

BOOK REVIEWS

Barua, M. 2023. *Lively Cities: Reconfiguring Urban Ecology*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

In *Lively Cities*, Maan Barua explores how Delhi and London, two global cities, not only share common colonial/postcolonial historical and contemporary relationships, but are also enlivened by “other-than-humans” like, respectively, rhesus macaques and cattle, and parakeets. Taking a point of departure from contemporary social and political theories that have shaped urban studies — posthumanism, critical political economy, postcolonial theory — Barua develops an eclectic conceptual framework, the “urban in minor key”, to make sense of a diverse range of archival and ethnographic materials that deal with how the lives of humans and other-than-humans intersect in, and indeed (re)make, cities.

In the introductory chapter, Barua sets off this ambitious and enviable task, what he calls formulating “a different grammar of the urban” (p. 3). Crucial in this formulation is an integrated way to thinking about cities and the urban — what is referred to as “urbanicity”. In this way, *Lively Cities* is a work of urban theory, particularly, of urban ontology; it is diagnostic in the sense that it furthers conceptual and methodological ways of considering how “other-than-humans” are a vital part of the infrastructures and metabolic flows that make up urbanicity, and this opens up new political possibilities. Another key intervention further underlines this text, what Barua calls “the urban in minor key”, a metaphor derived from music and linguistics (pp. 14–15). The “major key”, Barua

suggests, signifies the urban as a planned and rational category, and also speaks to the orthodoxies of social and political theory. In contrast, the urban in minor key (or political economy, for instance), refers to the “cramped” and “crowded” nature of urban studies itself (p. 16). The notion of liveliness, in turn, suggests a “wider ontology” of the urban, which focuses on registers of city-making, micropolitics, and the molecular (pp. 20–21).

Alongside the introduction and conclusion, *Lively Cities* is divided into six chapters, all of which draw on a rich and diverse source of materials, from ethnographic observations and archival research to scholarly discussions and media accounts and reports.

The first two chapters are devoted to the rhesus macaque and/in Delhi. Chapter 1, titled “A Minor Ecology of Infrastructure”, asks what it means to “ecologize infrastructure” by looking at the relationships between Delhi’s inhabitants, its rhesus macaques, and basic infrastructural services (or staples) like electricity and water (pp. 26–27). Chapter 2, “The Politics of Commensality”, further explores this lively ethnographic field by “rethink[ing] how the lived city is experienced and inhabited in excess of anthropocentric sensibilities”, as well as “how the state aims to govern other-than-human life” (p. 69). Both chapters consist of evocative ethnographic descriptions of macaques’ everyday lives as they traverse Delhi’s arboreal terrain of powerlines and built structures, as well as how a host of human interventions emerge around them — from devotees of Hanuman and street vendors who engage in pious and

economic relations with the macaques, to civic bureaucrats and precarious workers, like *katiyabaaz* (electricity grafters) and *langur* (Colobine monkeys) wranglers who work in a liminal economy between legal and illicit. These chapters also deploy a host of theoretical lenses like “meshwork” and “commensality”, which respectively refer to the infra-political and social relations between human and other-than-humans.

In Chapters 3 and 4, Barua turns his attention to the theme of “ferality” which characterises public and (bio)political reactions to parakeets in London. As with the first two chapters, these chapters also weave together ethnographic and archival materials, which trace the colonial and postcolonial trans-territorial flow of parakeets — termed “other-than-human migrants” (p. 149) — between South Asia and the United Kingdom. By looking at how parakeets are termed “feral”, these chapters also underscore the underlying racial logics and anxieties over migration, particularly through notions like “biotic nativism” and cosmopolitanism (p. 115). Chapter 3, “Lively Capital and Recombinant Urbanisms”, looks at how parakeets’ “reproductive and metabolic work” is vital in the reproduction of lively capital through transnational flows and breeding (p. 119). The chapter also explores how parakeets affect the nature of London’s parks and gardens, where the birds’ affective actions constitute a sort of “recombinant urbanism” that emerges through new patterns of dwelling and local ecological changes among avifauna (pp. 138–142). Chapter 4, titled “The Micropolitics of Fertility”, explores the themes of hospitality, biopolitics and world making, further underscoring the

racializing discourses around migration and ferality, where parakeets effectively “migrantise” cities like London in a postcolonial vein (p. 190).

In Chapters 5 and 6 we return to Delhi once again, this time looking at cattle as an agrarian and urban question (p. 194). In Chapter 5, “Pastoral Formations”, Barua troubles the conclusions drawn by planetary urbanism, particularly between rigid boundaries between the urban and the agrarian, by building on the idea of a “pastoral ethos of the city”, especially as bovine animals’ habitation and mobilities also shape urban spaces, while also reassessing questions of capital (p. 195). This chapter then uses the notion of “patchwork” to “understand how the pastoral is immanent to the urban” (p. 227), thus opening up new questions regarding urban inhabitation, dwelling, and more than human collectives. Chapter 6, titled “Surplus Ecologies”, follows Delhi’s urban dairies through the lens of “molecular economies”, which are expressed as iterations of the ecological economy, escaping capital, and relations between bodies (p. 239). Barua then looks at how metabolic activities of cattle — such as waste — become conduits in a “minor circuit of value that exceeds the purpose of capitalist accumulation (p. 260). This chapter then critiques the “apolitical ecology of exposure” around plastic pollution, which emerges as “new ecologies of bodily harm” (p. 266).

The book’s conclusions reiterate some of the crucial points of departure that the text marks from contemporary theories of the urban. In doing so, Barua underscores how these previous theories of the urban operate in a “major key”. By contrast, Barua argues that

engendering theories in a “minor key”, as well as developing a “wider ontology of the urban”, is crucial for attending to the molecular and micropolitical relationships between humans and other-than-humans. “What is needed”, he writes, “is an acceptance of other-than-human life as a vital element of urbanicity rather than effacing it or subjecting it to punitive action” (p. 287).

In my view, *Lively Cities* is an ambitious, provocative and productive response to the strands of social theory that inform contemporary urban studies, like critical political economy, posthumanism, and postcolonial theory. Indeed, I believe this book speaks to particular dilemmas or impasses that I have encountered in my own research on Mumbai’s urban infrastructures, where I identified precisely the limits that Barua effectively critiques and builds on. Barua’s evocative ethnographic descriptions of other-than-humans, as well as his lively reading of archival materials and scientific literature, is also an impressive contribution to the field of urban studies—indeed, one could effectively adopt this approach to think and write about how cities like Mumbai, Istanbul and New York, for instance, are shaped by “feral” species like street dogs, cats, and rats, respectively.

That said, despite my admiration for how Barua deftly weaves together diverse theoretical strands and traditions to develop a minor grammar of the urban, *Lively Cities* is a very demanding text. In part, a particular challenge this book poses is the sheer number of terms that Barua fashions, most of which I could not accommodate in this review (onto-cartographies, ethology, ecumene, striation, divergence, comparison,

etc.). I can also imagine that readers without working proficiencies in some, if not all, of the theoretical fields cited in the text would not gain quite as much as those who possess more familiarity with these debates. On a different note, while I also appreciated the nuanced discussions and insights Barua brings to bear on contentious issues in contemporary India, particularly how Hindu religiosity around monkeys and cattle are mobilised in acts of violence against Muslims and Dalits, I was not quite convinced by Barua’s assertion that this book developed political possibilities. The problematisation of caste, for instance, left more to be desired, especially when it came to interrogating the continuum between the urban and agrarian questions, as well as when dealing with politically-charged questions of waste. In raising these questions, however, I am motivated more by a sense of curiosity than critique: In what ways can a minor grammar of the urban look at anti-caste politics — and, to an extent, indigeneity and Adivasi cosmopolitics — as a sort of liveliness that already configures an engagement a host of other-than-humans in a micropolitical and metabolic vein? These questions aside, I have no doubt that *Lively Cities* would be an invaluable and impressive resource for scholars engaged in researching cities and the urban, especially those with a keen interest in following more-than-human flows, rhythms, and politics.

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Bratchford, G. and Zuev, D. (eds). 2023. *Vision & Verticality: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Interest in and the application of visual approaches for the study of a multitude of subjects in the social sciences has been growing more rapidly in recent years. When I started my association with social scientists of the visual kind in the 1997 (Krase 1997), Visual Sociology, was placed well beyond the pale of normal professional practice and practitioners had to justify the use of images as sociological data. However, it was grudgingly acceptable to use images to “illustrate” research findings gathered from other forms of “normal” research practices such as survey and demographic studies.

Over the years, Gary Blatchford and Dennis Zuev have evolved from young and energetic pioneers in the field of visual studies to being mature leaders and innovators in developing their own as well as searching for unique approaches of others. They have successfully presented these valuable contributions to scholarly multidisciplinary audiences in a variety of textual and visual formats. *Vision & Verticality* is a recent entry in the Palgrave MacMillan Social Visualities Series which they coedit, and which has received high praise by leaders in the field such as Douglas Harper. As noted by the editors, this volume emerged from an edited issue of the journal *Visual Studies* “Aerial Visibilities: Towards a Visual Sociology of the Sky” (2020). It must also be noted here that *Visual Studies* is the leading journal in visual sociology and is produced by the International Visual Sociology Association in which the editors have had long and fruitful scholarly relations.

This Palgrave MacMillan book series is affiliated with the International Sociological Association’s Research Committee 57 which examines the role and function of images, objects and/or performances within society and/or in particular cultures or communities.

In this book, the editors have as their goal bring the practice of vertical and aerial analysis into sociological discourse through a broad range of interdisciplinary perspectives such as cultural theory and urban geography. They have accomplished this by carefully selecting and editing contributions from astronauts, artists, architects, sociologists, urbanists, visual culture theorists, geographers, anthropologists and others in the humanities. By employing socio-visual thinking, *Vision and Verticality* attempts to convince social scientists closer to a sociology of or through images towards a sociology *with* images well beyond the beyond the *au courant* practice of using drones for aerial research. The book contains a wide variety of topics such as urban spaces, travel, leisure, politics, and environmental challenges. While it is impossible to do justice to each of the seventeen chapters in this brief review, I believe listing a few titles here might suffice to get a sense of the eclectic range. These were the most challenging for me: “Of Carnal Gravity: A Three-Voice Conversation”; “The Algorithmic Apparatus of Neocolonialism”, and “Elemental Monsters”. These sound more conventional but are equally engaging when seen from above: “Viewing from Where? Satellite Imaging and the Politics of Space Technology”; “Mapping Cultural Landscapes, Vertically”, and “Revitalization and Touristification”.

While I found the book to be excellent in its coverage of many fields, I was surprised that the work of one of my favourite scholars, Jean Baudrillard, could not find a worthy place in the otherwise excellent volume. Many of the contributions were well outside my normal practice but a few such as "Mapping Cultural Landscapes, Vertically," were especially pertinent and will be referenced in my future work. In other reviews of Gary Bratchford and Dennis Zuev's *Vision & Verticality: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, I have seen the use of words that are unusual for social such as "dizzying", "brilliant", "eclectic", "enthraling", "soaring", and "groundbreaking". To these I would add my more pragmatic praise as "useful" and enlightening.

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Caldararo, N. 2019. *An Ethnography of the Goodman Building: The Longest Rent Strike*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Best read with the aroma of petunia competing for the senses with the riffs of Jefferson Airplane, this paean to San Francisco (SF) and the 1970s counter-culture

is a lovingly told Proustian bailing out all things remembered. Essentially a story of an idealistic world of, in the author's words, "an organic self-determination in co-living", the book is a biography of the Goodman Building of Downtown SF, alongside the created community within and its ever-evolving environment. Described by his university (San Francisco State) as a "veteran anthropologist", Caldararo entered the building in the early 1970s, invited by the tenants to be their *de facto* anthropologist-in-residence to assist in and record their rent strike. He stayed for a decade wherein he lived, laughed, learned and loved with the plethora of co-residents who passed through this fascinating structure. The book reflects an extended anthropological field study produced through participant observation, the copious field notes of which were given to some research respondents for verification. Some co-habitants also provide accounts of their time and place in the building.

The Goodman Building was constructed in 1869 to accommodate the swell of people attracted to San Francisco by the California Gold Rush. The voyages of the European powers brought waves of migrants who, combined with waves of internal migrants similarly seeking the good life, trampled on the rights of the pre-existing Native Americans. Sailors, migrants from South and East Asia, and working-class immigrants chasing the Gold Rush lived alongside one another in the city's South of Market neighbourhood, and the Goodman Building provided for the various newly arrived. Purchased by the Goodman family at the turn of the 20th century, the building continued to be a place for newcomers to San

Francisco, offering single room occupancy for workers attracted to the ever-growing city. Post-World War 2, it housed former GIs and was favoured by artists attempting to celebrate the “live-work movement”. By the time of Caldararo’s research, the building consisted of four storeys and 30 rooms hosting an uneasy combination of artists, Buddhist practitioners and Neo-Dadaists, and non-artists. One resident cracked safes, some were crackpots. Monies were embezzled. Childcare was an issue for some. The “check to check urban singles” and various waifs attracted to the perceived nirvana of SF were not as idealistic as some of the hippies wanted them to be.

Beyond the Goodman Building’s eclectic inhabitants, the specific focus of much of the text is on the decade-long rent strike. The 70 or so tenants in what one resident described as an “urban space probe” evidenced no end of tensions which the rent strike brought to the fore. One significant point of tension was about residential status; there were members and residents. In what was a community of activists celebrating a form of cooperative living and voluntary association, the idealism (and the strike action) revealed acts of collusion, treachery and inappropriateness. The Hippie movement was integral to the thinking and, with it, a gender imbalance and ethnic absences. The contradictory and the ideal are presented, as are the ideal and the real. It is a sketch of the flavour of the time. The text is a time-piece wherein thick description presents other attempted ways of being, notably the in-house “university” classes the residents provided in anthropology, drama and political science.

The place also attracted curious locals and visitors from across the USA.

The Goodman Group emerged in an attempt to make sense of the place and implemented the Monday Night Meeting (MNM). Here, tenants tried to agree how to live and how to resist the Municipal government’s plans to evict them and turn the building into something corporate (so as to fit in with the wider neighbourhood). Communal living cannot be conducted on a do-as-you-please ethos. Such living needed structures, and these were implemented by the positions of President, Vice-president and a Board. Not all had the revolutionary consciousness sought by the hippie counter-culture movement; some were considered counter-revolutionary and some men exploited women. The intellectuals vied for co-existence with those who did not pay rent on time. The MNM chapter explains how a weekly congress acted as both a legislature for shared living and a theatre of personalities wherein resolutions were attempted and emotions managed - not always successfully. The MNM attempted to provide some order to the experimental chaos. The intractable and timeless issues of communal living — dirty dishes in the sink, neglected communal areas, garbage being someone else’s problem, fraught regulation of those who enter, and those who sign up to the project but do not pull their weight in delivering it — are all presented to remind us that Sartre had a point when explaining that Hell is other people.

The book is also implicitly about city (San Francisco) governance. It reflects on variously: ways of being, migratory flows, living with scarcity, understanding affordability, accepting transformation, how

temporary living arrangements can be and how homelessness and the un-housed live. Essentially it is a study of economic survival tactics, transitory platforms and the negotiated identities that built environments can offer. It is also about how people organise their living space. The book informs the curious as to the tension between old and new tenants, the foundations and fissures of a created community and the production of the Other.

The way of being pursued perhaps best described as “direct democracy” required in some the fetishization of consensus. Did this pursuit permit too much voice to personal concerns over efficient building management? The strike ended in 1982 and eviction the following year without violence. For a while, the strike led by the Goodman Project personnel attracted celebrities and activists of various causes; notably, those interested in art, architecture and people. Others were no doubt fascinated by the experiment in ways of sharing and acting. Who visited? In the words of one former resident, “lawyers and community organisers, real and faux-celebrities, shipping tycoons and citizens” (p. 202). Privacy was not guaranteed. Arguments were audible as was sexual congress. The author, however, could find beauty in all of this, lauding: “...the wisps of movement and scents of past experiences created dimension of dreams within a sleepy reality...” (p. 190). This reality was sold to a property developer in 1982, and so the “slum clearance” pursued by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency was accomplished by pricing out those described as “working people” whose presence held back the corporate image of the district. Some 30 % of

the Goodman tenants bought into the renovated block. Disputes ensued amongst various housing groups as to who should be prioritised in allocation.

Who would purchase and read this vast tome? Chapter 1 is a brilliant literature review for anyone interested in urban anthropology. But for this reader the text is far too long. The 345 pages could be reduced by a third. The 30-page appendices are not needed. A glossary is, however, and chapter sub-headings would help enormously. Some chapters consist of just 2 and 3 pages, while others number over 50. A reader is left pondering a few issues. Is atomisation of the people a conscious political project? At the more anthropological level, a reader would have liked to know not only who *was* in the building at the time but who the main protagonist and actors *were*; i.e. where did they arrive to the Goodman from, and was theirs a youthful idealism safe in the knowledge that elsewhere in the US their inheritance was guaranteed and the family home big enough to take them in if all else failed? We are left to consider whether the pursuit of community living relies on a charismatic leader or rule-oriented entities for its success. What had the experiment in living that the Goodman Building hosted produced? Towards the end of the book, the author provides an answer: “We had engaged the world and brought a measure of holistic ordering into a corner of mechanised waste and chaos. And along the way, reintroduced a dialectical tension between the poles of vision and matter; takes a step toward deconstructing the divide put up by Descartes and company and done it on the home planet, not outer space” (p. 284). Right. Or maybe

Mary Douglas (1991) put it simpler when stating that a home is not just a house or a shelter but people and experiences. The author ends the book stating a “community was lost”. It no doubt was, but that asks us to consider whether all constructs of community have a lifespan and why that is so.

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Karner, T. X. 2023. *Making a Scene! How Visionary Individuals Created an International Photography Scene in Houston, Texas*. Amsterdam: Schilt Publishing.

Making a Scene! is a well written and carefully researched multimodal ethnography of how a collection of dedicated, talented, and art savvy individuals were able to create an internationally recognized art world centred around photography in what some might think was an unlikely place. In her selectively illustrated book, Tracy Xavia Karner weaves together the many varied efforts from more and less well-known local artists through philanthropists to describe how, they individually and collectively, managed to create a Southern USA Mecca of international photography.

During the course of her almost a decade long study, Karner conducted 46 in-depth interviews which provided most of the rich core of materials for the book. The main characters in the detailed story begin with Houston’s Museum of Fine Arts Director

Bill Agee’s early dream of a photography department, and from which a vibrant and engaged photography scene emerged and developed. Anne Tucker, also at the *Museum of Fine Arts* in Houston, and local photographers who created *Houston Center for Photography* were also central to the effort. Wendy Watriss, Fred Baldwin, and Petra Benteler, who inaugurated the first international photography festival in the United States — *FotoFest* — were key players in the successful effort.

The narrative form of Karner’s writing style also was a pleasant surprise as the inviting text was very easy and enjoyable to read. The following is example:

“The Gus and Lyndall Wortham Curator of Photography, Anne Wilkes Tucker, sat alone in her office surrounded by boxes waiting to be filled. How to sort a life into boxes? Could cardboard hold years of ideas, friendships, and memories? Somehow, she had to fit 39 years of her life into these containers. Some things would go to the museum archives, but much more would be leaving with her. Anne had spent more than half her life leading the Photography Department at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and though somewhat wistful, she decided now was the time to close that chapter in her life. [...] The clear June evening sky bestowed a golden hue to the trees outside Anne’s office window, and most everyone else had already gone home for the day. Anne loved being in the museum at night and taking advantage of her access, after all the visitors had gone, to go up to the third floor. To be alone in the John A. and Audrey Jones Beck Collection, Anne says,

‘was one of my favorite privileges of working at the museum’.” (p. 16)

During the course of my reading, I was quite amused as I came across a reference to the “Texas Medici”. The exalted title was given to John and Dominique de Menil. The De Menils were members of the European elite and refugees from France during the Second World War. Over the decades since their coming to Houston, which in the 1950s was described as a “cultural desert”, the De Menils became major benefactors of Houston’s arts, media, and other cultural institutions. It should be noted in this regard that Houston’s internationally recognized music scene had existed long before its celebrated pictorial art scene.

Karner frames her scenic approach early in the text, noting that “Everyone wants to find their scene. It’s the social space where you feel comfortable, meet, like-minded, souls, and participate in activities that are important and meaningful to you.” (p. 10) and “Scenes our place based. They claim a location where interested people can find and join in the shared activities. Houston, and entrepreneurial city, is receptive to innovative ideas that showcase the city. It is also a place that pulls people from all over, and this was especially true during the economic boomtime of the 1970s, when this story begins.” (p. 11). “Scenes” can be fruitful rubrics for urban ethnographers like me. I seldom use the term even though it was coined by my New York University doctoral dissertation advisor Alan Blum in his book *The Imaginative Structure of the City* (Blum 2003). Blum’s idea about cultural attractions for urban development was later elaborated upon by Daniel Aaron Silver and Terry

Nichols Clark in “Theory of Scenes” (Silver and Clark 2016: 29–69). For them, art scenes are one of their most meaningful categories for “Cool cosmopolitanism” which “[...] should appeal more to higher educated, upscale audiences and migrants, DINKs and singles, 20–40-year-olds.” (ibid: 38).

Making a Scene! is an unusually fascinating study by a well-known qualitative researcher and visual sociologist. Having known Tracy Xavier Karner and her excellent work over several decades, I expected an entirely different book, but was pleased to discover in its reading that “visual” sociology goes well beyond the usual collection and analysis of visual data. Having photographed in Houston, with special attention to the gentrification of its historical African American sections such as Freedmen’s Town on two occasions (2002 and 2019), I had hoped for the inclusion of more images of its fascinatingly varied urban spaces. Despite, my minor disappointment, Karner’s detailed exposition is an excellent multimodal ethnographic model, that includes archival as well as interviews and observational research, for the close-up study of a wide range of urban arts phenomena.

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Pardo, I. and Prato, G. B. (eds.). 2023. *The Legitimacy of Healthcare and Public Health: Anthropological Perspectives*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

“We are all in the same boat”, the often-repeated reassurance was perhaps one of the biggest lies perpetuated during the Covid pandemic that originated towards the end of 2019 and continued in milder and different forms well into 2023.

The pandemic did not create inequalities in the access to healthcare; rather, it exposed the already existing rigid hierarchies that exist globally and across countries. This leads to the point that health is not only a biological aspect, nor is healthcare simply a system that can be accessed when sought after. The understanding of health and the existence of healthcare are created in a social context and contribute to weaving the social fabric of which they are a part. This social context becomes important to study if we are to understand the nature of healthcare vis-à-vis the multitude of health ailments that we face today. Pardo and Prato’s edited volume brings together essays that portray the complex nature of the social in the understanding of healthcare and the issue of health more broadly. Reflecting that complexity, this edited work highlights two fundamental, inter-related social aspects of healthcare — governance and violence — within the over-arching theme of legitimacy. It is a timely intervention that shows why social anthropologists must study health.

There are fifteen essays in the book, including the introductory chapter which lays out the blurred nature of legitimacy. Where does the legitimate end and the

illegitimate start? Do rules always define what is right and what is wrong? The chapters in the book do not try to answer these questions, but rather reflect on a wide range of issues from across the world to show that a multitude of possibilities exist. At the same time, the book shows that perhaps there is not much of a difference across geographically distant countries when it comes to healthcare! Who has access to healthcare? What determines this? What do world leaders do to showcase their efficiency and where do they lag behind?

The essays by Prato, Pardo, Mitra Channa, Koenig and Diarra, Arnold, and Rogers foreground this complexity through their studies in the U.K., Italy, Mali, and the U.S.A. Prato, in her comparative study of the public healthcare systems in the U.K. and Italy, brings out how privatization of a basic necessity such as healthcare can create hierarchies in a supposedly State-funded service, while Pardo’s study emphasises how privatization coupled with corruption can cripple healthcare systems, making the citizens suffer. Koenig and Diarra echo the same dynamics in their study of healthcare in Manantali, Mali, while both Arnold’s and Rogers’ essays offer critical lenses to understand how the same healthcare system can have different effects on patients of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, thereby furthering an already hierarchical society.

Kaalyap Jurich’s and Mitra Channa’s works on Turkey and India respectively question the elected representatives and their actions in the face of the pandemic. While Kaalyap Jurich’s work lays bare how the State can construct “legal” and “acceptable”

treatment through the authority it holds, Mitra Channa's work talks about how the workings of charismatic leadership can relegate the exigencies of the pandemic to the background.

The chapters by Olson, Sarfati and Varelaki go beyond the issues of privatization and leaderships' antics to point at the epistemological question of what is medicine or who can prescribe medicine, and how does alternative medicine gain legitimacy, if at all? These chapters on Mexico, South Korea, Israel and Greece — also complemented by Prato's study on the U.K. — bring anthropological nuance to the complex existence, practice and acceptance of medical pluralism in contemporary societies. Just as the above works question the notion of a singular system of medicine, Spyridakis' work on disabled people's access to jobs in Greece interrogates the perceptions that people and laws have towards disability. The assumption that only "able-bodied" individuals are productive and any sort of physical disability mars people's efficiency and capability creates exclusion on the basis of assumptions. Thus, any kind of affirmative action for inclusivity is seen through the lens of favour or pity rather than as a matter of legitimate right.

The following chapters by Mollica on Lebanon and Armstrong and Rosbrook-Thompson's on the U.K. analyse the legitimacy of public health in contexts which are routinely affected by violence. The question of legitimacy becomes significant because there is a difference between the macro picture as constructed by those in power and on-the-ground realities of social locations as experienced by people in the

local contexts. Thus, the authors' bottom-up approach to understanding these complexities deconstructs the pervasive legal narratives.

The book finally comes a full circle with Nugent's concluding essay on the question of healing. Nugent focusses on Peru in the context of terrorist resurgence to address the above issue. However, his essay nudges us to look through the imminent issues in societies and come to understand how people's everyday lives go on in the face of diseases, pandemics, joblessness and terrorism. But is there a clear starting and an ending point of the pain and the sorrow? Nugent's essay shows otherwise.

The book brings out intersectionality lucidly through the collection of essays — most evidently in its analyses of class, race, region, migrant status. All the chapters are inter-connected organically which also explains why the editors have not narrowed down the essays by putting them into sub-themes. However, one does find analysis of gendered realities of access to healthcare unaccounted for. Nevertheless, the work remains an important contribution for the anthropological study of healthcare and legitimacy as well as for the detailed sections on research methodology which can be useful for students pursuing social sciences at an advanced level.

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