



Roads: An Anthropology of Infrastructure and Expertise (Expertise: Cultures and Technologies of Knowledge)

By Penny Harvey, Hannah Knox

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Roads matter to people. This claim is central to the work of Penny Harvey and Hannah Knox, who in this book use the example of highway building in South America to explore what large public infrastructural projects can tell us about contemporary state formation, social relations, and emerging political economies.

Roads focuses on two main sites: the interoceanic highway currently under construction between Brazil and Peru, a major public/private collaboration that is being realized within new, internationally ratified regulatory standards; and a recently completed one-hundred-kilometer stretch of highway between Iquitos, the largest city in the Peruvian Amazon, and a small town called Nauta, one of the earliest colonial settlements in the Amazon. The Iquitos-Nauta highway is one of the most expensive roads per kilometer on the planet.

Combining ethnographic and historical research, Harvey and Knox shed light on the work of engineers and scientists, bureaucrats and construction company officials. They describe how local populations anticipated each of the road projects, even getting deeply involved in questions of exact routing as worries arose that the road would benefit some more than others. Connectivity was a key recurring theme as people imagined the prosperity that will come by being connected to other parts of the country and with other parts of the world. Sweeping in scope and conceptually ambitious, *Roads* tells a story of global flows of money, goods, and people and of attempts to stabilize inherently unstable physical and social environments.

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- Sales Rank: #962418 in Books
- Published on: 2015-06-23
- Released on: 2015-05-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .66" w x 6.00" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 264 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"What is the relation between the unity and stability of the nation-state and the state of a nation's infrastructure? In addressing this question, *Roads* forces us to consider, among much else, the expertise of infrastructure's architects, the construction engineers, whose work is attuned to the instability, unruliness and unevenness of the environments within which infrastructure is assembled. The infrastructure of the road turns out not to be the stable base on which the state can ground its existence, but a situated achievement. Penny Harvey and Hannah Knox's remarkable ethnography of infrastructure is a vital intervention, in anthropology and beyond."?Andrew Barry, University College London, author of *Material Politics: Disputes Along the Pipeline*

About the Author

Penny Harvey is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester and Director of the ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change. She is the author of *Hybrids of Modernity: Anthropology, the Nation State and the Universal Exhibition* and coeditor of *Technologized Images, Technologized Bodies, Objects and Materials: A Routledge Companion*, and *Anthropology and Science: Epistemologies in Practice*.

Hannah Knox is a Lecturer in Digital Anthropology and Material Culture at University College London.

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