

## Tracing ARTs Studies: Patriarchal Relations, Hypermedicalisation, and Global Inequalities

**Demircioğlu Gökner, Merve. 2015. *Achieving Procreation. Childlessness and IVF in Turkey*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books. xii + 201 pp. Hb.: \$80.00/£50.00. ISBN: 9781782386346.**

**Inhorn, Marcia C. 2015. *Cosmopolitan Conceptions: IVF Sojourns in Global Dubai*. Durham, London: Duke University Press. xxviii+ 379 pp. Pb.: \$27.95. ISBN: 9780822359333.**

**Whittaker, Andrea. 2015. *Thai in Vitro. Gender, Culture and Assisted Reproduction*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books. xv+260 pp. Hb.: \$110.00/£68.00. ISBN: 9781782387329.**

*Cosmopolitan Conceptions*, *Thai in Vitro*, and *Achieving Procreation* are three convincing ethnographic accounts of the use, meaning and implications of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) in The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Thailand, and Turkey. Together the books build a broad introduction to the ongoing discussion on assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) in and beyond medical anthropology. They provide a balanced overview of the mainstream anthropological approach to ARTs, particularly to IVF. Inhorn and Whittaker are leading anthropologists in this field who have been working for many years in the regions of their studies and have written extensively on ARTs and related topics. Gökner is delivering her first book on the subject which results from her training as an anthropologist with a Turkish background in Cambridge. Connections between the books are evident in many ways. *Achieving Procreation* and *Thai in Vitro* are two subsequent volumes of the Berghahn Books Series *Fertility, Reproduction and Sexuality* of which Inhorn is one of the general editors.

Initially created to overcome fallopian tubes obstruction (a specific form of female infertility as defined by biomedicine) IVF underwent multiple developments since a ‘test-tube-baby’ was safely born for the first time in England in 1978. Associated technologies were developed including intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection to overcome male infertility and preimplantation genetic diagnosis, a technique used to identify genetic defects in embryos that also has other controversial uses such as sex selection. Likewise, IVF underlies the development of third-party-assisted reproductive treatments like gametes (ova and sperm) donation and surrogacy. IVF spread around the world in the 1980s, but it boomed with the privatisation of health care since the 1990s and in the first decade of the twenty-first century in the global south, e.g. in Turkey, Thailand, and the UAE.

IVF became a lucrative industry not only for pharmaceutical and bio-tech corporations but also for practitioners, investors and states. Its worldwide acceptance by medical, religious, state authorities and people of very dissimilar backgrounds, runs parallel to the much-discussed medicalisation of life and birth pointing to the worldwide spread of biomedicine as the hegemonic form of medical care (e.g. Menéndez 2009, Lock & Nguyen 2010). However, IVF remains a contended technology that poses philosophical, social, ethical as well as medical dilemmas for users: patients/consumers and practitioners. It

also challenges our understandings of sociality and subjectivity, building a fertile ground for anthropological studies. The present prolificacy of ARTs as an “ethnographic object” suggests that it is one of the subjects that are central to the development of an “anthropology of medicines” (Dilger & Hadolt 2010) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This review provides an overview of the books’ aims and methodologies followed by a presentation of three topics that represent the central contribution of each study to the understanding of IVF.

## **The books: aims and methodology**

*Achieving Procreation* by Göknaar is ‘the first anthropological manuscript on Turkey with regards to infertility and ART’ (p.12). There a lack of anthropological interest in the issue of not having a child contrasting with the pronatalist political discourse and the media promotion of IVF which turned it into a ‘pop culture artefact’, offered in television programs as a gift along with furniture and household appliances. Media attention has declined in recent years, while the pronatalist discourse was reinforced by the Erdogan government through the exaltation of motherhood and the suggestion that Turkish women bear at least three children.

Göknaar aims to explore the dynamics that inform the demand for IVF in this context. She strives to understand the experience of childlessness and the decision for (or against) IVF by observing the social implications of childlessness and the related issue of sonlessness. Her ethnographic approach combined research in two clinics in Istanbul and in two villages located within a three-hour drive of this city. The book’s most meaningful insights clearly emerge from Göknaar’s immersion in everyday life in the villages and, particularly, out of the experience of being a childless, unmarried woman there: a girl, *kiz*, different from *kadin*, women. Her decision to undertake the research in western Turkey deserves to be highlighted for it shows that the stigma attached to infertility is neither confined to the east of the country nor to a specific group.

Turkish legislation on ARTs follows the Sunni Muslim consensus making IVF available exclusively to heterosexual married couples using their own gametes. Third-party assisted reproductive treatment, donation, and surrogacy are illegal. People may travel abroad for these services although this has recently been outlawed.

Travel for assisted reproductive treatment is the topic of *Cosmopolitan Conceptions* by Inhorn. It is a phenomenon as old as IVF itself and deep-rooted in history. People in the Middle East have ‘traveled for conception’ for centuries, e.g. visiting sacred places, herbalists and other healers (p. 17). However, Inhorn’s core research interest is also a mark of this century since ‘reprohubs’ in the global south developed only recently. In the 1990s Emiratis used to travel out of their country for ART, notably with state funding. Today people living in the UAE would still travel out for several reasons, e.g. to avoid restrictions on donation since the Sunni consensus also informs IVF treatment there, but there are truly cosmopolitan IVF clinics within the Emirates capable of attracting clients from nearly a third of the world’s countries in a period of six months. That is the case of Conceive, the Emirates’ largest private clinic which provides a ‘multi-sited sensibility’ for Inhorn’s ‘strategically situated (single-sited) ethnography’ (p. 40).

Opened in 2004 by a renowned IVF Indian physician and his Emirati sponsor, Conceive is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious clinic, where costs for IVF are as high as in England. In 2007, Inhorn conducted over six months of research there in the form of a “marital ethnography” interviewing 125 couples from fifty different countries. She promoted her research at this clinic as a study on “reproductive tourism” (a term routinely used in the media and scholarly literature, including some of her previous work) yet she was confronted with the opinions and feelings of people that cannot identify themselves as tourists. In their “struggle to conceive” they often feel forced out of their countries and experience anxiety, suffering, compulsion and other emotions very dissimilar to the assumed leisure of tourism. Therefore, Inhorn claims insistently for the removal of the term “reproductive tourism” from the “conceptual lexicon of ARTs” and encourages the use of “reproductive travel” contracted as “reprotravel”. People traveling for IVF treatment are labelled ‘reprotravelers’ that move in a “reproscape” through “reproflows” facing “reproductive constraints”. All this informs a “global reproductive assemblage”. Thus, the study focuses on the intersections of reproductive travel and process of globalisation as interpreted by leading globalisation theorists.

In this global reproductive assemblage, Thailand ‘has marked itself as the world’s premier medical tourism hub’ (p. 11) since the government encouraged the growth of a reprotravel industry. In this scenario, *Thai in Vitro* by Whittaker offers an insightful perspective. Thailand is involved in a global ART trade while the local population struggles to afford access to reproductive biotechnologies because neither the national public health insurance nor private health insurance offer provisions for IVF (i.e. the cost of treatment is borne by patients). Furthermore, the lack of public funding may underlie the fact that ART has been allowed to proliferate with little state intervention until very recently. The situation is further promoted by the pre-eminence, prestige and trust placed in biomedicine within Thai society and the lack of a single authoritative Buddhist position on ARTs. Buddhist commentators tend to support its use as a meritorious act aimed to facilitate the rebirth of another life force. In recent years, cases involving international commercial surrogacy and ova donation pointed to the existence of a ‘rotten trade’ that rests on the exploitation of women and raises questions regarding the ethical standards of Thai clinics and doctors.

Whittaker focuses on how Thai users and providers approach reproduction through ARTs in Thailand offering a ‘case study of similar effects happening throughout the world, albeit with localized variations’ (p. 2). For her local instantiation of the global assemblage of ARTs, she relies on an eight-month multi-site research project in one public and three private IVF clinics in Bangkok in 2007-2008. Together with her Thai research assistant, she interviewed thirty-one women, thirteen men and six staff, largely ‘middle class to upper class elites’ (p. 5). Additionally, they undertook observation at the clinics and at various shrines as well as a search of the media and popular press and a systematic collection of Thai language web boards. The author warns that her book can only provide a partial view of how people deal with infertility because IVF clinics ‘have become exclusive — run by a handful of elite doctors catering to wealthy patients’ (p. 6). However, Whittaker’s previous long-term ethnographic experience studying reproduction while being

a married childless woman in a rural Thai village influence the study enhancing the book's problematisation of the contradictory effects of the experimentation with techno-scientific practices in Thailand.

## **Childlessness and social relations**

Although stigma attached to childlessness takes varied forms and differs within and between groups and regions, a kind of social suffering is central to the experience of childlessness in many societies. Childlessness may be attached to stigmatisation, discrimination, ostracism, humiliation, financial disadvantages, physical and psychological violence, the neglect of inheritance rights, and even of the right to speak. Class, age, and socioeconomic status influence the experience of stigmatisation.

In Göknaar's words '[a]n understanding of the experience of infertility necessitates an understanding of social relationships because it is these relations which influence experience the most' (p. 127). When women belong to the families they marry into, as it is in the two Turkish villages, childlessness or sonlessness challenges their identity and disempowers them in multiple ways. They no longer belong to their natal homes and not yet to their husband's families, until they fulfil the expectation of bearing children. Religion and the relationships to female affines, especially mothers-in-law, fundamentally determine the experience of childlessness. Göknaar stresses the role of women in perpetrating patriarchal ideologies as well as the existence of multiple masculinities in Turkey; she shows how hegemonic patriarchal ideologies underlie the consideration of childless women as incomplete and undesirable: a 'fruitless tree'.

Gendered religious rhetoric may aggravate the situation by reifying patriarchal values, yet it may also provide a rhetorical strategy to empower childless people. The rhetoric of childlessness as God-given can be used to persuade others of childless adults' rightful position in society by assessing that any scorn about their childlessness questions God's will. Similarly, in Thailand childlessness may be re-signified as a positive karmic outcome indicating the completion of the karmic cycle. Furthermore, religious practices may have an empowering effect especially for childless women who move through what Whitaker calls a 'sacred geography of fertility' with female deities and figures playing a salient role unmediated by (male) Buddhist monks.

Anyway, incompleteness is a substantial concern surrounding childlessness in the three ethnographic studies, as Whitaker suggests

Infertility threatens gendered identities for women and men, particularly in Asian societies that place high values upon reproduction and where motherhood and fatherhood are considered fundamental to full adult femininity and masculinity. The sources of such stigma derive from the failure of infertile women and men to fulfil normative gender expectations (p. 51).

These expectations are bounded to patriarchal reinforcement of a motherhood mandate on women and a fatherhood mandate on men tied to the performance of manhood as a proof of virility. Göknaar suggests thinking of male infertility as a 'total loss' for the whole family which explains the willingness of women to shoulder the blame of infertility and undergo IVF treatment for their husbands. It is worth noting that, compared to the

other two studies, the women in the Turkish clinics have a lower socioeconomic status. Even though IVF treatment is subsidised by the state under certain conditions, the costs of treatment may be very difficult to bear for Turkish couples.

However, regardless of economic constraints, the very presence of ARTs may reinforce patriarchal mandates so that many women and couples in the age of ART feel compelled to undergo IVF. The three authors distance themselves from previous studies of reproductive technologies that tend to critique the patriarchal imperative for motherhood but failed to acknowledge the agency and strong desire to have children that characterise many couples' use of these technologies. To provide a more nuanced view of women's agency within medical treatment, they resort to the concept of "patriarchal bargains" being consciously made in the engagement with IVF.

Women and men engage in continuous negotiations throughout IVF treatment which are consistent with what is expected of them and with their own aspirations, so that the boundaries between expectation and agency blur. Göknaar even concludes that the pursuit of IVF may represent an appropriation of attitudes and roles that usually belong to men (especially achievement) and thus a subversion of gender conventions. In addition, via IVF women actively perform procreation whereas masculine procreation is what is appropriated by IVF. This explains the reluctance to undergo IVF treatment ascribed to men by the women in her research. She assesses that '[i]n *vivo* procreation belongs more to men, whereas *in vitro* procreation belongs more to women' (p. 165) who engage in a fight that they may win, if God permits, even against the will of their husbands and in-laws.

Determination, aspiration, the will to fight and persist are also central attitudes of many women (and men) in the other two ethnographic settings. Inhorn's focus on couples engaging in IVF in a cosmopolitan clinic distant to their homes is sensitive to gender imbalances in a different way. As also stressed by Whitaker, many women give up their jobs to undergo IVF since it is more difficult for women – whose bodies are at the core of all IVF interventions – than it is for men to keep their jobs and carry on with their usual activities. Women may be held responsible for success, but they certainly tend to be held responsible for the failure of treatment, which is the most common outcome of IVF. More importantly, they expose themselves to life-threatening complications risking their health and life in several ways, especially when traveling abroad to overcome legal restrictions and other constraints.

Regardless, at the core of the ongoing debate on whether ARTs enhance women's reproductive choice or facilitates oppression and the reproduction of patriarchal relations lie 'fundamental anthropological concerns regarding the nature of agency within conditions of gendered, class and racial inequality,' as Whitaker states (p. 157). Agency concerning IVF takes place in what Inhorn calls 'a gendered and stratified reproscape' (p. 24).

## The medicalisation of infertility

Infertility became a disease to be treated in the realm of biomedicine, in Whittaker's words it was 'invented as a potentially treatable medical condition' (p. 43). The advent of IVF reinforced biology as the basis for parental ties, thus rendering adoption, fostering and other possibilities of dealing with childlessness a less acceptable option. In their engage-

ment with ARTs people transform their understandings of the body, fertility, reproduction and so on in the simultaneous double movement of the naturalisation of culture and the culturalisation of nature that characterise the production of health (Fassin 2008).

For Göknaar the medicalisation of infertility involves a normalisation of IVF parallel to the socialisation of ART through the association of established cultural practices with new ones. This is exemplified by the way in which IVF in Turkey became a “solution” to the “problem of polygyny” in popular discourse. The mutual informing relations between hegemonic social relations and biomedical theory and practice underlies Göknaar’s analysis and is also visible in Inhorn’s “reprostories” (the narratives of her research participants). This central concern of medical anthropology is further elaborated in Whittaker’s account that explores how ARTs have been incorporated into Thai understandings and practices surrounding reproduction. The ‘hypermedicalized world of IVF,’ she concludes, form part of a ‘sacred geography of fertility’ (p. 101).

Pilgrimage, prayers, and the use of other-than-biomedical forms of care have a notorious presence in Thailand and Turkey as well as among Conceive clients in the UAE. These practices may involve moving from one place to another in the process of syncretic care seeking at multiple sites. Whittaker traces a convincing analogy between pilgrimage to sacred shrines and patients’ approach to ART and concludes that ‘[t]he high-tech production of embryos and babies is full of enchantment, not fully comprehensible to patients participating in it and surprising even the doctors applying it’ (p. 99). Patients and doctors require acts of faith and belief in technology. Failure of IVF cycles is re-signified as a failure of the embryo or the female body so that the technology remains unquestioned.

The IVF clinics studied by Whittaker are cold and silent places where patients’ hopes, desires and opinions are negotiated with very busy practitioners that face enormous time pressures and heavy caseloads. Patients often experience humiliation, assaults on their privacy, fear, and bewilderment. Men are routinely excluded. Mental health, psychological assistance, and counselling are not priority. Over-servicing for commercial purposes and iatrogenic treatment transformed the well-established image of a doctor as a healer with special moral status and expertise to that of a doctor as a businessman engaged in profit-making activity.

Inhorn also discusses the issue of iatrogenic and low-quality treatment. Both authors stress that for patients the quality of IVF care is tied to communicational skills and the establishment of a respectful, caring relation with the staff of the clinic which builds trust not only in the technology but in the people involved in it. The Conceive clinic in the UAE is the opposite to the overcrowded Thai clinics and for Inhorn an example of patient-centred reproductive care.

The intensified scientific and medical knowledge of their body developed by IVF patients and their identification with others who share the ‘biological condition’ of infertility gave rise to a form of “informational bio-sociality” in Thailand. It takes place mainly in the internet with ‘virtual communities promoting biomedical resolution to childlessness’ (p. 181). Contrary to what happens elsewhere, this bio-sociality does not derive in more political forms of biological citizenship and advocacy, even though it promoted the figure of the patient as an educated consumer and allowed for some forms of contending the hyper-medicalised understanding of human reproduction.

In sum, the medicalisation of infertility reveals that science and technology including biomedicine and biotechnologies are reinforced and permeated with the worldviews, values, ideologies and structural arrangements of the society in which it is generated and used.

## **IVF in an unequal global world**

Although statistics and registers of fertility problems are incomplete and not always reliable, Inhorn provides estimates concluding that the probable global average of infertile couples is 9% but it reaches 30% in some regions. Women in the global south are disproportionately suffering the consequences of infertility. Africa is a continent with higher infertility rates. This is especially tragic ‘given that most cases are preventable with early detection and antibiotic treatment of the infections that cause them’ (p. 109).

Lack of infertility prevention and treatment services are justified as providing a ‘solution to overpopulation.’ ARTs are considered a low-priority issue in the context of scarce health care resources. Inhorn argues that this may ‘reflect a tacit eugenic view that infertile people in developing countries are unworthy of treatment’ and that providing treatment to them ‘contradicts Western interests in population control’ (p. 110). In addition, “egg donation” is very often the commercialisation of ova sold by women from specific regions at different prices on an international market. Surrogacy tends to derive in a complex hierarchical relation that reproduces class and race imbalances and promotes the objectivation of women and even their trafficking. Besides, as Göknaar shows, people undergoing IVF face the risk of losing their friends, jobs, the place they live, authority, prestige, etc. To summarise, in the context of global health disparities, differential environmental management, racism and socioeconomic inequality the ‘global reproductive assemblage’ reflects global inequalities.

As Inhorn convincingly assesses, ‘reprotravel often connotes the failures of states to grant safe, legal, affordable, and effective IVF as a right of citizenship’ (p. 301). People from the most affected regions do not travel for IVF to Dubai and, in this sense, they are not part of Inhorn’s study of cosmopolitan conceptions. However, she offers a consistent inclusion of the effects of uneven neoliberal globalisation in her study. This is one of the virtues of a book which through the ethnography of mostly privileged IVF consumers in a privileged cosmopolitan clinic in the context of an Arab Gulf “ethnocracy” glimpses the intertwined relation between the global spread of biotechnologies and of capitalism in its economic, cultural, and ideological dimensions.

After providing a register of IVF shortcomings, inequities and catastrophic expenditures through the stories of (elite and other) people’s “IVF sojourns”, Inhorn concludes that ‘the provision of affordable IVF may be one of the most important issues of reproductive justice facing the world in the new millennium’ (pp. 137–38). The book closes with a call for a three-fold “reproductive health activism” including “infertility prevention”, “support of the infertile” (in the form of destigmatisation and encouragement of adoption and fostering) and the commitment to the low-cost IVF movement which aims to make safe, affordable, and effective IVF accessible to everyone who needs it. Inhorn’s “activist future”, in my view, needs to expand to the promotion of scholarship that explores, thinks, and problematises other ways of dealing with health and fertility in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Open questions

Finally, I wish to mention three sets of questions that arose from my engagement with the books. First, are there estimations of women, men, and couples who have been deemed infertile by biomedical practitioners and have nevertheless conceived without biomedical intervention and especially without IVF? How do the success rates of IVF compare to these estimations? The inclusion of this information (or the lack of it) in the analysis of ARTs is relevant because it opens paths to interrogate the solutions that biomedicine is offering. More importantly, it may point to solutions that could be developed by following other paths of medical research and experimentation.

Second, if the spread of biomedical knowledge and technologies is intertwined with the spread of capitalism providing a base for racisms, colonialisms, male dominances, etc., how do we avoid the perpetuation of biomedical categorisations in anthropological analysis? In this sense, the extended use of terms like “infertile woman/men/couple” and “the infertile” in the three books is problematic even if people may appropriate this idiom under some circumstances.

Finally, how do we write a comprehensive ethnography without rendering recognisable people who wish not to be recognised? The authors had to find a solution because several participants required anonymity since they were undergoing treatment with “absolute secrecy”. Pseudonyms and other precautions are used but at times very detailed information about participants’ life circumstances is given, especially by Inhorn. On the one hand, this strengthens her argument and enriches a book which rests on detailed reprostories but, on the other, it may render research participants perfectly recognisable. Thus, an old controversial issue surrounding ethnographic practice remains unresolved in the 21<sup>st</sup> century ethnographies of IVF.

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**Malkki, Liisa H. 2015. *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism*. Durham, London: Duke University Press. x+270 pp. Pb.: \$24.95. ISBN: 9780822359326.**

Ethnographic enquiries into the motivations of international aid workers habitually link humanitarian endeavours with values of cosmopolitanism, the ethical obligation to help, selflessness and self-sacrifice. Less often, the debate on the rationales behind helping others brings forth the notions of self-escape and alleviation of the neediness of the *helpers themselves*. Lisa Malkki takes an exploratory trip down that road. Based on the extensive and demanding research with the international Finnish Red Cross aid workers and Finns involved in humanitarian and charitable activities from home, she provides a compelling and convincing argumentation that helping others stems from the crisis of ordinariness, i.e. from a need to escape the mundaneness, loneliness, the emotionally cold Finnish welfare state, and the experiences of social and sensorial deprivation (p. 8). She argues that the need to help is induced by a profound neediness to be part of something meaningful, important, exciting and unpredictable. In this sense, *The Need to Help* can be read as a critique of the impersonal Finnish society and impoverished culture (p. 144) that is prompting a desire to escape.

The book begins with a remarkable introduction on the notions of “need”, “imagination” and the “care of the self”, and continues with the discussion on the international aid workers’ motivations to work abroad. The inclusion of a selection of the most relevant aid workers’ narratives significantly contributes to reinforcing Malkki’s argument that a sense of deprivation experienced at home propels engagement in international humanitarianism. Aid workers’ needs, fears, desires to travel and get lost in work, the overwhelming drive to do something challenging, energetic and personally enriching are illustrative of the lack of warmth, sociability, and professional challenges in Finland. By all means, engaging in humanitarian activities is by definition demanding, traumatic and often frustrating. The aid workers’ ‘heart monologues’ (p. 59–68), the intimate portrayals of the impossible ethical dilemmas they are confronted with in the field, are heart-breaking. Yet, as Malkki argues, the drive to take part in humanitarian missions and continuous reluctance to return home despite the emotionally and physically draining nature of the job is profoundly evident. She points out that many interviewees in fact experienced a sense of fulfilment by losing themselves in the demanding nature of their work. The intense personal and professional engagement with the world, she argues, has become a way of losing themselves while paradoxically staying vitally alive. Aid workers are thus not portrayed as self-sacrificing individuals performing heroic acts but rather as persons seeking to alleviate their own need to travel, give, help and be part of something bigger than themselves.

The experience of such a ‘pleasurable loss of self’ (p. 42) is palpable also in the case of the elderly Finns who are involved in humanitarian activities from the confines of their home. Knitting trauma teddies, aid bunnies and blankets, especially for children in need (imagined as the embodiments of a ‘basic human goodness and innocence’ (p. 80)) alleviates loneliness of the elderly and evokes feelings of usefulness, helpfulness and regained dignity. Knitted blankets become, Malkki argues, ‘a gift of the self to an imagined other,

but also a gift to the self' (p. 10). It is through their handicrafts that many knitters manage to escape solitude and loneliness, a condition most oppressive, painful and overwhelmingly widespread. The chapters on the neediness of the elderly knitters to belong, connect and escape social isolation are written with tremendous finesse and a palpable undertone of sadness, as they set out to illuminate the continuous processes of alienation of the elderly from society. Further anthropological reflection on knitting for "the needy" as sociality and therapy for the elderly knitters is just as heady and captivating.

*The Need to Help* is a remarkable read that challenges the one-directional delivery of help from the self-sacrificing aid workers from rich Western states to the needy recipients of aid in impoverished and war-torn zones. It convincingly argues that aid work not only serves the needs of those who receive help but also of those who provide it. Importantly, Malkki does not question the devotedness, highly developed sense of ethical obligation and professionalism of international aid workers. Indeed, a commitment to aid work and neediness to engage in aid work are not mutually exclusive.

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**Goldstein, Daniel M. 2016. *Owners of the Sidewalk: Security and Survival in the Informal City*. Durham, London: Duke University Press. xiv+ 334 pp. Pb.: \$26.95. ISBN: 9780822360452**

Taken alone or indiscernibly entwined, markets (preferably indigenous or illegal), the state, and informality exert a perpetual fascination, heady and of the Orientalist kind, on ethnographers of Latin America. The right buzzwords draped onto well-trodden tropes have largely set the bar and tone for studies of a region that have taken on a life of their own – of their own making, that is: *Mestizos* of their own. Goldstein's ethnography of markets, their vendors, their spaces and lack thereof in Cochabamba, Bolivia, is in a sophisticated, cordial dialogue with this body of literature: a showing-by-doing dialogue, convincing by virtue of its meticulousness.

On a first axis, Goldstein studies relations between the state and its citizens in terms of legality, illegality, and extra-legality; and mobility, insecurity and informality writ large are its organising devices. The analysis is finely textured and thoroughly supported by impressive ethnographic material. Particularly refined is his take on what he calls *disregulation*: the state's discretionary practices of law enforcement that produce and maintain order and disorder. These activate and enable complementary sovereignties (union and *sindicato* leaders, private policing, national police forces, vigilante-style penalties, and sanctions) organised around Cochabamba's market (pp. 148–53) where the complexity of Cochabamba's vendors' relation to the state, seeking forms of formality (p. 250) and legitimacy surpasses simplistic analysis of compliance-resistance. Most of Goldstein's lines of argument are enhanced, or even possible, by a sharp attention to concrete flows; money, charisma, and political clout the most salient ones. The simultaneous taxation and spatial marginalisation of *chicherías* (p. 84) enabled the modernising, Euro-oriented gravitas of Cochabamba from which *chicherías* are both priced out and fenced off from is an example, and an illustration of Goldstein's eye for and intelligent use of irony. Merchandise circulates in markets integrating legal and illegal spaces, dealers and transactions, from clothes donations from the US to candies, stolen electronics, and carrots from competing regions of Bolivia (p. 190), unravelling the points in which legal and illegal, formal and informal intertwine. Goldstein's contribution gains grounds by virtue of detail and precision, heuristic and rhetorical, joining Roitman and Elyachar's attention to the often-standardised forms and patterns 'in-formality' works through, shaping up an increasingly rich discussion of the idea of informality.

Around a second axis the book emerges as a (sometimes panegyric) discussion of ethnography as engagement. Goldstein believes in and practices activist anthropology and collaborative fieldwork. This operates on two levels. First, he both problematises and refers frequently to his collaborators in the form of hired co-researchers, some local, some foreign, and occasionally quotes their field notes at length. One of them, in particular, officiates as a kind of Virgil to Goldstein's Dante across the maze of stalls and cacophony of languages and their registers. The co-researcher doubling as informant is woven into the ethnography-as-book in what seems to be a direct correspondence to his presence in the ethnography-as-activity. Goldstein remains the unambiguously visible author of the

argument, however, curator of all other insertions-interjections and organiser of a text that has only him as our interlocutor. I think this more sobering than problematic: in this sense writ large, there has never been ethnography without collaboration.

Yet collaboration here dances also to other tunes, those of a persuasive, if at times preachy, defence and argument for activist anthropology. Goldstein sets out to ‘present as far as possible both the *reality* and the *truth* of market life’ (p. 11, italics in original). He finds in his field two opposing organisations and forms of economic life: fixed stall vendors, who complain about insecurity, and itinerant-mobile vendors (*ambulantes*), who are usually blamed for said insecurity and whose leadership is determined to get another fixed market for them to use. Goldstein decides to help the leaders of both camps, acknowledging that this will allow him access to spaces and people otherwise beyond his limits – the stuff that *reality* and *truth* are made of. He crafts his local credibility as a foreign expert into seminars and newspaper articles, and later books, that circulate in Cochabamba advocating for both causes separately yet simultaneously. Precisely because he is so attentive to nuance throughout his book, the reader knows, and knows Goldstein knows, that these two groups are interlocked (p. 180) in parasitic and often symbiotic or colluding ways. The reader might be surprised that only on page 228 Goldstein acknowledges that one of these leaders is more of a *caudillo* than anything else, and it is only as an *ex post* addition to the main text – for that is what ‘epilogue’ means – that we learn that the *caudillo* has been hoarding and trying to cash in on the book Goldstein wrote for free distribution, thanking them for their help by allegedly advancing their cause. As a cynical reader, I am comfortable with calling it collaboration in the tit-for-tat sense: neutral anthropology is an illusion, both leaders helped Goldstein achieve *his* ends, Goldstein helped them with theirs. In terms of a quest for truth and reality, however, other exciting layers of debate are activated involving the very nature of the discipline, its methods, the truths it creates, the truths it unveils and the truths it unveils by creating them. The author chooses to engage with these debates by arguing that ‘that is the way things go, though, in fieldwork’ (p. 228), and mentioning that all too often ethnographers choose to plaster over these difficulties, while he has chosen not to. Readers with more enthusiastic convictions *vis-à-vis* activist anthropology than me, for or against, will enjoy the challenge of exploring the extent to which a fully edited ‘putting it out there’ amounts exactly to owning up to it, or even implies a somehow salutary honesty... in a discipline of its own kinds of truths, anyway. They will surely enjoy the healthy reminder that the gap between them is resolved through neither endless imperialist atonement nor cynicism.

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**Crehan, Kate. 2016. *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives*. Durham, London: Duke University Press. 240 pp. Pb.: \$23.95. ISBN: 9780822362395.**

This is Crehan's second book on Gramsci, and she is a known authority on this remarkable 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectual. The most positive aspect of her critical assessment of this rather difficult-to-understand author, especially for those reading him in English translation, is the lucidity of her text and her ability to make the reader understand even complex ideas in a direct fashion. In this book, Crehan takes up the concepts of common sense which is not really the English term *common sense* but *senso commune* (In Italian) which is the knowledge held by the masses that is incoherent and disjointed but nevertheless contains wisdom that needs to be made coherent by the intellectuals, who are a product of these very social relations that produce this knowledge. To Gramsci, the intellectual is not just a person with a mind but is a product of historical social relations, embedded in the social milieu and not to be understood apart from it. The contextualisation of knowledge in its material conditions is rooted in Gramsci's Marxist ideology but his understanding of the world is nuanced and more complex. Crehan takes up other readers of Gramsci's text, such as Gayatri Spivak and the subaltern school of South Asian scholars who have their own interpretation of Gramsci's concept of subaltern. We learn from Crehan that subaltern is not a class and not a literal translation of proletariat but a large and complex category, of the dominated and oppressed, where domination can take a myriad of forms including patriarchy, racism, and religious intolerance.

The book is divided into two sections; the first part deals with the major concepts of *Subaltern*, *Intellectuals*, *Common Sense*, and the *Knowledge* that is possessed by the subaltern, expressed primarily through folklore and popular culture. Crehan takes a critical look at the interpretations of other scholars, such as Hannah Arndt and Edward Said, giving her own commentary on how they understand concepts such as common sense (Arndt) and intellectuals (Said). Gramsci, did not conceptualise common sense as a quality possessed by ordinary people but actual knowledge born out of life experience that is fragmented and incoherent but has the potential for bringing about change. The organic intellectual, who is born out of the historical conditions producing this knowledge, can be recognised as such only in hindsight. At any historical moment, it is not possible to recognise what effect the intellectuals will have on history.

The second part of the book contains three case studies to illuminate in more coherent terms the author's interpretations in the first part: Adam Smith, the Scottish intellectual seen by many as the founder of modern economics, the Tea Party, and the Occupy Wall Street movements. Smith is taken as an example of an organic intellectual born at the historical moment of the replacement of feudal structures with capitalism and signifies the rise of the bourgeoisie. He can be identified as an organic intellectual only as his thoughts laid the foundation of a new mode of knowledge produced by the new social order based on capitalism.

The two other examples illustrate what is understood by common sense, in the sense given by Gramsci, as *senso commune*; the feelings and knowledge of the masses. Thus, Crehan shows in a very interesting way that both movements, in spite of their overt

ideological differences, were supported by the masses through their life conditions of inequality and growing deprivation; the difference being the way they had interpreted the cause of their deprivation. The Tea Party created a deliberate distortion led by powerful people, while the Occupy movement could be seen as a truly spontaneous movement of the masses, where the subaltern were provided with a crux namely the 99% to represent a wide range of deprivation. The masses who followed the Tea Party were deluded into believing that they were supporting a new order that would tackle the problems of poverty through a liberal economy and, as the author points out, they were driven by feelings and not any rationale. In this sense, they were not much different from the masses of the Occupy movement who too were demonstrating against inequality, except here they blamed the rich and not the state.

This is an important book for all who are attempting to understand inequality as a social phenomenon, giving primacy to the material conditions of existence interpreted not merely as the economy but as the broader social reality in general with its ideology and values.

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**Björkman, Lisa. 2015. *Pipe politics, contested waters: Embedded Infrastructures of Millennial Mumbai*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 281pp. Pb.: \$25.95. ISBN: 9780822359692.**

Over the last decade and a half, water has become a rather popular topic in anthropology and in other social sciences. It is a subject that lends itself to study and interpretation from all kinds of angles. Like food, for example, water does not just have to be a topic of research but can be a means to studying human relations surrounding its use: from the poetic, symbolic meanings of water, the human animal relations in sharing a scarce natural resource, to translational politics and conflicts, including very violent ones. In the case of Björkman's fascinating monograph, it is the everyday politics of providing and managing drinking water as a scarce resource within a complex context that are today's millennial cities, such as Mumbai, India, that are at the centre of attention.

This book is a result of the author's doctoral fieldwork in Mumbai in 2008. We learn that Björkman spent much of her research in the company of the employees of the Department of Hydraulic Engineering, which is part of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai. She accompanied them when they visited their work sites in the city's neighbourhoods, but mostly focusing on Mumbai's M-East Ward area. Through the visits in the neighbourhood, she encounters users whose everyday lives depend on the unpredictability of the local water supply and on local brokers who capitalise on the fact that they possess the sought-after currency of knowledge about the ways of local water supply, or are at least successful in making others believe that they possess this most valued knowledge. In the final chapter, she delves into city politics and the ways that local politicians take advantage of the difficulties in the local water supply to make, what are, most likely, idle promises about improving the situation, if elected to public office.

While water is the fascinating underlining topic, the *leitmotiv* of the monograph, the value of the book lies in all the other issues that come up, when the author is trying to understand the mysterious, unchartered territories of Mumbai's piped water ways. As she writes in the Introduction, '[w]ater is a medium with which to explore material and symbolic dimensions of political contestation at the intersection of large-scale infrastructural dynamics (flows of finance, technological expertise, global management discourses) and intimate forms of knowledge, power and authority' (p. 14).

One recurring and somewhat nagging thought I had while reading the book was that a Western observer, even a researcher who is trying to be as non-biased and as open to the ways of the culture and society she is studying, holds certain ideas and expectations regarding the existence of an explicable logic to something as embedded in the Western idea of modernity as a piped water system. Despite the mess on the ground, the thousands of "spaghetti pipes" that no one seems to have a map for, there must've once existed a plan, there must exist an "original plan/map", there must be a system to this madness, but the more the book evolves, the more Björkman asks, the clearer it is that there is not and maybe never has been such a plan. As a reader of similarly Western persuasions, I was hoping that Björkman would perhaps create a map of her own, a wonderful, magical explanation for the mess on the ground, but she does not. She mentions that individual engineers working

at the Department of Hydraulics built/drew their own maps (possibly mental ones) about the pipes and links within their districts and kept them close to their heart, as if they were playing in a high-stakes poker game. Björkman mentions that an engineer approached her to meet outside work to share the wealth of information they both possessed but she declined the offer. She then goes on to write about *Knowledge beyond maps* and discusses how knowledge about water distribution systems can be produced in the absence of any official or private maps (p. 138) and then on page 153 provides a figure of a connection map that she drew based on interview and observations, but I found the map to be unclear and not very informative. I found many of the illustrations/figures in the book to be less than useful and kept hoping for more.

That notwithstanding, I found *Pipe Politics, Contested Waters* to be a really well written book that will be of interest not only to scholars of all things water, but especially to those interested in urban governance, everyday politics of infrastructure, science and technology studies, institutional analysis, everyday politics, and urban studies in India and beyond.

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**Walasek, Helen, Richard Charlton, Amra Hadžimuhamedović, Valery Perry, and Tina Wik (2015). *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge. 430 pp. Hb.: \$115.43/£90 ISBN: 978-1-4094-3623-2.**

This monumental multi-authored publication brings a historical overview of the destruction and (re)construction of the religious and cultural heritage of Bosnia (and Herzegovina) after the war there (1992-1995). This very simplifying and summarising sentence does not begin to outline the content of this detailed in-depth analysis of mostly problems and processes of the restoration of tangible heritage in different parts and regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I have defined it as monumental since it brings so much data, information, documents, thick descriptions of particular cases of that destruction and restoration of monuments, its packed with facts that even a well-informed participants and researcher of Bosnia and Herzegovina will have problems following the story. However, this is surely the most valuable contribution of the volume. Everyone interested in the effects of the war on Bosnia and Herzegovinian cultural and religious heritage, but also communities whose heritage it was and is, will find almost all data necessary not just to begin the research but to start the interpretation and analysis of the location: from the personal experiences of the authors, all of them heavily involved in the process of the restoration and conservation of the monuments, through information on the local pre-war, war, and post-war situation, newspaper articles, scientific papers and original documents from different judicial processes. I do not think that, so far, anyone has documented on this level the destruction and the restoration of Bosnia and Herzegovinian heritage. As I have already mentioned, the authors of particular chapters, Helen Walasek, Richard Charlton, Valery Perry, Amra Hadžimuhamedović, and Tina Wik, are all well-informed experts on Bosnia and Herzegovinian heritage. They have conducted field trips making the first extensive assessment of the destroyed monuments across Bosnia and Herzegovina, they were personally involved in restoration, some even have personal family ties with locations that were destroyed and restored.

It would be too complex to summarise the chapters of the volume. The chapters are not conceptualised as scientific papers with some hypothesis and specific conclusions; they are more or less overviews of the events that resulted in the destruction of a particular monument, the post-war struggle for its restoration, informing us at the end of the success or failure of their effort. I think it will be enough to briefly contextualise the content of the volume. Although it is an integrated volume, I would personally divide it into two parts. The first part is giving us a historical input into the war, the destruction of the monuments, and how the post-conflict protection and restoration of the heritage was framed by the Dayton Peace Accord. In the second half of the volume, the emphasis is on post-war restoration, reconstruction and the role of the destruction and the restoration of religious and cultural heritage had on justice, human rights, and how it impacts local communities. The focus is on 'iconic sites' that are usually promoted as 'powerful symbols' of Bosnia's 'multiculturalism and diversity', 'historic tolerance', and 'religious pluralism that should have acted as a 'vehicle for reconciliations' (p. 209). These sites, in this volume, are: the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ferhadija and Aladža Mosques in Banja Luka and Foča; the 17<sup>th</sup> century Serbian Orthodox Monastery at Žitomislić, the small town of Počitelj with its exceptional

ensemble of Ottoman architecture; 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Old Bridge at Mostar, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Austro-Hungarian National Library in Sarajevo, the Ottoman architectural heritage in the city of Stolac, and others.

From these sentences that briefly outline the content of the volume, the careful reader could have noticed some of the weaknesses of it, at least from my reading. To label something as “iconic”, a “symbol of multiculturalism, diversity, tolerance, and pluralism” and then focus and list monuments that are mostly connected to Islam and Ottoman heritage with the exception of a few Orthodox monasteries and churches, some Austrian-Hungarian architecture, sporadically mentioned Catholic churches and monasteries, and all of this in a volume that problematise the destruction of cultural and religious heritage in contemporary more or less war-torn and divided country is problematic.

Everyone that is at least partially familiarised with Bosnia and Herzegovina’s historical background and contemporary situation knows how complex this country is, and how impossible, and even dangerous it is to generalise and take partial cases on which you build sentences about the country and the entire nations and religions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. First, but not the most important, what is heritage? This review is no place for questioning the concept of heritage but the volume that discusses the destruction of the heritage, and in such a problematic context, should have considered this question. Whose heritage? When has something become heritage? And if it is the heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina, why have people of this country destroyed their heritage? Can we even talk about Bosnia and Herzegovina’s heritage? Almost all the authors are foreign experts that had an important role in the post-war restoration of the heritage. I realise that in that period it was not the time for questions but to save as much as can be saved, but decades later, writing a volume on your actions, gives a good opportunity to think about your personal role and the roles of other experts involved, and to contemplate your decisions in choosing which heritage is heritage, and which heritage should be saved and restored, and which should not. Bosnia and Herzegovina’s heritage demands better contextualisation, not just of the last war (1992-1995) but much broader historical contextualisation. Although from this volume we learn that the idea behind most of the restorations of the heritage monuments in after war Bosnia and Herzegovina was to work on reconciliation, the fact is that heritage does not serve this function; quite opposite, heritage is there to mark the place and landscape, to present someone’s culture, identity, history, presence – value of the heritage is not self-given, the value is in the eye of the observer.

Like most of the authors dealing with Bosnia and Herzegovina, the term “ethnic cleansing” is again overused in this volume. We should be very careful when and in what context we use this term. It is easy to use it, but it has serious implications, especially when it is being used by experts writing to other experts.

Although in the introductory chapter, the history of the war is presented in a rarely seen objective, realistic and factually based overview, it nevertheless, brings us to dangerously oversimplifying things and to the generalisation of very complex situations that depended on local or at a most regional context. Bosnia and Herzegovina and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a mosaic of events, the same as Bosnian and Herzegovinian cultural and religious heritage. There cannot be general statements and conclusions. The

circumstances, the development of the war, war crimes, the destruction of cultural and religious heritage does not fit into one framework; they are a result of local and regional contexts. It is not the same if we discuss the events in Herzegovina or the Central Bosnia region, the Bosanska Posavina Region, or in the territory of today's Republic of Srpska. People researching, studying, and writing about Bosnia and Herzegovina have to be aware of this fact.

This volume presents many facts and data, but I think it should not be taken for granted but it should be used as a good starting point for opening discussions on destruction, reconstructions, and the usage of the heritage in general in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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