BOOK REVIEWS

CITY OF SONG, MUSIC AND THE MAKING OF MODERN JERUSALEM, By Michael A. Figuero, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022

City of Song by Michael A. Figueroa, is an important contribution to the literature of cultural geography. It is a deep digger, knowledgeable and fascinating book. Especially, it exposes the role of songs in the process of place making, as intersection of history, geography and ideology in the modernity. It integrates a wide range of cultural fields, along with political events and public reactions, across diverse discourses and interpretations of Jerusalem's images, occasionally contradicting each other. They represent diverse ideologies and changes along time-space, articulated and produced by songs.

A rich literature has been written on the mechanisms, actors and agency in constructing national traditions via images, symbols and metaphors, which create social consciousness of imagined territory as a source of identity. Among them, music and songs play an essential role in the narrativization of place. The connections between songs, place and space demand an understanding of the ways in which the various aspects intertwine and overlap (Bennet, 2017). Within this framework, divided cities are politically sustained, institutionally consolidated, and relentlessly territorialized by competing ethno-nationalist actors and are highly resistant to peacebuilding efforts at the state level (Howell, Pruitt and Hassler, 2019).

Eventually, the establishment of spatial identity develops and changes within a culture crystallized as a product of the forces and struggles operating on the territory. The spatial image is engraved on the national memory through repeated performance until it becomes a hard kernel of the ethno-national identity. As an arena from which influential discourses and practices emerge, reflecting and shaping the society's values and goals, popular music is an appropriate tool to examine the geographical perceptions of Israeli Jews regarding homeland (Yiftachel and Roded, 2004).

Figueroa employed the genealogical method to analyze the emergence of multiple visions of modern Jerusalem within the field of popular songs, that considered the most privileged domain of political discourse in Israeli society. In the context of modernity's enduring nationalisms, the city is typically being configured as being the urban center of two national imaginaries, Israeli and Palestinian, but in practice those groups are both internally diverse and surrounded by several groups who

do not naturally identify with the prevailing national bifurcation (p. 189). The author presents a history of Zionist musical discourses on Jerusalem in the long 20th century (1880-2010s), reorienting the understanding of the city's place in the Israeli-Palestine conflict from the Israeli points of view.

He argues that a popular song has been an essential discursive site to produce spatial knowledge about Jerusalem, the main contested territory within the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. The study demonstrates how the present crisis in Jerusalem is not just a problem of cultural and religious mismatch, but the production of modernity. This book is about Israeli popular music identified with Zionism, a powerful point of historiographical inquiry into the present. The study traces the ways songs participate in a larger genealogy of a musical discourse about Jerusalem as the crucial mode of Israeli place-making.

The production of discourse is represented by historical agents, from the origins of Zionism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the late 1960s and early '70s, which coincided with major social and political changes, developing conceptions of national identity and culture, and transformations of the very cultural geography of Jerusalem as a lived city. In every sense, Jerusalem is greater than any national concept that would count the city among its physical territories.

The book is organized in five chapters that combine chronology and distinct analytical emphasis, each presenting historical epi¬sodes ordered from the history of Jewish cultural production into the Yishuv era (1882-1948), the early statehood period (1948-1967), the narrative climax of 1967, and the postwar period imme¬diately following 1967. Each chapter has a parallel main title: Metaphorical Jerusalem, Forgotten Jerusalem, Haunted Jerusalem, Gilded Jerusalem, and Heterotopian Jerusalem. Each term rep¬resents a distinct analytical emphasis for the audible histories contained therein.

The first chapter, Metaphorical Jerusalem, establishes the poetics of Jerusalem song's as a relation be¬tween metaphorical and material that are intertwined, through analyses of biblical, literary, and musical adaptations of the city and its diverse symbolic content. The song "From the Summit of Mt. Scopus" (*Me'Al Pisgat Har Ha-Tsofim*) is the axis of the chapter. This song was one of the earliest Zionist musical expressions of longing for Jerusalem. The story of its creation and recep¬tion reveals much about the shifting metaphorical attachment to Jerusalem, as expressed in Zionist and Israeli songwriting over the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: Three metanarratives of Jewish history – the literature of return, of a fulfillment of the divine promise to rebuild Jerusalem, and redemption associated with exile.

Chapter 2 – Forgotten Jerusalem, during the Yishuv era (when early Jewish Zionist resettlement began, 1882-1948), Jerusalem appeared to be absent from Jewish cultural production in Palestine. In this era the images of place territorializing rural Palestine, particularly deserts and green valleys, and images of the new Hebrew city of Tel Aviv, were dominant. It investigates musical discourses implicated in

the popular belief that Jerusalem and Tel Aviv represent distinct ways of being Israeli. But the author argues for their similarities: both are spatial imaginings of historical redemption from slavery, oppression, or exile. The chapter shows parallel phenomena of forgetting and presence.

Chapter 3, Haunted Jerusalem – analyses the way in which Jerusalem's Memorial Landscape demonstrates the relation between commemorative song and landscape, discussing how music and monuments work to narrate past violence from the early statehood period (c. 1948-1967). It is about what comes after war, what solidifies and transfers the memory to be perpetuated across multiple hearings and performances. In performing war songs such as "Bab El-Wad" (Gate of the Valley) and Giv'at HaTachmoshet" (Ammunition Hill) people can measure Israel's violent history. But those songs also provide symbolic and musical material for critique for protest against unjust war, challenging national myths as well.

Chapter 4, Gilded Jerusalem – deals with the work of Naomi Shemer – "Yerushalaim shel Zahav" (Jerusalem of Gold), written in 1967. The chapter discusses the creation, performance history, and critical responses to that song, arguing the song's process of canonization premiered at just the right moment in Israeli history to serve as an informal Zionist anthem. Though the Israeli public's response it demonstrates lack of consensus on the status of Jerusalem within Israeli political imaginaries. Critics of Shemer highlight politics of exclusion that erase Palestinians from Jerusalem's landscape, typical to settler colonialism. This case reveals how musicians and musical publics have a visibly political representation, among them the ethical dilemma of occupation.

The final chapter evaluates the political usefulness of song during the period from 1967 to 1977, when the Labor Party Zionist paradigm of cultural politics came to an end, through a discussion of musical representa¬tions of Jerusalem as an heterotopian site of cultural difference. Little Jerusalem until 1967 war was represented as divided, small, secular university town, with a secular, intellectual social life that produced the country's intellectual elite. Very few Israeli Jews longed for a return to Old Jerusalem then. After the Six Days War, political and religious motivations constituted Jerusalem as a place of all times, that is itself outside of time, a sort of perpetual and immobile utopian, an unreal place (Foucault, 1984). The author analyses in this chapter the songs from the cosmopolitan point of view, that undermines the political.

The book's epilogue notes that Israeli national culture is not merely textual but musical in profound ways (p. 220). The role of popular music is often hidden below the surface of the text, whose aim is to shape the society's outlook, to legitimize the social order and to unite society. But, as Gretz (1995) and Regev (1998) argue the power of these texts can be multi-directional and even serve as an effective platform for anti-state protest activity and as a weapon in the struggle between competing narratives.

The book is scholarly original and interesting, diverse in its approaches and perspectives. It is successfully disassembling the complexity of the functions of songs

and music to shape a layered city in conflict and, in a way, even its status and future. It is now called upon to follow the same path for the Palestinian side of the equation and to compare the two disputed sides.

To end the issue of culture and place, I find it appropriate to present a recent artistic case about Mount Zion as a synecdoche to Jerusalem, published by Nir Hason (2024). The article illustrates the mountain's history and politics as a background to a new exhibition opening there:

> From 1948 until 1967, since the Wailing Wall and other holy sites remained on the other side of the border, Mount Zion became a religious and national center of the state by government initiative. After the unification of the city and the return to the Wailing Wall and the Cave of the Patriarchs, the mountain was forgotten. But over the last 20 years, religious groups began to promote the status of David's Tomb in the hierarchy of holy sites. Recently, the founders and curators of Manofim Festival [an annual contemporary art event in Jerusalem] started researching it and decided to launch an exhibition there. They discovered that there are stories in it that don't associate with each other. This place seems to contain the history of this land in the most refined way possible, both the sacred and the myth, doomed to be a part of Jerusalem.

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NEOLIBERALISM A NOT A BAD WORD: A BOOK REVIEW ESSAY of RESEARCH HANDBOOK ON HOUSING, THE HOME, AND SOCIETY, Edited by Keith Jacobs, Kathleen Flanagan, Jacqueline De Vries and Emma MacDonald, Edgar Elgar Publishing, Northampton, MA, 2024.

In *Research Handbook on Housing, the Home, and Society*, editors Keith Jacobs, Kathleen Flanagan, Jacqueline De Vries and Emma MacDonald seek to showcase the theme, "housing, home and society—in its broadest sense—capturing developments within social theory, the contribution of earlier research, policy interventions, experiences and representations of the home, the practices enacted within the home, and the intersection of housing with the economy and with politics" (p. 1). Although the editors try to obtain a broad geographical coverage, the studies fall largely within white, European, and anglophone perspectives. Of the 61 contributors, 35 are from Australia, 16 are from the UK, with far smaller numbers from Belgium (1), Canada (5) Chile (2), and Hong Kong (1). Most, but not all, of the contributors are progressives or liberals who are sometimes shrill in criticizing neoliberalism (privatization, deregulation, consumer choice, globalization, free trade, monetarism, austerity and reductions in government spending), but offer few clues on what they would replace capitalism with. This handbook does not offer a balanced examination of housing.

This 37-chapter book of 624 pages starts slowly. Following the Introduction, the first two chapters in Part 1 ("Theoretical Perspectives") are vague, relying on academic jargon and only loosely connected to housing or housing policy. David Clapham (Chapter 1) focuses on social constructivism, the view that learning occurs through social interaction and the help of others. He suggests applying this perspective to social practice by, for example, studying the way recruits are socialized and integrated into the building professions.

Megan Carras (Chapter 2) applies a Foucauldian perspective to housing. She believes that discourse, or the use of communication to create knowledge, is a form of social control that benefits the most powerful in society. For example, according to Carras, by emphasizing market-oriented reforms, and by prioritizing owning over renting, neoliberal governments of the Global North have pushed people into debt. Following Foucault's belief that the individual can develop alternative strategies "from below," Carras discusses her own research on the Tiny House Movement (THM) in which individuals develop an alternative approach to homeownership. However, she provides few details about the movement and tiny homes.

The thesis of Chapter 3 ("Postcolonializing housing" by David Kelly) is that, from the point of view of indigenous people in Australia, colonization has never ended. (Several other chapters in the book utilize this thesis.) The remote region, Kimberly in north-west Australia, is known for its natural beauty, tourism, and large oil reserves. Around 2010, Premier Minister Colin Barnett, citing rampant sexual

abuses and overcrowding in the area, closed one remote community and threatened closing 150 others by withholding funding for housing infrastructure, schools, and policing. Eventually the issue subsided in 2017 when Barnett's administration was voted out of office. Kelly fails to answer two key questions: how do post-colonial societies, such as Australia, reduce income and other disparities that are due to cultural differences, in this case, the culture of Aboriginal People? and furthermore, should Australia, in the guise of multi-culturalism, avoid intervening in Aboriginal communities where rampant sexual abuse is a problem?

In Chapter 4 ("Historical sensibility' and its relevance to housing studies"), Keith Jacobs argues that housing scholars need to challenge the ideological assumptions that are built into the housing system (for example, that homeownership is important). Since the 1980s, most countries in the Global North have pursued market-based reforms to open the welfare provision to competition, and scholars must question this approach, says Jacobs. Jacobs also believes that scholars need to do more than simply bandy around the term neoliberalism. According to him, the term remains problematic, not least because it continues to be used for different purposes: "... [some researchers feel] that it is somehow responsible for all problematic housing issues" (p. 57). For example, researchers studying social housing regeneration in London involving the selling off units to tenants, found that some of Labor-dominated councils participated in this process enthusiastically.

Kenneth Gibbs ("Economics," Chapter 5) argues that an economic perspective can provide "key stylized facts, areas of contention and insights that stem from an economic reading of contemporary housing" (p. 64). But we can also learn from the varying approaches to economics. Gibbs correctly asserts that in order to be an effective urban economist today, one must draw from classical writings positing rational economic agents working in competitive markets. But in addition, the researcher should also draw from new fields like behavioral economics and institutional economics (e.g., new models of housing management and ownership of the non-profit sector).

Manuel Aalbers concludes Part 1 with Chapter 6 ("Political Economy") by highlighting key differences between mainstream and political economics. Whereas under mainstream economics actors are assumed to be oriented toward profit and utility maximization, political economists assume that these actors may be focused on other things (e.g., a happy fulfilling life and the continuation of their firm). He applies the political economy approach to a specific topic—shrinking cities, but unfortunately his presentation is so vague and abstract to not be useful. What strategy should declining cities like Detroit follow? Should they focus on the downtown which, in Detroit's case is showing signs of revitalization, should they focus on areas beyond the CBD that are still viable, or should they simply spread the money around evenly—the approach most politicians prefer?

Part II is a useful and cohesive review of different practices and methods of housing research. Max Travers (Chapter 7) highlights the benefits of an ethnographic

perspective. Ethnographer's vivid descriptions are accessible and interesting, they portray the reaction of people to government policies; views are often hidden in quantitative studies and "ethnographies often reveal a complexity in human actions and social environments that is unavailable in other methods" (p. 103). Travers's study of retirement villages in Australia highlight the benefits of an intuitive, exploratory approach. Even though residents were dissatisfied, "engaging in a legal class action against a [retirement] village or company... created a community" (p. 105).

David Cowan (Chapter 8) shows how socio-legal studies, which have been taught in law schools and are largely based on textual analysis, have evolved in recent decades. "Law-in-context" which began as a way to think of a way to look beyond the law in the books and the law in practices, has led a generation of lawyers to look at housing not only as a form of investment, but also as a place where people actually live, and where lawyers need to find ways to protect the homeowners. Finally, whereas in law-in-context studies, scholars did not travel far from their legal books, "gap theorists" rely on the tool kit of the social sciences to examine actual decision-making by housing market actors. This approach has led to the prosecution of landlords for housing related offenses by local governments.

In Chapter 9, Chris Leishman and Satyam Goel's "gentle introduction" to the use of econometric methods in housing research is light on mathematics and econometric theory to illustrate the potential value of econometric research. They focus on hedonic price models, which have been particularly popular in assessing the impacts of neighborhood externalities (e.g., park views, accessibility to transportation nodes, noise, and pollution) on housing prices. Their discussion of "traditional" cross-sectional HPM is simple to understand and useful, but their discussion of time series HPMs requires a background in regression analysis.

Mark Stephens and Rod Hick (Chapter 10) assess the evolution of comparative housing research over the past half century focusing on Gøsta Esping-Andersen's widely cited model identifying three clearly distinguishable welfare regimes: corporatist, liberal, and social democratic. However, "the distinctive ideologies of social and Christian democracy and even neo-liberalism (italics added) are no longer so clearly reflected in western Europe and North America" (p. 154). As a result, the differences between the three clusters of European countries welfare regimes (Southern, Northern, and Eastern) based on Esping-Andersen's model are diminishing.

John Sylvestre, Konrad Czechowski and Kimberly Turner (Chapter 11) argue that visual resource techniques (photos, films, paintings, maps) can contribute to a more in-depth understanding of housing spaces. We learn for example about "photo-elicitation," where images are used to generate focus group discussions, "photovoice," where participants photograph their experiences and use the results as a basis for qualitative interviews and group discussions, and "digital storytelling," where participants take part in workshops to develop two- to three-minute videos.

According to Dallas Rogers, Thomas Moore and Benai Pham, (Chapter 12), podcasting is changing how housing scholars undertake and disseminate research

and with student interaction. However, podcasting is not a politically neutral activity. "What we record, how we record it, what we play back to others, and what voices we include or leave out of our podcasts, are political choices that require our political attention" (p. 178). Drawing upon earlier work related to Australian community radio stations, the authors urge housing scholars to collaborate in podcasting with marginalized ethnic communities.

Part III, "Experiences of Housing and the Home," begins with Kath Hulse and Margaret Reynolds's Chapter 13 on housing tenure, often considered the key concept regarding the relationship between householders and their home. Much of the empirical literature on housing tenure since 1990 has focused on the psycho-social benefits of homeownership, but these studies fail to explain what it is about aspects of housing tenure that produce the claimed associations and effects. For example, are these results simply due to the capacity of owners to live in better quality homes?

In Chapter 14, Jennifer Hoolachan approaches homelessness from the perspective of lived experiences, informed by qualitative (ethnographic) research. This approach allows us to see ways in which non-housing structures (labor markets, crime, health) affect the uniqueness and complexity of homeless people's lives. Despite the impact of structural factors, those living on the streets or in a shelter "still exercise agency and attempt to home-make [by displaying objects such as photos, posters and ornaments] demonstrating how important a semblance of home is for people's physical and mental well-being" (p. 224). Unfortunately, the chapter lacks a detailed discussion of policy approaches to homelessness, for example, whether the initial focus should be on providing decent housing ("Housing First") or whether it should be on housing readiness (dealing with drug or alcohol dependency) as a prerequisite for a subsidized housing unit.

Millions of people in the Global South live in informal settlements (barrios, favelas), but as Gonzolo Lizarralde and Gabriel Fauveaud (Chapter 15) point out, policymakers lack an understanding of the functions of the informal sector that enables householders to build (or add space) for an apartment, a workshop or a small industry, thereby enabling them to benefit from proximity to jobs, services and infrastructure. The authors warn, however, that an emphasis on the qualities and strengths of informal housing has "been used by the political right to justify a disinvestment in social programs and social housing" (p. 242). They advocate for an expanded role of the State, but are unclear as to whether this means a shift toward socialism as in Cuba or Venezuela.

Chapter 16, "Representing the queer rural home: Lesbian homemaking in rural Tasmania, Australia by Ruby Grant and Briohny Walker, is one of the first studies of its kind "to document the complex factors influencing older lesbians' place-based belonging and futurities" (p. 264). Grant and Walker relied on photovoice methods (mentioned in connection with Chapter 11), where 13 women between 57 and 70 living in small country towns in Tasmania took photographs of their home environments and then reflected on these photo images in two rounds of in-depth

interviews. In sharp contrast to what was anticipated based on the scholarly literature (i.e. that there would be high levels of discrimination against lesbians), Grant and Walker found that the rural elderly lesbians were able to create a good life; that is, one where lesbian couples share each others' values and interests, where they are connected to the natural environment, and where they are able to engage with neighbors on hobbies in "shed programs" in public spaces.

Stigmatized social housing is a problem in Europe and Australia as well as the United States. Media accounts depicting high rates of crime, drugs, and anti-social behavior have helped to stigmatize social housing estates, but so too have academic studies of the ghetto, which have emphasized negative externalities linked to poverty concentrations (e.g., crime, drug dealing, inter-generational welfare dependency, Norris and Byrne, Chapter 17). Tenure and income mixed projects (like HOPE VI in the US) have only been partially successful in reducing stigma. Such mixing has reduced stigmatization of developments by those outside these neighborhoods by enabling low-income residents to camouflage that they live in public housing. "However, internal stigmatization, that is, by other residents within their development [e.g. former social housing residents who have become owners within the same development], increased" (p. 270, italics in original).

Many of the findings of Chapter 18 (Dario Ferrazzi and Rowland Atkinson) on the role of the home as protection from crime, are hardly new. Few readers will be surprised to learn that burglary rates in the UK are high in low-income rental areas, especially those with high concentrations of social housing. Readers will, however, benefit from the authors' balanced discussion of the UK's two main housing-based approaches to crime. The first addresses the behavior of residents with removal or sanctions against those exhibiting anti-social behavior. The second involves "hardening" social housing, making sure targets are defensible via better lighting, CCTV, and strong fencing. Both approaches are urgently needed because they can make social housing safer, but, according to the authors, they create costs; problem families are stigmatized as a result of banishment; and residents lose privacy when more closely monitored.

In a changing world where global forces play a seemingly overwhelming role, what impact do households have? Kate Booth and Antonia Settle (Chapter 19) address insurance (but not only housing insurance) in the daily life of Australians. They show that households, in fact, exercise significant agency; financially stressed households can decide to drop home insurance coverage but continue their car and health insurance. American housing scholars will find this chapter puzzling and disappointing. In the US, those purchasing a home via a mortgage must purchase both homeowners' insurance for risks such as fires, storms and mortgage insurance (in order to insure that the household pays back the loan). Why do Australian home buyers have more agency than American ones? This is not discussed.

Bruce Judd (Chapter 20, "Housing, place, and design") argues that "it is important... to see housing design not merely as an aesthetic, technical or economic

preoccupation but as a socio-spatial process meeting the needs and aspirations of all residents" (p. 309). Starting in the 1960s, different forms of User-Centered Design Approaches (UCD) have accompanied the emergence of Environment-Behavior Studies with users actively engaged in all stages of the design process. What is unclear, however, is whether this citizen-involvement represents real citizen power or just tokenism and whether meaningful citizen engagement tends to delay projects and/or to increase costs.

Hazel Easthope and Sophie-Mae Kerr (Chapter 21) describe the challenges and opportunities created by condominiums, where each apartment is owned individually and where all owners share collective ownership over the common property. Making repairs and improvements is difficult especially when a large proportion of residents live on fixed incomes. I was surprised to learn that in Australia, more than half of all condominium units are rented out by their owners, and as a result, these renters are excluded from building governance. Despite these problems, the authors are cautiously optimistic about the future of this tenure model. They show how mixed-income and mixed-tenure condominiums can be created and managed and how condominiums, in conjunction with local government, can promote disaster preparedness, energy efficiency and facilitate aging in place.

Omar Ben Haman's primary aim in Chapter 22 ("Occupying housing") is to critically examine the factors that account for the adverse housing conditions of Israeli Arab citizens in Israel. He believes a combination of factors have shaped the Arab housing domain including socio-economic disparities and a preference of small towns and villages due to a strong sense of kinship and belonging to the land. However, most important, according to Ben Haman, is governmental discrimination (e.g., denial of building permits in Arab-only rural towns). Together, these factors have been instrumental in worsening levels of overcrowding and to inadequate access to public services. Ben Haman advocates that Israel cut back demolitions of informal settlements while insuring that Arab share equally in the housing market with their Jewish counterparts. I must point out that the title of this chapter is irresponsible. I blame the editors, and publisher, as well as Ben Haman, because it is inaccurate and offensive, as well as ideologically-driven. Israel is a sovereign country where Arabs have the same rights as Jews. The chapter does not deal with the "occupied" West Bank (also called Samaria and Judea).

Chapter 23 ("Homes in displacement") by Iris Levin and Kim Robinson seeks to understand the various meanings of "home" during the refugee journey and how the refugee's agency and sense of belonging affect resettlement. A case study of Melbourne, Australia social housing during the 2019 pandemic reveals the ways that refugees resisted housing lockdown practices by organizing protests with community agencies and by having their own leaders meet with government officials to challenge their treatment.

In Chapter 24, Rob Imrie explores the interrelationships between domestic design and physical and mental well-being in relation to the lives of disabled people.

According to the author, the building industry relies on templates to maximize profit while ignoring the diverse needs of the population. To re-design domestic spaces for habitation, Imrie looks to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Yiken Yamamoto. How Wright's work is relevant to the disabled is unclear. Wright used glass and light to create airy and light-filled interiors to connect wealthy householders living in large detached homes with nature. Yamamoto's work is more relevant. He focused on how multi-unit buildings could provide places for communal kitchens, libraries, day care facilities, and open spaces for recreation.

Braam Lowies and Kurt Lushington ("Aging in place," Chapter 25) assert that for aging societies in the Global North to achieve equity in housing, elderly homeowners, who are asset rich and cash-poor, will need to take advantage of the accumulated equity in their homes through, for example, reverse mortgages. Despite its promise, however, the utilization rate for reverse mortgages in Australia has been modest due to a lack of awareness and understanding of this option, which implies the need for a greater emphasis on financial education and financial counseling.

Part IV starts with Paul Dave's "Representations of housing and home" (Chapter 26) which applies historical materialism—a Marxist perspective—to examine the changing meaning of house and home, as seen in the 1945 film "I Know Where I'm Going." After viewing the film, I do not see any Marxist connection to support Dave's thesis. A 25-year-old ambitious independently-minded middle-class Englishwoman travels from Manchester to the Hebrides to marry an industrialist, but instead marries a Scottish owner of the (fictitious) Isle of Kiloran. Dave's main argument—that loutish English capitalist landlords with restrictive social circles are replaced by the rich social cohesion of rural pre-capitalist Scottish communities—is overly simplistic and historically inaccurate. The film considers none of these premises. The film is a well-acted romance and not much more.

On the other hand, in Chapter 27 ("Housing and fiction") Tony Manzi argues convincingly, using three examples of literary work, that fiction has advantages over typical academic studies: context, contingency (the role of chance and fate), and conjuncture (combining the multidisciplinary influences of sociology, literary theory, politics and cultural anthropology). He highlights three books that I am eager to read. The Londoners, by Sam Selvon, examines the experiences of West Indian immigrants to London in the 1950s (the Windrus generation); Haneif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia contrasts social mobility for South Asian Indians and Pakistanis in crime-ridden inner-city areas in London as compared to suburban landscape; and NW, by Zadie Smith, shows how the two main working-class characters interpret class differences differently in contemporary London—one remains close to her community and the other distances herself from it.

In Chapter 28, Hong Zen analyzes three groups of art projects in China and Hong Kong to show how East Asian artists engage with the home. Most of Zen's ideas come from performance art (one piece is a short film of a man smoking in a tiny room). How these performance pieces support Zen's contentions is questionable.

This chapter strays away from housing to unrelated subjects like gender roles. Why this chapter was included rather than say a study of art projects in Australia or the UK, in a study of housing mostly focused on the latter two countries, is a mystery!

Donald Reid (Chapter 29) argues that TV real estate programs (what in the US are called HGTV), are "more than a 'how-to' on method, [they] are 'evaluative and normative'" (p. 468) in that they promote the notion of the physical and financial security of the home while ignoring the growing gap in housing affordability. Reid concedes that using such programs to critique neoliberalism is based on weak foundations. None of the programs can "be strictly defined as a form of governmentality, [that is, that the programs' founders were trying to support neoliberal governance] and the participants are afforded personal agency even if there are cultural and ideological modes of stratification underlying their choices" (p. 464). Secondly, when applied to this chapter and to this book, "the concept of neoliberalism is slippery, especially when the free-market agenda is so pervasive within the political and economic discourse" (p. 464).

Part V, "The Politics of Housing," is a loosely connected mishmash of papers. None of the chapters discuss how politics influences housing reform. Hal Pawson (Chapter 30) lays out the three types of housing policy reforms that have recently emerged in Australia and the UK. Firstly, rational economic housing reform stresses that government should aspire for tenure neutrality and that private ownership privileges should be discarded. Secondly, the supply discourse stresses that the insufficient supply of housing is due to overly restrictive zoning and building regulations. Thirdly, progressive economists believe that affordability can only be addressed by discouraging speculative acquisition and holding of land by a combination of land value taxation (LVT, an idea developed by Henry George) and greater government involvement in land ownership.

Natalie Osborne (Chapter 31) guiltily sees herself as a white settler in "so-called Australia, a term she uses because the land had another name(s) before white settlers arrived. She believes that Australia's climate emergency has focused too much on individual households and design/technological solutions such as solar panels and these solutions are disconnected from economic, political, social and cultural concerns. Although she believes in democratic, capitalistic systems, the State plays too limited a role. Most of her recommendations are incremental that can be carried out within the existing private housing market, e.g., giving renters the opportunity to make modifications of their dwellings. Her most radical recommendation is "to de-commodify housing and unwind the financialization of housing in general" (p. 499). This idea is unrelated to political reality.

In Chapter 32, Martin Konings and colleagues discuss recent dynamics of lock-in and lock-out in Australia's property-driven political economy. The country's rapid rise in housing prices has benefited the baby boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964), but at the same time the trend has made it increasingly difficult for millennials (born between 1980 and 2000) to become homeowners. During

the pandemic, the Australian government attempted to keep households liquid and solvent through policy measures allowing temporary mortgage deferrals. But government support for renters was not nearly as strong. It did not issue a moratorium on evictions nor did it require rental payment reductions nor deferrals. How Australia and other developed countries will close the owner-tenant gap and this inter-generational rift is left unresolved.

Housing, and the home are increasingly mediated by digital smart-home technology. But such digitization creates costs as well as benefits. Sophia Maalsen (Chapter 33) focuses on the digitization of rental housing, especially shared housing, a living arrangement where a number of people share a house and split the rent and general living costs. She notes digitization of tenant information can facilitate strict tenant selection policies that lead to exclusion and homelessness. Additionally, closed-circuit television (CCTV) can lead to the loss of privacy. She urges fellow critical housing scholars to investigate "what is often hidden in this use of digitization [and] the surveillance and capitalist practices of extraction" (p. 525). Her preoccupation with capitalism's weaknesses—which is common in this book—is both overly simplistic and misplaced. China's use of surveillance technology in the persecution of its Uyghur minority is far more pernicious than its use in democratic, capitalistic countries in the Global North.

Chapter 34, "Gentrification" by Sharda Rozena, explores the ever-evolving meaning of gentrification from its original meaning—the physical upgrading of properties leading to the replacement of working class populations by middle class ones—to include: rural gentrification, "studentification", new build gentrification, tourist-led displacement (e.g., the impact of Airbnb properties), and "state-led gentrification" (the demolition of social housing replaced by mixed-income housing). Rozena urges scholars to focus on the "slow violence of gentrification" (p. 542) and to work with activists to resist gentrification. She ignores the fact that in most American cities neighborhood decline is more common than gentrification. Gentrification is not always problematic since it is not always accompanied by displacement. Furthermore, indigenous owners can benefit from price increase and residents of all income levels can benefit from improved neighborhood services and conditions. Rozena could have offered another possible role for gentrification researchers, which is to work with local governments and non-profit organizations to promote "smart gentrification," using housing vouchers, tax credits, and existing social housing to promote a stable income mix thereby enabling low-income residents to benefit from improved neighborhood conditions.

"Rethinking Housing Inequality and Justice in a Settler Colonial City," by Naama Blatman and Alistair Sisson (Chapter 35), is a case study of the campaign for Aboriginal community-controlled housing in the Redforn section of Sydney and how this is part of wider land rights and self-determination struggles. According to the authors, a government grant enabled the AHC to purchase and rehabilitate 70 homes leased at affordable rates to Aboriginal families on a site originally known as

the Block. Demolition of the Block was carried out in 2011. Since then divisions have emerged between the AHC and sections of the community and some critics say that the AHC has abandoned its community organizational roots (Smith 2017). The authors' claim that AHC's effort was worthwhile because it was governed by the principles of community control and determination appears like empty progressive rhetoric. The AHC's failure parallels failed attempts in the US to achieve tenant control in public housing and community control in the schools.

In Part V (Politics of Housing), Daniel Meza Carvalán and Ernest López-Morales (Chapter 36) is the only chapter in this part of the book to deal with the Global South, describing the Movement of Struggling Settlers (MPL) rooted in the Peñalolén borough of Santiago, Chile. The MPL evolved from housing advocacy into "an emancipatory building management technology" (p. 567) that involves four stages of housing self management: getting a group of voucher holders together to finance the project; finding suitable land; designing and building the project; and managing it in conjunction with local government. Training residents to deal with technical details and technical jargon, and building larger complex projects was a challenge for MPL. I wonder whether how feasible training residents is in most communities. Additionally, MPL's autonomous approach has been threatened by the governmental social integration policies that prioritize mixed-income projects that must be built by private companies. Despite these challenges, the authors enthuse about this housing model arguing that MPL is one of "Chile's most effective grassroots [autonomous] housing organizations..." (p. 580) and assert that "MPL buildings signal how a housing policy could do things differently and better without the state" (p. 581). Really? The State makes this option possible only because it provides funding for housing vouchers.

The final chapter, (Chapter 37) "Gender, care and the home" by Emma R. Power and Kathy Mee, focuses on a theme covered throughout the book: owner-renter differences. "Homes are not just somewhere to live, they are also increasingly valued as an economic asset that can be used to build wealth and pay for future care needs" (p. 585). For homeowners, higher housing costs during the working years are counteracted by low-cost residence post-retirement once mortgages have been paid off. Post-retirement provides homeowners with a dwelling and freed-up income, which can be utilized for non-housing needs. Renters do not have these options and need to focus on short-term needs to maintain their dwelling and avoid eviction. The authors suggest several incremental approaches to help renters, such as providing financial incentives to developers and landlords to create and restructure units so that they are more suitable to the needs of the disabled and frail elderly. But they leave unanswered the question of how to address the above-described tenure inequities.

The Afterword draws attention to three future challenges: climate change, attaining greater diversity in housing studies, and most speculative, what comes next? The assumption is made that the status quo (existing neoliberal economies)

"are inevitable, permanent, and universal" (p. 603). But this is a far more incremental stance than that taken by many of the book's contributors.

I have mixed reactions to Housing, the Home, and Society. The book's wide substantive scope is impressive (although geographically, the book is mainly restricted to Australia and the UK) and I learned a lot about Australian housing issues. However, the book's weaknesses—connected to pushing a specific agenda—counterbalance its strengths. Firstly, there is the book's constant and strident progressive rhetoric. To use the phrases "housing under occupation" in Israel proper, "so-called Australia," and the over-reliance on vague, academic terminology, make parts difficult to read and make the book unsuitable for practitioners and most university students. Secondly, the editors' chapter selection is serendipitous. Why include a chapter on performance art in China? Or the Marxist interpretation of a film that has no relationship to the thesis posited by the author? And finally, and most importantly, there should have been a concluding chapter that brings all neoliberalism-related conclusions from the 37 chapters together. Such a chapter would have compared and contrasted how different progressive scholars, including the editors themselves, present different views on neoliberalism and housing. They could have used this as a basis to describe a progressive policy and research agenda for the future.

If progressive housing scholars want to have a seat at the table when neoliberal policies are discussed, they must move beyond cliches that use neoliberalism as a dirty word, and be willing to discuss their vision for a new political economic system and how it could be achieved through democratic housing reform.

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ELGAR ENCYCLOPEDIA IN URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING AND DESIGN, Edited by Kristof van Assche, Raoul Beunen and Martijn Duineveld, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton MA: Edward Elgar, 2023.

The first question that comes up when reviewing an encyclopedia in these days of easy internet search and AI is: what is its purpose? As the editors themselves admit, an encyclopedia can no longer perform the role of being a definitive authority. What

aim, then, does it wish to achieve? To inform, educate or provoke debate? In their introduction, the editors address this question and declare they neither had the illusion nor the ambition of comprehensiveness. Rather they feel that "the selection of the concepts included in the encyclopedia first and foremost reflects the diversity of the vocabulary of planning and design" (p. 2). The contributors were asked to reflect on the development of the concept they were describing over time and its co-existing different definitions or understandings. They are more concerned in representing the diversity and evolution of urban planning and design thinking than attempting to consolidate definitions that reflect the current power balance. They wished to avoid reproducing power relations and reinforce hegemonic discourses.

There are 144 terms defined and explained in the encyclopedia. Starting with "Adaptive Planning" and ending with one of the earliest, and perhaps most durable of planning tools: "Zoning." In between are terms which are familiar to any urban planning student or practitioner like: Affordable Housing, Commons, Garden City and Garden City Ideas and Neighborhood Planning, as well as other terms which, for the reviewer at least, were rather new, at least in an urban planning context like: Big Other, Dispositif, Earthly attachments in the Anthropocene, Line of flight, Nomocracy or Verticality. Other, more familiar terms took on very different meanings and understandings than what I expected to find, eliciting perplexity, curiosity and sometimes strong disagreement.

As often in encyclopedias, the sections describing the terms are short, sometimes less than a page, rarely more than three pages. At the end of each section is a short list of references for further reading, and a list of other terms connected to the term under discussion. This is a good idea, as it allows the reader to look for other terms in the encyclopedia that expand the discussion. Unfortunately, the terms written are not consistent. Some appear elsewhere in the book, others do not. It would have been more appropriate if the terms were marked with their numbers to allow for easier movement between them.

The chapters were written by various scholars, most of them European , Canadian and Australian academics. There are relatively few from the US and far fewer Asians, Africans Latin Americans. The quality of the writing is somewhat uneven. There is an excellent and clear chapter on Affordable Housing and its relationship to the Neo-liberal turn in the past 40 years. An interesting chapter is also on Agonism and its role in democratic discourse and urban planning debates. A series of chapters deal with Assemblage Theory, Autopoiesis and Complexity Theory and how they reveal the impossibility of planning cities for a scientifically predicted future state. I also found the chapter on Big Data and Machine Learning very useful in explaining the difference between them and more classical modeling techniques. In some chapters, such as that on Biopolitics, the discussion is interesting in itself however it is hard to connect it to urban planning and design. The chapter on Boundary Organizations was useful in explaining the gap between science and policy, which urban planning researchers (like myself) encounter throughout their career. There is also a very good

short chapter on the Commons, and the three different meanings the term has in urban and environmental planning discourse. Unfortunately, the author did not tie the discussion to Public Space, the most commonplace of Commons in cities, thus failing to make the abstract terms more concrete in their spatiality. There is also an interesting chapter on Corruption and some systematic ways that could be used to reduce its likelihood. There is too little discussion of the dark side of urban planning and development, and particularly about the ways that planning administrations and tools create opportunities and incentives for corruption.

Many chapters introduce philosophical and social scientific theoretical concepts that underly many contemporary planning theories. This is definitely one of the successful achievements of this encyclopedia – particularly for people who work or research at the boundary between urban planning, governance and public policy. Finally, there is a good little chapter on Planning as Therapy, which promotes the idea that urban planning is a "helping profession" like medicine or psychotherapy. I found this chapter important first because it recognized that planning processes are rife with emotions and feelings that have to be addressed and processed by the planners, and second because it stresses the importance for planners to understand their position and the limits of their role in helping the people of a community, and I would add, of a place, to help themselves become the best they can be.

However, when turning to chapters which are closer to my expertise as an urban designer and researcher, I find myself being more critical. For example, with regard to Complexity in planning, it was Jane Jacobs, not mentioned in the chapter, who in "The Kind of Problem a City Is"—the last chapter of her famous *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961)— was the first to discuss the complexity of cities, and its implications for urban planning, directly, taking inspiration from Weaver's paper which is cited in the chapter. A second important early source missing from the discussion is Alexander's *A City is Not a Tree* (1965), one of the most influential and reprinted texts in urban design, which exposed the limits of master planning, and likened urban areas to semi-lattices, relying in its analysis on network theory. Alexander then devoted his whole career to developing methods for dealing with complexity in urban planning as well as architectural design, efforts which unfortunately are not mentioned in the book.

I found the chapter on Density rather lackluster and very dated. It did not connect the discussion to Transit Oriented Development (TOD), walkability or healthy cities, or consider the impact of spatial configuration on perceived density, as well as patterns of co-presence and avoidance, which allow people to gain the benefits of density, while controlling for its associated dangers.

Also missing were the chapters on Neighborhood Planning, omitting different and more novel concepts of neighborhood, which critique the neighborhood unit concept, and base the sense of neighborhood on patterns of movement rather than territorial definition (Mehaffy et al., 2011). Likewise the chapter on New Urbanism limits itself to rehashing the old academic critiques of the movement, while ignoring

its pragmatism and role in institutional reform of urban planning and design: Form Based Codes as a substitute for functional zoning, new street and parking standards, promoting complete streets and the dismantling of urban freeways and their replacement by boulevards. Also ignored are the wide field of interventions—from urban centers, to sprawling suburbs as well as regional visions and plans. In an encyclopedia devoted to urban and regional planning and design, one would expect a more significant discussion of the various innovations created within the New Urbanist movement, not only in the US but throughout the world.

There are also some odd omissions in the encyclopedia. There is no mention of transportation planning and its relationship to urban planning, no chapter on urban street design and street design guidelines, nothing on public space as a spatial and social reality and perhaps the essence of urban space, and no discussion of the term place-making (as opposed to place branding). No section is devoted to urban morphology as the science of the historical development of cities, and as a guide to conservation and development. In the end the encyclopedia presents an outlook on urban and regional planning that is very social science and governance oriented and very European, UK and EU influenced and planning systems oriented. It seems to me that it is less concerned with issues more central to the American experience and has little to say about typical problems of urban planning and design in the rest of the world (despite two excellent chapters on informal settlements and informality). As such, perhaps, it does tend to reinforce an existing hegemony, at least in the Urban Planning Academy.

So, in sum, who are the intended readers of this encyclopedia? If I was a first-year student of urban planning wishing to get a sense of what urban planning and design is about, would this encyclopedia give me a coherent understanding of the field? I'm afraid not. If I was a practicing professional, would it enrich my professional toolbox? Possibly. It would definitely challenge me to rethink some of my concepts and methods and may introduce me to new ideas and ways of looking at problems. The one audience that will definitely find this encyclopedia useful and interesting are urban planning academics and research students – particularly those studying for their planning theory exams.

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RETHINKING RURAL STUDIES, By David L. Brown and Mark Shucksmith, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton MA: Edward Elgar, 2024.

I feel obliged to begin this review by saying that this is an interesting, fascinating, and contributing book, one that serves every student and researcher who deal with rural space and opens the door to those who are unfamiliar with it.

Brown and Shucksmith indicate at the introductory chapter that their book's structure is deliberately unconventional, and not organized around typical substantive domains such as rural community institutions, agriculture, environment, rural economy, etc. Their approach examines the embeddedness of rural people, communities and institutions within larger societal and global systems. The book provides a view of rural studies that comprises innovative conceptual, theoretical and empirical approaches for examining rural society, economy and environment, and identifies emerging issues for research and public policy. According to the authors each chapter is focused on core ideas that define their view of rural studies: (a) trans-disciplinarity, (b) an examination of embeddedness and place, (c) a rejection of binary thinking (rural versus urban), (d) an aspiration to obtain knowledge gained through empirical methodological strategies, and (e) a belief that research-based information can enlighten public discourse and propose improved development strategies.

The authors criticize the conventional top-down approach of urban dominance, arguing that spatial economic power is a dynamic process that provides a space for a major role of rural and smaller urban places. People still engage with the challenges of daily life in places, and one's place of residence still comprises a critical dimension of personal identity.

A number of central issues arise from the discussion in the book, emphasizing its contribution to research on rural space and knowledge derived from it. The discussion on rural economy (the third chapter) is examined through the analysis of survival strategies of rural households; in other words, the manner in which rural households make a living and the prevalence of pluriactivity strategy which rely on income of all household members and which dominates rural space. This chapter also examines how local economies are embedded in broader national and global circuits of capital, labour and information. This is followed by the concept of collective wellbeing (chapter 4) in relation to rural development, rural governance, and notions of a 'good countryside'. This issue could be expanded to include cooperation in the areas of production and marketing of agricultural products, and even in the areas of joint ownership of means of production.

Inequality in rural space is widely discussed (Chapter 5 and 6) addressing poverty, social inequality and spatial inequality in rural settlements. The discussion explores mechanisms, processes and outcomes and particularly processes generating and reproducing inequality and rural poverty. Two frameworks are suggested for developing new understandings of rural poverty, social inequality and disadvantages.

A major question that arises is why inequalities exist and persist across space, both within rural areas and between rural and urban areas. The authors criticize the notion that rural space is defined as 'places left behind' and calls for a new one based on innovative empirical research.

A principal insight emphasized in the book (Chapter 7) is that rural population dynamics and community structure are mutually interdependent. Rural community structure contributes to changes in the population size, their distribution across space, and their social, economic and demographic characteristics. At the same time population dynamics is a derivative of changes in community structure and wellbeing. All these ideas are acceptable but the authors do not emphasis the fact that rural population dynamics and rural community structure and organization are very much dependent on location. There is a lack of discussion about the differences between the rural-urban fringe and peripheral areas. The rural space is not uniform and issues such as demographic growth, characteristics of economic activity and trends in external investment, are not necessarily the same in these two spaces. I will mention two prominent processes: gentrification is common in the rural urban fringe while geriatricification is more common in peripheral areas.

An interesting idea appears in Chapter 8 which is focused on agriculture and its derived activities. The viewpoint is on the mutual interdependencies linking agriculture with other social, economic and environmental domains. Using this viewpoint, the agricultural sector based on family farms is both a determinant and a consequence of broader social, economic, scientific and environmental trends and changes – shifting from small farms to large farms. Additionally, agricultural development is related and permanently depended on scientific discovery and technological innovation. Chapter 8 uses scientific lenses to examine changes in the agricultural production process, and how they affect rural society, economy and environment.

Minerals, energy sources, forests, farmland, open space and scenic landscapes, and other natural resources are dominant in rural space. These are resources for economic activities and prospects of the development of rural communities. At the same time regional institutions and governance structures affect the quality and sustainability of environment and natural resources. Chapter 9 is dedicated to the discussion on the interrelationships between rural society and the natural world. The discussion in this chapter is focused on questions concerning rural sustainability, whose interests are served by using natural resources, and how discursive power is exercised to favour these interests. The discussion leads to policy and practice-related questions of how rural communities can become more sustainable and how regional and national policies can support the efforts that lead to local and regional sustainability.

The book concludes with a chapter dedicated to the contribution of the book. First, the chapter considers how the issues and research perspectives developed in the book might contribute to the support of the wellbeing of the rural population and

rural communities. Second, the topics discussed in the book recommend an agenda for future rural studies research. Third, the book opens a door to the question what rural studies can contribute to a new progressive and better era.

One issue is missing in the book – discussion of the dominant on-going process of restructuring of rural space. The rural space in developed market economies has undergone substantial transformation processes in recent years. It has experienced decline in agricultural employment and settlement change, and it is intensely contested by non-agricultural land uses. There are several underlying mechanisms impinging upon the transformation processes, all of which affect the physical-spatial structure and the socio-economic systems in the rural-space. It should be emphasized that the changes are not at the same rate and intensity in the rural-urban fringe compared with peripheral areas.

Altogether, scholars and students of rural studies will appreciate this book. It is a well-knit one dealing with an important field that is undergoing major changes in the 21st century. The authors have done a spectacular job in putting together new and sometimes non-conventional ideas into one scholarly basket, thus providing those interested in the subject an in-depth view of the definitions, concepts, phenomena, underlying processes and issues central to the current debates on rural studies. It enables the readers to identify and reflect on the factors, relations and justifications that together constitute the core of rural studies. From my point of view, the book contributes towards better rural futures. I enjoyed this book.

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THE NEGEV AND THE BEDOUIN: NOMADISM, LIVING AREAS, AND THE LAND ISSUE 1800-1967, By Ruth Kark, New York: Israel Academic Press, 2024[1]

Being part of Israel as a Western Jewish state, the Muslim Arab-Palestinian Bedouin community in the northern Negev constitutes a unique Indigenous minority. One of the crucial issues resulting from this contradictory reality, and the most conflict-ridden one legally and politically, is Bedouin's long-standing claim for historical ownership of their land which the state regards as state land. The prime attempt of this book is to historically refute Bedouin land claims. The book, which spans about 250 pages, is authored by Ruth Kark, one of Israel's most prominent historical geographers studying, inter alia, the history of modern Jewish settlement in the Negev desert under the late Ottman, Mandatory Palestine/Land of Israel and Israeli regimes. In publishing this book Kark joins the growing group of domestic and

1 This is a review of the Hebrew version of the book.

international academics studying the Negev Bedouin. The major reason for this growth of academic interest is that this land conflict is responsible for the extremely inferior socio-economic and environmental condition of many in this community still living in tens of unrecognized squatters.

Kark argues that there is no evidence whatsoever to support Bedouin claims for ownership of their lands. Her rationale is historical: since the Bedouin were nomads there were no Bedouin buildings and therefore no settlements in the Negev; since the Bedouin were pastoralists there was no agriculture in most of this region; hence they could not stand up for the legal conditions that the Ottoman, British Mandate or Israeli law would accept for a land title.

The method employed to substantiate this thesis is based on a profound and encompassing search for historical evidence since the early Nineteenth Century. This search covers, as the author attests, thousands of archival documents in more than ten local and international archives, hundreds of original maps, and hundreds of printed books, articles, press reports, research reports, theses and dissertations in various languages all spanning the period until 1967. A crucial part of the evidence is derived from Nineteenth Century traveler literature in the Holy Land. Each source was examined for its settlement and agricultural information including an indirect one that pertains to the land law and its various definitions and conditions. These vast sources were synthesized and analyzed by the author to portray the settlement, agriculture and land tenure scene in the northern Negev. Based on these analyses, the book, rich with maps, quotes, tables and references, is divided into three analytical chapters: spatial permanent settlement aspects; transformation processes in agriculture; and the historical legal status of land in the region, all spanning the three state regimes in these two centuries.

Kark's major conclusion is that the Bedouin in the Negev lived in tents with which they roamed unorderly throughout this region. They took control of their claimed land by force through wars with other tribes and nearby permanent villages. They had no permanent settlements of their own, practiced no annually successive agriculture until late in the studied period and nevertheless most of the land was uncultivable given the means available to their culture within this harsh arid environment.

This is an impressive historical account of an issue that, in terms of Bedouin-Jewish relationships, stands high on the current public agenda in the Negev and nationally. In the absence of any other formal legal proof of ownership that would meet contemporary legal standards, such a tremendous number of facts is accepted by the formal legal system in rejecting Bedouin land claims. In this respect the book constitutes a real challenge to local and international proponents of Bedouin land claims as legal.

However, as the author admits, the scene portrayed by the various sources used reveals the hidden more than the visible. Hence, the question immediately coming to mind is whether there is only one appropriate device to shed light over the

hidden. Given the extreme cruciality of the land issue to Bedouin life, isn't there possibly another lens, a different observation scale, that may portray another reality and hence another Bedouin geography, one which may produce alternative facts that might be worth considering seriously both academically and judicially? In other words, can the evidence brought by the book withstand an alternative reality of Bedouin settlements, agriculture and land tenure in the studied period, what might be called Bedouin spatiality that is, how they internally produce and manage their space as a unique cultural group?

Answering these questions calls for probing several underlying ontological and epistemological postulates of the book. The first ontological postulate refers to the placelessness of a nomadic society and therefore the impossibility of its living in permanent settlements. The contemporary and more radical vast international literature on pastoral peoples has never portrayed any such group as placeless. On the contrary, it is widely accepted that in search of pasture there is always an anchor place around which the group migrates seasonally and sequentially within an internal socio-politically predefined territory. Furthermore, it is perhaps due to this perpetual pattern that the scholarly community has in recent decades tended to relinquish pastoral nomadism in favor of pastoralism. This counter-ontology has a significant effect upon realizing that each of these groups (e.g., a tribe, sub-tribe, clan, etc.) must have a specific spatial anchor which deserves to be viewed as a settlement in the sense that they settle and live there. Harnessing this as a research lens implies the counter possibility to that argued in this book, of existence of Bedouin settlements of various sizes and numbers dispersed over the northern Negev which, given a proper field methodology, might have been discovered by those scholars on whose accounts the analysis in this book builds upon. The latter, however, have tended to align with the established Western Nineteenth Century ontology of the time, promoted by imperial governments, of pastoralism as placeless nomadism.

The second ontological postulate of the book regards pastoralism as a subsistence source. Several questions come to mind. Can a group of pastoralists make exclusive subsistence off animal husbandry? Isn't there some necessary small scale subsistence farming that may produce even the minimal daily vegetarian needs, with unique Indigenous knowledge and methods, to complement animal produce for a balanced nutrition? Furthermore, isn't there any spatial and functional interdependence between farming and animal husbandry within a pastoral context that may result in simultaneous mobile pastoralism and sedentary farming practiced by the household or extended family? Even further, in contrast with customary wisdom, isn't it possible that in some circumstances small household scale farming, in a topographically and environmentally appropriate site, may be the prime spatial anchor that bonds a pastoral group to a certain place as a small settlement around which its pastures and water sources are socio-spatially dispersed?

The third postulate regards the nature of a settlement. The book presents no explicit definition for 'settlement', but the criteria employed imply implicitly a

cluster of dense hard-built buildings connected by built roads. This too calls in several questions. Are hard buildings the only kind of abode that can provide permanent shelter for humans? Weren't there during the studied period, in fact from times immemorial, other abodes that used other materials for providing a decent shelter as a home? Are built roads the only possible spatial paths for connecting among people and people to farming and pastoral resources and territories? Reflecting the superiority of the value of spatial density to that of social density (the latter as customary among the Bedouin), are densely arranged buildings the only possible criterion for defining a settlement? Finally, given all these questions, how many such places could have been found during the studied period in the studied area given its environmental carrying capacity under this alternative ontology?

The second type of postulate to be questioned is epistemological. Referring to the nature of sources used in this book, the question is whether there is no alternative way of knowing what kind of reality there is. Two issues are at stake here. First, the author doubts the reliability of more recent critical scholarship's reliance on earlier sources in drawing conclusions about Bedouin land ownership whereas the essence of this book is relying itself precisely on this same kind of earlier sources. One cannot escape wondering about a hierarchy of reliability and hence legitimacy of sources adopted in this book. This ushers the second issue, that of print evidence as used by this book vs. oral history evidence as derived from local people. In what way is the print and published evidence, itself produced by traveler writers as their own oral account of their voyages with little contact with the local population, superior to historical oral evidence derived from this population by more recent scholars in their highly methodical and profound field trips that relied on close and intensive contact with them? Finally, in an era of growing reliance on oral historical documentation as an alternative or at least complementary to established archival documentation (that possibly adopts categories convenient to the establishment), in what ways is the local knowledge, oral history and narrative sources inferior to archival formal evidence?

All these ontological and epistemological questions converge into the following final ones: In what ways is modernist historical geography superior to post-modern decolonized geography in understanding the unique spatiality of the Bedouin in the past and even at present and hence the issue of land ownership? Can the account provided in this book afford remaining inattentive to contemporary critical historical geography?

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