**Top tips for writing an academic book/ film review**

One of the ways that you can contribute to *Routes* is by writing a review of a book that you have read. Try to choose books that others might not have read either because it is new or not particularly well-known. Reviews give you the opportunity to share your opinions and perspectives on an area of geography that particularly interests you.

Academic book reviews differ from the kinds of reviews you might typically find in a magazine as they are not about persuading a reader to buy a book/ watch a film but about using your geographical expertise to help orientate readers to the broader value of a text as well as its partialities. This is a really important and difficult skill and involves being critical. You can still really like a piece of work to be critical. Indeed, the best critique is not dismissive but deconstructs a piece of work to show how the author arrived at certain conclusions, the consequences of this and what alternative perspectives might have produced.

As you review a piece of work, you might reflect on:

1) **Who is the author and how might their background and ideas shape the ideas presented?**
   Is the author a geographer? What other work have they written? What difference does this make to the ideas put forward? How might others in different parts of the world see this same issue? What might the consequences be if we saw the issue from a different perspective?

2) **How does this book/ film contribute to broader debates and ideas in geography?**
   Does this book provide anything new to how we understand the world or is it simply a repetition of an old argument? How might this book/ film help us think differently about an issue? Is it important that we watch/ read at this moment in time? How might it be helpful for how we address environmental issues or live together more harmoniously? What new debates does it generate or does it simply close down debate and make it difficult for alternative arguments to be put forward?

3) **How does the work fit with your experiences of an issue?**
   Does the work reflect your own experiences of an issue? If not, how might this work be different? What would need to change about this work for it to reflect the issues as you experience them?

4) **What data are used to present the arguments?**
   How have the data led to the particular arguments? What would happen if we used different data? Why has the author used that data? Is the argument simply finding data to fit a particular viewpoint (induction/ law like statements) or is the data being used to provide new ways of looking at an issue (new theories and ideas).

5) **Are the arguments logical and what particular assumptions about the world are reinforced/ challenged?**
   Do the arguments flow logically? Are there unresolved tensions or contradictions? Is the author playing it safe or really showing the ambiguities and tensions involved? Is the author reinforcing common ideas (e.g. about nature/ development/ sustainability) or challenging these?

An example of an academic book review can be found here