

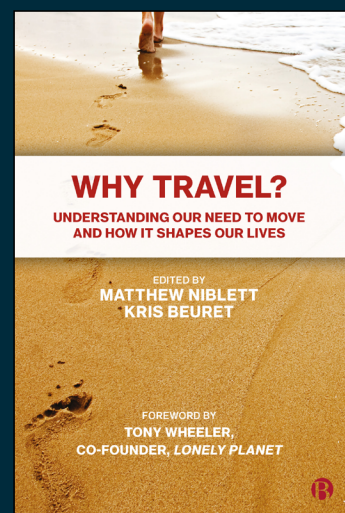
Why Travel? Understanding our Need to Move and How it Shapes our Lives

OVERVIEW

Why travel? What are the fundamental motivations that underpin the journeys we make? And how can we make decisions that better satisfy these motivations and the quality of our travel experiences? We all travel, and for many of us, at least until the COVID-19 pandemic, travel filled our lives. The importance of travel is seen in the way it has shaped our society and economy, and some of the most difficult aspects of the pandemic have stemmed from the ways in which it has resulted in restrictions on movement, and forced us to confront the extent to which we miss the pleasures and freedoms associated with travel.

In this book, supported by the Independent Transport Commission (ITC) research charity, the fundamental motivations that underpin human travel are explored from a wide range of fresh perspectives. Experts from many fields of human knowledge, including evolutionary biology, psychology, economics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, technology and urbanism address the importance of travel for human wellbeing and the role that it should be given in policy making. Offering a deeper understanding of the importance of travel in our lives, the book will appeal to a wide audience working in and studying transport, as well as general readers with an interest in travel.

A special foreword is provided by Tony Wheeler, the co-founder of the *Lonely Planet* guidebooks.



Why Travel? Understanding our Need to Move and How it Shapes our Lives edited by Matthew Niblett and Kris Beuret is published by Bristol University Press, July 2021

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CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that we still understand too little about the motivations that underpin travel, in spite of its critical importance for our whole way of life and our future. Travel has traditionally been viewed as a derivative of other human activities: from this perspective it is not undertaken for its own sake but rather is derived from our desire to access activities in different locations. Hence travel is often seen as wasted time, and investment decisions are based on trying to reduce the time we spend travelling as far as possible.

This book challenges this perspective. It provides fresh evidence that much travel behaviour is actually rooted in the desire to move as a purpose in itself: an issue determined by social, physical, psychological and cultural factors. The findings in this book suggest that travel appears to have its own utility, and this appears no more clearly than at the current time, when the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically reduced travel globally as a result of social distancing restrictions. Confined and limited in where we can move, people across the world have developed a fresh appreciation of the importance of travel to our mental health and existence.

The expert authors provide, for the first time, a holistic examination of the motivations that underpin our travel behaviour. Evolutionary biologist Professor Charles Pasternak and author Tony Hiss demonstrate how the need for travel is hardwired into our brains as a result of evolutionary processes and neurological developments. Anthropologist Professor Tom Selwyn and

sociologist Kristine Beuret demonstrate the ways in which travel has shaped societies and cultural habits across the world, while Alex Jan and Matt Dillon explain how the utility of travelling is forcing us to reassess economic assumptions about the value of travel. Other authors explore how travelling well has been a crucial concern of philosophers across the centuries, as well as how our travel motivations have given rise to tourism, exploration and pilgrimage.

At the same time, the book recognises that travel generates external costs, nowhere more evident than in its relationship with the environment. Terry Hill examines how we might approach a more sustainable travel future, meeting our needs by travelling better rather than travelling less. And Professor Glenn Lyons shows how technological developments will reshape travel in ways that can serve our travel motivations more successfully, and potentially more sustainably.

Together, the insights in the book demonstrate that our travel motivations are deep-rooted and integral to our mental and physical wellbeing. As such, travel and the need for mobility have come to form a core aspect of modern society. The challenge policy makers must now face in a post-pandemic world is how to retain, encourage and improve travel without adverse impacts.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this cross-disciplinary study are striking. The common verdict is that we are human because we travel – our evolution depended on our being the best at a combination of speed and distance. Furthermore, there is evidence of links between travel and mental and physical health with the authors demonstrating that challenge and novelty are beneficial to our cognitive abilities, including creativity, and that we would never have flourished to the same extent as a species without widespread travel. Even if the derived demand for travel could be met by some form of virtual communication, the consequences of preventing travel could be severe both for individuals and society.

The implications for policy makers are important and various:

- The evidence indicates that we need to calculate the intrinsic value of travel as an end in itself, accounting for its personal and social benefits, from improving mental wellbeing to the ability to work and think on the move.
- There is a need to update travel demand analysis and appraisal to account for these benefits, so that access to mobility is given due weight and these issues take a more prominent place when determining investment priorities.
- Planning policy should be upgraded to give greater weight to mobility, particularly active travel, and the potential for human connectivity. If the public realm is to work well it should incorporate mobility, beauty, safety, a sense of belonging and also encourage sustainable travel.
- In a post-pandemic world, we should not be restricting travel, but focusing instead on travelling better, in more sustainable ways which do less harm to the environment. This might mean a much greater focus on slow travel or on fulfilling our travel needs through low-carbon modes of transport.
- The quality of our journeys is much more important than has previously been realised, and we need to see travel as a central aspect of human wellbeing when shaping health and social policy.

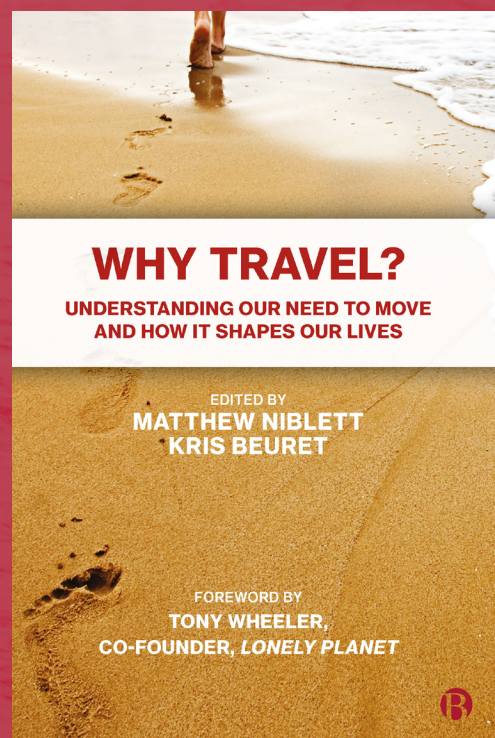
About the book

Arguing that the desire to move is a purpose in itself, this book brings together leading experts to provide insights from multiple viewpoints, including the sciences, arts and humanities. Together, they examine key travel conundrums, such as our carbon footprint, the quality of our journeys, the lure of travel while minimising risks and how mobility is changing in response to technological and social developments.

They show how our choices about where to live and work are influenced by social, physical, psychological and cultural factors, which demand analysis and provide forecasting to be used in future transport policies.





Dr Matthew Niblett is Director of the Independent Transport Commission and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He oversees the ITC's research portfolio and has presented findings from this research to Ministers and Parliamentary Select Committee enquiries. Matthew holds a doctorate from the University of Oxford and was a Senior Research Associate at Oxford's Transport Studies Unit.

Kris Beuret OBE is the Director of Social Research Associates (SRA). She is a sociologist, previously an academic, and a member of the Independent Transport Commission and Highways England's Research and Innovation Advisory Board. Kris has advised the House of Commons Transport Committee, TfL, the DfT and overseas governments on disability and diversity issues.



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