

Hannah Knox, *Thinking Like a Climate: Governing a City in Times of Environmental Change*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 328, 2020.

Climate change is arguably one of the most pressing issues facing humanity. Based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken between 2011 and 2018 among city officials and activists in Manchester, UK, Hannah Knox's *Thinking Like a Climate: Governing a City in Times of Environmental Change* offers an impressive attempt to elucidate some of the challenges that climate change poses to modern forms of biopolitical and neoliberal governing and organization. As such, the author productively carves out a space for analysing how these processes currently participate in the reconfiguration of the political in other settings. Yet, given its ethnographic richness and theoretical agility, the book is of relevance to scholars whose interests are not limited to climate but also include urban governance, planning, expertise, data and energy.

Recurrent throughout the eight chapters is the notion of 'thinking like a climate', a conceptual tool that posits climate as a 'form of thought' (p. 6), and under the aegis of which the introduction outlines an approach to data, models and material objects not in terms of their reality but their form. Instead of concerning itself with the way the ideational translates into material practices, this framework allows for the treatment of a wide array of phenomena as interacting on a common plane of signs. It helps to hold within view heterogeneous manifestations of climate, from carbon numbers in spreadsheets to everyday attention to light bulbs, and to examine how human sociality emerges through various proxy objects, such as technical devices and natural processes. Accordingly, Knox's is not a posthuman anthropology, but an attempt to 'extend anthropology's remit to be able to attend to representational capacities that the modern social sciences have tended to bracket out as not central to human meaning-making processes' (p. 7). The account therefore sets itself apart from burgeoning attempts to bring nature into politics. By the same token, it refrains from using local accounts to critique the failures of modern reductionism. Rather, the practices of city administrators are treated as in and of themselves situated modes of action that engender new forms of knowledge and relationality.

The first part of the book examines the qualities of climate change as it is made detectable, measurable and scalable, including how its patterns are evidenced, presented and circulated. Numerous examples foreground how this work raises questions around what constitutes appropriate and proportional responses to climate change. When beginning to see things as 'systemic thermodynamic wholes and disaggregated contributory parts' (p. 83), sites of governing become redescribed in terms of their carbon-producing effects. The boundaries of the city are unsettled, and officials' efforts become oriented towards objects that had formerly been removed from local government control. Similar effects ensue from consumption-based carbon footprinting. As the findings of climate science encounter techniques of accounting, the coherence of objects begins to dissolve, partially undoing commodities and the categorical foundations of contemporary governing practices.

Things become newly political and lines of responsibility are blurred. By guiding us through numbers, graphs, projections and models, Knox steers our attention to her interlocutors' questions around the relationship between 'knowing and acting, planning and doing' (p. 155), as well as to their reconsiderations of what counts as action in the first place.

The second part of the book delves into the ways in which the formal qualities of climate change have been generative of different modes of doing politics and of being a person. By conceptualizing ecological show homes and energy monitoring devices as infrastructural trials and diagnostic tools, two of the chapters trace the various reconfigurations that climate change propels in how knowing and acting relate to one another outside the context of city administration. As figurative devices with diagnostic effects, energy monitors instigate novel possibilities to engage matter. They turn people's houses into 'sites where the public politics of energy and climate change comes to manifest' (p. 254), thereby presenting vernacular engineering as an expression of alternative modes of responsiveness, attunement and enquiry. We further get to follow how climatological forms of activism move beyond notions of such activism as necessarily post-political, instead creatively producing knowledge and objective facts without succumbing to dominant systems.

Several of the analytics elicited throughout the chapters are then invoked to rethink how anthropology itself might become responsive to climate change. This, we learn, requires that we move beyond the logic of additionality, whereby other ways of living are simply extracted and celebrated. It would likewise abstain from a critique of representationalism and rather conceive of representational practices as always and already 'entangled, interpellated, and formed through more material and energetic forms of representation and thought' (p. 265). While scholars of a more critical bent might find these propositions unconvincing, *Thinking Like a Climate* is nevertheless an excellent demonstration of the merit of such an endeavour for the discipline more broadly considered.

Chakad Ojani

University of Manchester