

Oil, mobilities and the American suburbs

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Abstract

In the last years of the last century, neo-liberalism ratcheted up the global scale of movement within the global North. Oil enabled this. But this extravaganza came to a shuddering halt when oil prices increased in the early years of this century. Suburban houses could not be sold especially where they were in far-flung oil-dependent locations. Financial products and institutions were found to be worthless. Easy money, easy credit and easy oil had gone together. And when oil prices hit the roof in these US suburbs then easy money and credit also came to a shuddering halt. The financial house of cards had been built upon cheap oil and cheap mobility. This story of oil in the US provides a bleak vision of the future as 'easy oil' more generally runs out by the middle of this century. The Chief Economist at HSBC Bank maintains that: 'Even if demand doesn't increase, there could be as little as 49 years of oil left'. The twentieth century has left us with an utterly unsustainable civilization based on the mobilities of people and goods requiring this one resource of cheap, plentiful easy oil. This talk draws upon John Urry, *Societies beyond Oil* (London: Zed, 2012).



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