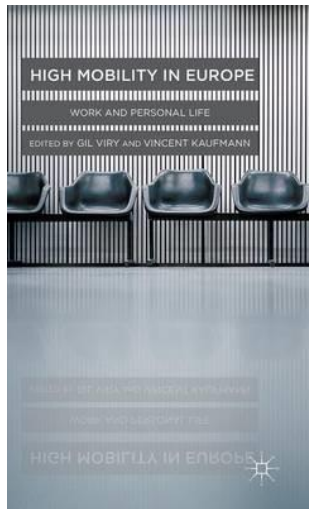


High Mobility in Europe: Work and Personal Life, edited by G. Viry and V. Kaufmann (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, ISBN 9781137447371); xiv+235pp., £65.00 hb.

This is a working version. The final version of the review will be available in *the Journal of Common Market Studies*.



Mobility—social and geographical—is not a new concept in the social sciences, and certainly not a new phenomenon in Europe. Commuting for work has also been an important part of the life of many Europeans for decades. Yet, while various forms of work-related travel across significant distances—multi-location family arrangements, long-distance or long-duration commuting, overnighing—had been fairly marginal until recently, ‘together they have become a major social phenomenon’ (p. 1). This is the contention of the editors of this volume exploring different facets of the phenomenon they call ‘high mobility’.

‘High mobility’ raises a series of questions. How ‘highly mobile’ *are* the Europeans, and are they really becoming more so? What are its conditions, that is to say what factors contribute to ‘people’s potential ability to be spatially mobile’ (p. 140), and what ‘possibilities’ does a territory offer for such mobility? Does socialisation play a role in the ‘internalisation of norms, knowledge, skills and values’ that would facilitate high mobility practices (p. 81)? How does high mobility impact on family life, and what are its gendered aspects? Does it change over the life-course, and is it really ‘reversible’, not only spatially, but also ‘existentially’ and ‘relationally’ (p. 203)? And, of course, how can we empirically study ‘an emerging phenomenon that cannot be analysed with existing conceptual tools’ (p. 16)?

Despite being an edited volume, the ten chapters co-authored in different configurations by five contributors associated, in one quality or another, with the Urban Sociology Laboratory of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, offer a very well integrated exploration of these various questions. The analyses are based on a longitudinal mixed-methods research focusing on France, Germany, Spain and Switzerland. The selection of cases, while unlikely to describe the empirical realities of Europe as a whole, nevertheless covers four countries of different sizes, levels of urbanisation and infrastructural development, and contrasting economic trajectories during and after the financial crisis. The various quantitative and qualitative methods—including their limitations—are detailed in a separate chapter outlining the overall methodological framework. Indeed, readers may find it surprising how successfully data from a two-wave panel survey, life-story interviews and photo elicitation exercises complement each other both across and within chapters. This coherence is what provides the volume its main strength and argumentative authority.

Although the examined material reinforces the truism that understanding the fine mechanisms of high mobility requires a deeper attention to ‘social context and personal circumstances’ (p. 211), the final chapter makes a good effort at formulating some conclusive findings from this complex research, alongside some rather general ‘policy perspectives’. All in all, the book evidences that thorough empirical research on mobility practices is both desirable and possible.

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