G. Doherty. *Paradoxes of Green: Landscapes of a City-Scape*. Oakland: University of California Press 2017. ISBN 9780520285019. xii +153 pages, notes, glossary, index.

Between 1950 and 1951, as he was dying, Wittgenstein (1979) sought to create a “logic of colour” (§4), invoking psychology and physics to explain why yellowish-blues or bright blacks were impossible. For Wittgenstein, a melody, like a colour, could not be inherently sad; nor could a composer convey her/his ideas directly to every listener; nor could a listener construct whatever they wished from the arranged notes. Melodies and colours have characters contingent on the metrics and histories present in a circumstance, and the circumstances’ capacities are distributed along the history of listeners, composers, and place. A colour, similarly, derives its meaning by both not being another colour and, through the history and meaning instilled into it, the particular effects it impels. It is through this mode of apprehending colour that Gareth Doherty reflects upon the colour green and its role in the creation of sustainable cities.

Describing the way in which environmentalist agitation for phasing out fossil fuels portends the expiry of profit and *stimulates* appropriation of natural resources, Sinn’s (2008) “green paradox” highlights the way sustainability rhetoric can contribute to the conditions it attempts to eradicate. Doherty’s short book *Paradoxes of Green* identifies such a process in the island city-state of Bahrain, where, he argues, “[t]o have and to be green is often presented as a moral imperative, yet the provision of urban greenery can be morally questionable” (p.1); the drive to render ‘green’ this arid region requires water and infrastructure at odds with its intention. This produces the paradoxical state of affairs in which, although ringing with an environmentalist tenor, “greenery... is an indicator of human settlement[t], not relief from” it (p.77). The fact that urbanisation and greenery require similar material, resources, and infrastructure is the basis of Doherty’s argument, and through a loosely organised series of vignettes, he reflects upon these shades of green and their intersection with water, the desert, Islam, development, and nostalgic conceptions of Bahrain.

Following the colour artist Josef Albers (2006, p.1), who suggests that “[i]n order to use colour effectively, it is necessary to recognise that colour deceives us continually,” Doherty identifies multiple instances in which a shade of green has undertones of another colour. In chapter 2, he explores the way in which the green of development in Bahrain is made possible through the use of blue. The rapid development of Bahrain, where the population has increased from 163,000 in 1960 to 1.4 million in 2015 (p.12), has depleted – even exhausted (p.151) – the availability of groundwater. Consuming over half the country’s water resources in the maintenance of its so-called “green areas” (including agriculture), Bahrain’s underground “second sea” (p.50) of freshwater is now dwindling. So any instances of ‘green’ are contingent on the existence of ‘blue.’ While Bahrain’s farmers produce only 12% of the nation’s vegetables, Doherty’s suggestion that “agriculture is conducted more for aesthetic reasons... the appearance of greenery is more important for the national economy than the food that is produced” (p.51) is perhaps too great a leap. Nonetheless, as the availability of water in the Gulf

becomes as strategically important as that of oil (Howari 2009), the implication of blue in green explored by Doherty is pertinent.

For Doherty, blue can be understood as carrying the environmentalist meaning typically attributed green; similarly, beige, by reflecting the 'natural' state of affairs could do the same (p.119). In chapter 6, Doherty details the ways in which green offers a counterpoint to the predominant beige of the desert. Bahrain's buildings and urban environment are commonly beige, and though efforts at greening seek to keep the desert at bay, sandstorms see it regularly encroach on developed regions. Green areas, particularly date palm groves, mitigate the encroaching desert, and, intuitively, it is by reference to the significance of the desert that these regions gain their appeal. Interestingly, throughout the winter months, 'desert camping' is a popular pastime for Bahrain's residents (p.114). Citing the "nomadic lifestyles their ancestors enjoyed" (p.114), desert campers appeal to nostalgia and, for Doherty, the "promise" of green that inheres in the beige and the development potential of these barren environments (p.119).

These nostalgic imaginings also underpin particular shades of green. Deep 'grey-greens' play a role culturally both through Islam – this green is considered the Prophet Muhammad's favourite colour – and the meaning of the country's date palm groves. Often several degrees cooler than the desert, these groves were country gardens to which the elite could retreat. Throughout the 1970s, as Bahrain's oil revenue permitted greater consumption and enabled wealthier citizens to drive cars, villas were built in these retreats and the country gardens became the city's green refuges (p.84). These date palm groves often exist alongside busy roads, limiting their recreational utility (p.123) so, although "more visible nowadays to Bahrainis in everyday life" (p.89), date palms' meanings have shifted, and anxieties over disappearing groves speak perhaps to a nostalgia for their place in Bahrain's history and the perceived dilution of Shi'a culture through immigration (p.87). So greening is not merely the conversion of beige to grey, but the reappraisal of green's meaning and its place in Bahraini culture (p.87). In a keen analysis of a multivalent circumstance, Doherty notes that though the colour indexes a verdant past and intimates the capacity for beige to be green, the "shade of green associated with the date palms is [now] considered passé" (p.90), all the while nostalgia for these shades impels movement toward newer, brighter greens.

The date palm groves – once the only means of identifying groundwater springs (p.48) – have a colour that has lost value. This green, while perhaps still increasing property prices, is commonly seen as "backward" or a hindrance to development (p.96). In greater favour are the brighter greens of lawns and astroturf. Such developments – generally taking place on roundabouts, roadside strips, and residential developments – are often of negative environmental value, requiring large amounts of water, energy, and labour (p.121). Roadside greenery, in particular, is the green with which Bahrainis have the most contact, but these regions are free of wildlife or species introduced by developers (p.124). While these spaces are enjoyed, generally by foreign and lower-income workers, they are stratified socially and their use is limited to the evenings, when less traffic means they can be accessed

safely (p.125). Troublingly, though this new green is built into both the country's development plans (p.138) and those of property developers (p.136), the ongoing costs – financial and environmental – are seldom considered. This speaks most clearly to Sinn's (2008) "green paradox," but reflection on the competing valences and shades of green adds texture to the way such a disjuncture plays out.

Doherty notes the tendency of ethnographic methods to deny a researcher's role in constructing knowledge and creating a subject/object distinction (p.38), and by being ambulatory – both methodologically and formally – and reflective, his book centralises the ethnographer. Lacking a thesis to connect the chapters, the book seems to take inspiration from the tangential exploration and at-times oblique argumentation of Michael Taussig's *What Colour is the Sacred?* (2009). While Taussig's (2009) meandering meditations can be compelling, because Doherty has limited his empirical scope to a particular region in a small city-state, his tangential connections and undefended conclusions leave a slight sense of a lack of direction his arguments. Moreover, although the essays are all thoughtful, the keener analytic chapters are those based on the author's identification of the logical relationship between the blue of Bahrain's water or the beige of the desert and the green of development; while Doherty notes that "green is more than color; it is relational" (p.4), there is more discussion of this logical relationship rather than social ones.

While issues of nostalgia (p.90), development approaches (p.138), and even the fact that people will not accept the shade of an artificial tree (p.98) are noted, they perhaps warrant greater exploration than is provided. The book itself hinges on one form of the green paradox, and uses this to frame clever discussions of colour, but its vignette approach means that the argumentation can occasionally be somewhat rarefied. The politics of colour – briefly noted in the changing meanings of the older green (p.90) or issues of access to newer green areas (p.124) – are often asides, small components of the way colour is exercised in the country. Such issues are only fleshed out during the discussions of property development (chapter 7, and to a lesser extent chapter 5). The discussion of zoning and, in particular, farmers' reticence to have their land zoned as agricultural – this will limit their land to agricultural development indefinitely – is stimulating, though also a little cursory (p.51-54). One of the final passages notes the significant implications of these attitudes, which became apparent to Doherty on a return visit (p.151), and this suggests that had he the opportunity to analyse such tensions earlier on, the piece could have spoken to a socio-political texture that is perhaps underexplored.

These qualms aside, *Paradoxes of Green* is a thoughtful contribution to the developing design anthropology literature, highlighting the at-times divergent meanings of a colour, exploring the networks that support it, and demonstrating the capacity for ethnography to provide a layered account of these complexities. Moreover, this book is a unique discussion of Bahraini history and a detailed account of the ways in which literal greening is a troubled substitute for ecologically sensitive development.

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