

future discussion and comparative research on urban transformation. With those future comparisons in mind, it is a pity that there is little shared historiography among the chapters. On the other hand, that means that the diversity of approaches within urban history is well-represented. And nevertheless, especially the chapters in section III speak most directly to each other, offering a glimpse of what a future comparative history of inner-city transformations can look like.

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Patrick Bek, *No Bicycle, No Bus, No Jobs. The Making of Workers' Mobility in the Netherlands, 1920-1990* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022). 211 p. ISBN 9789463723183.

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As Patrick Bek points out, so far little ink has been devoted to the history of commuting despite the home/work split being a fully-fledged feature of contemporary labor markets. In the existing literature on the topic, the main focus has been on how the expansion of transport modes influenced choices regarding whether, how, and when to travel to work. Yet restricting the explanation of commuter flows to the opportunities that transport infrastructure offers, so as to bridge the physical distance in a home/work split, enhances a narrative of technological determinism. To avoid this risk, Patrick Bek has mingled transport history with labor history and mobility studies, thereby bringing economic motivations and power relations into his study of worker's mobility and job accessibility in the Netherlands between 1920 and 1990.

Accordingly, the powerful agents in labor history – namely, industrial employers and blue-collar workers – have been placed on the same level as the usual suspect for restricting or enhancing commuter flows: the state. Moreover, the context of industrialization and deindustrialization has been given as much explanatory value as the expansion of ever faster and more comfortable transport modes in grasping the spatial reorganization of living and working in the twentieth century. For this innovative approach alone, *No Bicycle, No Bus, No Job* is worth reading. Five industrial core centers were selected to let this enriched approach of commuting land in historical research: the Limburg mining region,

the electronics factories of the Philips company in Eindhoven, the docks of Rotterdam and Schiedam, the steel company Hoogovens in IJmuiden, and the textile region in Twente. The well-thought-out choice was also a practical one, as the historical sources needed to document the issue of labor mobility in the past were readily available for the large-scale companies located in these industrial hot spots. Together, the eight well-written and chronologically ordered chapters give the reader insight in the challenges Dutch workers faced in order to safeguard their access to jobs during the previous century.

The first two chapters deal with the interwar period when progressive industrialization spurred the presence of a large labor force in the same place. This demanded an increased connectivity between the industrial core centers and places further afield, so that the available supply of labor in the immediate surroundings could be supplemented with commuters. The same mechanism of expanding industrialization and increased place-connectivity marked the period between 1947 and 1970 (chapter 4 and chapter 5). In both periods, the state provided public transport. In meeting the actual mobility needs of both employers and employees, however, the mobility system fell short. This failure of the Dutch government to deliver adequate transport connections established a mutual dependency relation between industrial companies and blue-collar workers. Indeed, in order to overcome the mobility barrier embedded in the home/work split, the two had to find alternative modes of transport, with the former being motivated to gather a substantive and cheap labor force for upholding production and the latter wanted to earn a living. For short-distance commutes during the interwar period, workers turned to bicycles while workers and employers alike in taking the initiative to organize collective taxi and bus services for covering long-distance commutes. In the period of post war industrialization, bicycles were joined by mopeds while companies hosted bus services.

In contrast with the periods of economic prosperity, which encouraged commuting to bridge the physical distance between home and workplace, times of hardship let the state install mobility barriers that hampered the journey to work. Discussing the bus regulations triggered by the Great Depression of the 1930s (chapter 2), the austerity measures of the Second World War (chapter 3), and the liberal discourse of self-reliance in the 1970-1990 period of deindustrialization (chapter 8) illustrate the phenomenon. Whereas industrial employers helped their employees to reduce the effects of these mobility barriers in the

first two periods, industrial employers abandoned their paternalistic attitude in the 1970s and left their workers to their own devices. The rise of a car-oriented society and the idea that all citizens were mobile aggravated this setback in worker's mobility and job accessibility for low-income households, with jobseekers like 22-year-old K. facing the consequences. In 1975, the Central Board of Appeal ruled that K. had to accept a poorly accessible job; they left him no choice, as refusing to comply with the court's justice implied losing his unemployment benefits. This ruling still stands today, for refusing a job offer based on deplorable transport conditions is generally conceived by the privileged as an unwillingness among the unemployed to find work, which in turn gives society the moral right to deny them their payments (Greg Marston *et al.*).

Overall, *No Bicycle, No Bus, No Jobs* broadens the understanding of mobility poverty by approaching it through the history of commuting. In my opinion, the strength of the book is twofold: interweaving transport technology with economic changes to explain commuting as labor practice as well as giving employers, workers, and the state agency in shaping and reshaping commuter flows. However, there is a tendency to overstress the influence of employers, which becomes explicit in chapter 6 and chapter 7 when the disciplining of blue-collar workers by industrial companies between 1947 and 1970 is examined in line with Michel Foucault's interpretation of power relations. As Patrick Bek himself admits, for the period after the Second World War his focus on power and company control has left the agency of workers in the shadows and therefore needs further research. In addition, the reader has been left clueless in relation to the societal importance of commuting. Surely, the attitude of state, companies, and workers varies in line with commuting maturing from a non-existent labor practice into a widespread habit. Nevertheless, it is fair to state that Patrick Bek has succeeded in writing an inspirational book for researchers who have mobility justice on their agenda.

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