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Book Review: Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions

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***Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions* by Ben Anderson. Ashgate, Farnham (2014) viii and pp. 194. Hardcover, ISBN 978-0-7546-7024-7.**

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Encountering Affect enters into the middle of recent scholarship on affect and offers one very timely 'take' on how affect might matter for human geography. Rather than provide an exhaustive overview of the multitudinous conceptualizations of affect co-existing in geography and other social science disciplines today, or present a definitive version on what affect *actually is*, Anderson instead considers how affects mediate and are mediated in various arenas of social and political life. More specifically, Anderson explores the ways in which affects can become 'object-targets' for specific forms of power, how affects relate to and impact upon bodily capacities to act and be acted upon, and how collective affects form part of the conditions of living together. Taken together, these concerns build towards an understanding of how affects take place, are ordered, but also how they themselves play a part in the immanent ordering of life.

While overlapping in nature, these concerns shape the unfolding of the book. Reflecting on various 'versions' of specific affective states ('morale' and 'debility, dependency, dread', respectively), the first two main chapters focus on affect as an 'object-target' for the manipulations of power through a range of discursive and non-discursive 'apparatuses'. Here we see how affects are both the object and the medium of interventions that seek to shape, if not entirely determine, the unfolding of life. The next chapter focuses on the connection between affect and bodily capacities by considering the imbrication of affects with a whole range of human and non-human materialities, illustrated by people's situated music listening practice. This is a familiar trope in recent affect-scholarship but here it is emphasized how capacities to affect and be affected are very much circumstantial and relate to the specific situation of bodies in the world, both spatially and temporally. The final two main chapters focus on collective affects through ideas of 'structures of feeling', illustrated through the affects of precarity, and 'atmospheres', illustrated by reflections on the affects experienced in conditions of simulated emergency. Notably, these chapters move away from approaches that delimit specific 'eras of affect' or 'cultures of affect' that risk effacing the singularity inherent to affects, towards one that allows for a greater diversity and plurality of coexisting affective envelopments.

One of the many highlights of the text is the way Anderson responds to critiques made of some version of affect that have taken hold in geography. Numerous critiques have been made arguing the detachment of affect-scholarship from issues of unequal power relations given affect's supposed 'autonomy' from discourse, representation, and social context. Responding in an affirmative tone, Anderson outlines one vision of the ways in which affects mediate such power-filled social formations and elaborates conceptual resources that facilitate an understanding of the functioning of this. This move alone marks a clear development in the direction of affect-scholarship in human geography and *Encountering Affect* will come to be a fundamental reference point for future work in this area as a result.