



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

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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