

SANCTUARIES OF THE CITY: LESSONS FROM TOKYO

by Anni Greve

Ashgate, Farnham and Burlington, 2011.

216 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7546-7764-2 (hbk)

Reviewed by

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This book is an interesting exercise in interdisciplinary thinking. It is published as part of the *Re-materialising Cultural Geography* series, the aim of which is to explore 'the dialectical relations which exist between culture, social relations and space and place'. The author is affiliated with the Department of Society and Globalization at Roskilde University in Denmark. Her research for this book was supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, the Scandinavian-Sasakawa Foundation and the Toyota Foundation. The book relies on contemporary English-language texts in Japanese studies. Disappointingly for a social anthropologist there is only occasional reference to her own first-hand empirical fieldwork to illustrate nine chapters of densely packed theory. However, in chapter ten, we are treated to 'several clusters of places alongside each other with sanctuary qualities' (Harajuku Station, the Meiji jingo Shrine, Street Dance and Free Jazz), and Greve's exposition of 'worldliness' and 'the cosmopolitan disposition' comes alive. As a teacher of urban anthropology, I would probably go directly to chapter ten to engage the interest of my students.

The author considers her contribution to be primarily reflections on theory and method, and the potential for social geography to contribute to an interdisciplinary debate on the concept of culture. For anthropologists, culture is a contested concept, which Greve does acknowledge. In particular, she critiques Ruth Benedict's 'othering' of the Japanese, which Greve sees as flawed not only in its political implications, but also because Benedict had never been there. However, Greve herself plays down the importance of the empirical stance. For example, she spends an inordinate time rethinking Durkheim, perhaps because she has also chosen the path of armchair anthropology, unnecessary as

Greve apparently had sufficient empirical experience to generate a grounded theoretical approach. Therefore, for an anthropologist, there is a certain disconnect between the theoretical eclecticism which makes up most of the book, and the examples of sanctuary presented.

However, it is the concept of sanctuary that is most interesting and the theme that holds the book together. Sanctuary is presented as a kind of liminal space; not the shrine but the space in front of the shrine. It is secular, and allows for the expression of free play. Various unexpected elements can be brought together, as in her example of 'free Jazz', where 'musicians [from all over the world] might not be able to talk together, but they can play together and improvise in a defined musical style' (p.177). Such spaces provide creative sanctuary in cities where strangers can practice a civility and 'worldliness' necessary in crowded cosmopolitan urban life. Sanctuaries can, and do, emerge in many ways, whether in pre-planned spaces, such as parks or squares, in crowded places that become empty at night, or as flash mobs that spring up in the midst of city streets.

In chapter 4 there is an interesting discussion of Hidenobu Jinnai's book *Tokyo, a Spatial Anthropology*:

A city can be conceptualized in two ways (Jinnai 1995, 5), 'It can be seen as an artificial creation, following an urban plan based on the ideas of the rulers and the leaders'; or it can be seen 'as a space that its people actually inhabit. The varied activities of the people who live and work there give meaning to urban space and add to it an image of abundance'... This involves the art of learning by walking its streets. (p.72).

By walking the streets following seventeenth century city maps, Jinnai came to understand that present day Tokyo, despite having been rebuilt twice (after the 1923 earthquake, and the bombing of World War 11), still 'followed the lines of the old symbolic order,the uses of asymmetry and of empty space' (73).

Whether in relation to sudden natural calamity, such as we have experienced in Christchurch, or the slow erosion of urban history in the built environment of Auckland or Wellington, this understanding of the relation between the 'natural flows of society and urban environment' is an important element in any attempt to create beautiful, livable cities. Cultural mapping of this kind is seen in the work of many urban anthropologists, such as Abu-Lughod's walk through the neighborhood of New York's lower east side (Abu-Lughod 1994).

Just as there is a tradition in New Zealand of calling on archeologists to carry out a site survey prior to development that might impact on Maori heritage, there would be significant value in establishing a tradition of urban anthropology that documents how we live in our cities. A first step might be to compile the work that has already been done, and then to encourage teaching and research in this area.

REFERENCES

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HOLOCAUST IMAGES AND PICTURING CATASTROPHE:
THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF SEEING

by Angi Buettner

Ashgate, Farnham and Burlington, 2011
210 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4094-0765-2 (hbk).

Reviewed by

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This book is a study of the role that images of the Holocaust play in symbolic and aesthetic responses to catastrophe. Certain images of the Holocaust have become iconic, and have influenced subsequent representations of other catastrophes, such as the Rwandan genocide. Buettner considers what is at stake in the cultural politics of these forms of representation. She proposes that the rhetorical uses of Holocaust images are a means 'to turn attention to violence, injustice and suffering' (p.4). In her introduction she invokes Walter Benjamin's figure of the angel of history as an enduring model for placing catastrophe at the centre of political understanding, along with his point that modern mass media serve a desire in the public to bring things 'closer' (p.11). Buettner proposes that the use of Holocaust imagery serves this need to make catastrophe somehow more familiar and accessible.

This is important territory in contemporary visual culture, and the book covers a range of compelling case studies and addresses issues of major aesthetic, ethical and political significance. The discussion of the photographs of James

Natchwey (chapter four) and the uses of Holocaust imagery by the radical animal rights movement (chapter six) are both examples of original and engaging research. The analysis of these and other examples leads Buettner to make the following proposition:

At the heart of debates over Holocaust uses – and of Holocaust discourse – lies a paradox. The dominant Holocaust discourse has declared the universal relevance of the Holocaust. At the same time, however, Holocaust uses that apply this universal reference are lamented as controversial, improper, or as a form of abuse (p.134).

The book's exploration of this paradox is positioned at the intersections of Holocaust studies and visual culture studies, although it also includes extensive discussion of literary and philosophical texts. A review of the Holocaust as master theory in chapter seven might have been helpful at the beginning in order to stake out the parameters of this specific project. The book's methodologies are derived from cultural studies (the complex relations between groups and institutions in the social production of meaning) and the visual studies of theorists and critics, including W.J.T Mitchell and John Berger. Mitchell's work, in particular, probably stands as the most important precedent for Buettner's concern with the ongoing transformation of images across different media. Overall, however, the book tends to borrow freely from a range of theories and approaches, particularly the extensive literature on the Holocaust. As the principal interest of the book lies in tracing the rhetorical transformation of media images, it might have benefited from a greater number of illustrations.

The chapters analyze a series of case studies that includes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the events of September 11, the Rwandan genocide, and animal rights. Chapter two discusses the ways that the Holocaust has shaped the historical imagery of modern Israel. The perception of Jews as victims of persecution and genocide (p.19) has permeated representations of Israel. Depending on the political perspective, this has meant that Israelis can be stereotyped as either heroic survivors of Nazi oppression or, in a symbolic reversal, Nazi-style oppressors of Palestinians (p.26). The image of the victim can be used to justify acts of self-defense, aggression, and violent retribution toward perceived enemies, while the image of the Nazi can be employed to morally condemn such actions.

One of Buettner's key points is that it is no longer simply a question of Holocaust representation being evaluated in terms of its historical accuracy, because Holocaust images now permeate collective memory in diverse international

contexts. She also proposes, however, that a decisive shift occurred ‘in the final decades of the twentieth century’ (p.51) in which the Holocaust became ‘the Holocaust’. One can question such a distinction insofar as the Holocaust has always been a term that included a complex set of historical events, and has been contested in a number of different historical accounts. For example, the term ‘Holocaust’ has been criticized for focusing exclusively on the Jewish victims of Nazism, rather than addressing what could be seen as the more fundamental problem of the responsibility of modern states (including Great Britain and the United States) for the mass deaths of civilian populations.

Buettner argues that representations of the Rwandan genocide in Western news media evoked Holocaust imagery, thereby tending to aestheticize and dehistoricize the events. Another perspective on this transfer of imagery, however, could be to understand the European colonial genocide in Africa as a forerunner of the Nazi genocide in Europe. By taking the Jewish Holocaust as the central reference point (what Jeffrey Alexander has called a ‘moral universal’), cultural analysis – like media representations – may constrain our historical perspective on racism and mass murder. Debates about the ‘uniqueness’ of the Jewish Holocaust have played an important role in determining how we approach other instances of genocide. The case of famine under nineteenth century colonial rule discussed in the final chapter returns to this unresolved problem. This chapter considers the extent to which catastrophe remains beyond visual representation. At its close, then, the book opens out to a set of questions that may no longer require the Holocaust as its central point of reference, but would rather see the Holocaust as itself part of a deeper historical continuum that we are still only beginning to acknowledge.

NEW ZEALAND’S MUSLIMS AND MULTICULTURALISM

by Erich Kolig

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Reviewed by

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In this book, Erich Kolig explores and discusses the Muslim minority in New Zealand, and pays particular attention to how national multicultural poli-

cies and legislation, specifically those which relate to the freedom of religious-cultural expression (p.12), affect the lives of Muslims amidst the larger non-Muslim society. Based on more than ten years of research since the mid-1990s, beginning with a small community of Muslims in Dunedin, and subsequently extended to include Muslims from different parts of the country, he wrote this book to fill the gap in research on the Muslim minority.

The book discusses a myriad of issues of particular interest in relation to Muslims that were widely exposed in the media after the events of 9/11. Issues such as the public transport bombing in London on July 7, 2005, publication of Danish cartoons in a number of New Zealand newspapers, the Ahmed Zaoui case and the *burqa* case (in which two Afghani women refused to unveil their faces in order to give evidence in a New Zealand court) among others are discussed. These provide perspectives on how different policies and legislation on human rights, freedom of speech and of religious and cultural manifestation work for or against New Zealand's Muslims' ability to live peacefully in the host country, and multiculturalism to be accepted as part of the current New Zealand.

By highlighting circumstances in other countries, particularly Europe and the U.S., and their disparate policies and legislation regarding Muslims and multiculturalism, and comparing these, and their significantly higher number of Muslim migrants, refugees and converts, with those of New Zealand Kolig concludes that Muslims in New Zealand may be somewhat better placed than Muslim minorities in other countries. Although the portrayal of Islam in the media tends to discredit Muslims by association with radicalism, militancy and, fanaticism (p.62), Muslims in New Zealand appear to be treated with more tolerance by the wider community. Indeed, the majority of Muslims in New Zealand 'do not wish to share in the ideals of an extremist and fanatical minority who believes it has to defend Islam by violence' (p.262), yet they still carry the stigma of being the 'aggressor' instead of the 'victim' of unbalanced and unjust views about Muslims and Islam. So-called 'mainstream' New Zealanders sometimes tend to take a negative stand, or to show 'an uncharacteristic lack of empathy and interest' (p.262). This is not to deny that individuals and groups of non-Muslims support New Zealand's Muslims in defending themselves against antagonistic forces surrounding them. As is reiterated a number of times in the book 'New Zealand's Muslims, by and large, have enjoyed benevolent indifference from the state system' (p.9).

As a Muslim myself, I applaud Kolig's effort to provide a balanced and thorough discussion of Muslims and Islam. Indeed, the aim of his book is not to elucidate the general Islamic tenets, or to explain the beliefs and practices of

New Zealand's Muslims (p.12). However, by pointing out pertinent *āyāt* (verses) of the Qur'an and *ahādith* to issues being discussed throughout the text, Kolig offers insight for the readers on why Muslims behave in certain ways, or adopt certain manners and understandings. His interest lies in how Muslims' 'interpretation of Islam guided their existence in a non-Muslim, highly secularised society' (p.15). Furthermore, he also clearly underlines that Muslims embody multiple religious discourses and practices, which gives new meaning and perspective to the often mistakenly-construed monolithic religion. I think this works both ways, for Muslim as well as non-Muslim readers. For non-Muslim readers, the text may enlighten them about the diverse interpretations of Islam and the effect of the available multicultural policies in different contexts of secular citizenship on Muslim minorities in New Zealand, and in the West generally. On the other hand, for Muslim readers this book may provide an insight into how the rest of the world, mainly the West and the wider society in New Zealand, perceive Islam, and how misunderstandings and intolerance may arise from isolated incidents overseas, deliberately exposed and exaggerated to otherwise relatively peaceful multicultural existence.

The text runs largely on 'a level of abstraction' (p.16) or analysis rather than narrative. Kolig's reason for taking this approach is understandable, as the number of Muslims in this country is relatively small. Hence, any story might be traceable to its source, and the intention of protecting the identity of the informant could be jeopardised. After explaining the current circumstances which Muslims in the West are experiencing, especially after the events of 9/11, elucidating the aim of the book and the field research in the first chapter, chapter 2 details the history of Muslim migration to New Zealand, Muslim organisations and their functions and programmes, and the make-up of the Muslim community in New Zealand, as well as the realities for Muslims of living in a secular country. Different disputes around the issues of language used in the *khutba* (sermon) on Friday prayer at mosques, or doctrinal division between conservative and more liberal Muslims, for example, alter the 'perfect image' of all Muslims as a monolithic bloc (p.42).

Chapter 3 discusses the issue of multiculturalism in the West, including New Zealand. Kolig shows that policies set up to accommodate a culturally multi-chromatic society so that different cultural values, beliefs and conducts can live side by side in mutual respect and common citizenship, do not always work for the benefit of all parties involved. However, New Zealand, with its Bill of Rights, Human Rights Act, and experience of Pakeha and Maori biculturalism seems to be more capable than its counterparts in Europe and the U.S. to 'manage' its Muslim minority. Although New Zealand officially proclaims its

secularization, multiculturalism in terms of various cultures and religions is acknowledged through the works and efforts of its Ministry of Ethnic Affairs..

In chapter 4, Kolig details integration and conflict discourses. He emphasises the importance of a sense of equality (p.135) embodied within the policy of integration, in which freedom of choice and equal standing of mutual interaction are assured. However, he cautions for a need to ascertain regulative limitations to ensure interaction and a social cohesion between multiethnic communities, as too much or too little cultural freedom could work against a minority community in many different ways. In this chapter Kolig conveys a number of conflict discourses to illustrate how religious communities, including Muslims, react to religious insults, such as the Danish cartoons affair, the Pope's faux pas and 'The Bloody Mary' controversy of the cartoon series *South Park*. In the subsequent chapters, issues of gender depicted by the *burqa* case, and of terrorism, elucidated by the Zaoui case, take centre stage with the aim of portraying how the reality of multiculturalism is complex and not easy to untangle.

With the current tendency of some European countries to 'restrict' the cultural-religious expression of their minority Muslim citizens by means of policies and legislation, Kolig's book is important, as it provides insight and better understanding of Muslims and their beliefs and practices, and shows that lessons can be learned from different outcomes of multiculturalism in different parts of the world.

POLICY WORLDS: ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE ANALYSIS
OF CONTEMPORARY POWER

Edited by Cris Shore, Susan Wright and Davide Però

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343 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8574-5116-3 (hbk).

Reviewed by

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Not being an anthropologist, I can admit with a clear conscience to having never read Malinowski. But, sitting in my living-room, I can view satellite images of the Trobriand Islands that discern individual built structures, I can

look up WHO statistics on HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea, and I can read about what AusAID is contributing to PNG's development – all in the space of a few minutes. The sexual life of the peoples of those islands today is evidently a question of policy, both local and global. And it is also a question that is open to global inspection on-line, at any time, by anyone with internet access.

The 'policy worlds' of today are radically dislocated, fast-moving and unpredictable. Power/knowledge is dispersed across channels that cover the globe at the speed of light. Anyone can appear expert in five minutes. Finance, diplomacy and warfare occur increasingly in virtual spaces. Trade happens by the nano-second, making machine-operated algorithms more competitive than human beings.

For all the social sciences, such developments compel us into new directions of inquiry; and the present text illustrates how anthropologists can bring their expertise to bear on the complex local/global practices of policy-making.

The editors justifiably reject the technocratic flow-diagram imagery of policy-making as a rational linear (or cyclical) process with discernible stages, authorised actors and definable ends. One day as a fly on the wall in the Beehive (pardon the mixed metaphor) would be enough to convince anyone that text-book theory and practical reality are different worlds, so there can be little argument with this point.

Instead, the two qualities of policy-making that anthropologists can highlight for us, they suggest, are its 'messiness and ambiguity' and its foundations in meaning and subjective understandings. This, too, is a valid direction. Policy-making may sometimes need to follow regulated pathways with well-established technical methods (the annual Budget cycle, for instance), but, fundamentally, public policy is always a work in progress. It relies on ever-changing networks and exchanges of ideas, and it means making choices with unpredictable results that, it is hoped, will express and enact values shared by significant communities. Hence, there is certainly much messiness and ambiguity in real-world policy exchanges, reflecting the political nature of the process and the unpredictable outcomes; and contests over meanings and hegemonic understandings are intrinsic to the processes. Anyone listening to policy debates in the media can appreciate this.

The editors are also right to point out that there is not really a 'sovereign author'. If we see policy as a game of meaning-making, then there can be no meta-language (to borrow from Lacan). There is no master-text of technically exact,

value-free and lawful policy science; and there is no ‘ideal legislator’ overseeing anything. But there is a multitude of voices out there trying to work within or around relations of power, and trying to influence what gets done about complex problems.

Reading the individual chapter studies in this volume, then, I asked myself what fresh approach anthropologists bring to policy studies. Much of the analysis is fairly ‘high-level’, in that it relies on public documents, including media interviews. So, for example, the famous BBC ‘bombshell’ interview with Clare Short in 2004 is presented as ‘ethnographic data’. That’s fine, except that this is also ‘data’ that might be used by historians, political scientists, strategic analysts and investigative journalists. And I could not really see any methodology or analytical perspective being brought to bear that was either distinctively anthropological or unfamiliar to critical policy studies.

This is not to say that the case studies are not interesting or useful. It is merely to ask why it is suggested repeatedly in this text that an anthropological approach can offer something that would otherwise be missing. Studies in the public policy world that I inhabit are frequently interpretive, focused on the experiences of persons affected by policies – as well as the ideas of those who design them – and aware of irrational, messy processes and unintended outcomes.

A lot of the analysis in this text, then, did not really stand out for me as representing an identifiably ‘anthropological’ approach – if there is such a thing. Not many of the researchers use participant-observation within policy-making teams or networks, for instance. Those who do rely on some insider experience have not necessarily provided fresh methodological insights.

But there are nice examples, and the chapter by Kugelberg is one that I would refer students to. This study describes fieldwork with an association of immigrant African women in Sweden, and charts the ways in which official evaluation and funding systems affected the very aims and objectives of the association, and imposed preconceived criteria on their organization. It shows how public policy and grass-roots community associations affect one another, the power behind the former disguising itself in a supposedly (but not really) neutral technical rationality.

Let me turn to the theoretical orientation of this text as a whole. To get a handle on this, just go to the index of names and see which theorists get the most citations. In the lead are Michel Foucault and Nikolas Rose – two theorists

who have influenced my own work. Bruno Latour is mentioned a lot. I don't like to force theorists into disciplinary pigeon-holes, but I wouldn't describe these fellows as anthropologists.

The authors in this text are certainly not slavish followers of Foucault, or of his governmentality thesis. But it does need to be pointed out that Foucault's 'archaeology' is *not* primarily aimed at elucidating the contested meanings of what was said and done in the political heat of the times. What he meant by 'discourse' was not 'a mere intersection of things and words... [but rather] practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 2002:53-54).

Rather than watch the game as a critic, Foucault chose to ask on what grounds the crowd and the contestants *and* their critics could get together, adopt their roles, and unquestioningly *know* what was going on. Anthropologists may or may not share such a methodology; but, although Foucault appears to be the most frequently cited theorist in this text, its contributors have not fully imbibed what he was teaching. To get to the level at which Foucault was working requires some critical reflection of one's present-day methods and disciplines.

Although there is a common misconception about this in much secondary literature, Foucault's analyses of discursive practices were not intended to lead to the uncovering of 'covert cabals' that 'subvert democratic accountability' (Shore, reviewed text, p.128). Critical literature inspired by Foucault is often reduced to this kind of task. It reads as if there were some covert intentionality behind the forces and strategies at play that must be identified, exposed and opposed in the name of democracy. And then it must also be the task of such a text to include narratives revealing how those who are the 'recipients' of the policies of the powerful 'contest and redefine' the terms of engagement (Però, reviewed text, p.223).

It is revealing, too, that Giorgio Agamben is referred to only once in the text, according to the index. His approach supplements Foucault very well, and would have helped some of the contributors in resolving the tension they perceive between the norms of law (and of policy-making) and the sheer force of law. Agamben dwells on the paradox of law that suspends the law, and thus he helps us to make sense of the exercise of power over matters such as national security or the administration of aliens.

This book-length exchange that I've now witnessed between the Policy-wonks and the anthropologists led me to re-read Clifford Geertz on Balinese men

and their cocks. He describes the cockfights as a form of ‘deep play’ that, in its most refined form, cannot be judged rationally because the participants stand to lose far more than they stand to win. But the drama can nonetheless be understood in meta-textual, interpretive terms as ‘a story they [Balinese men] tell themselves about themselves’ (Geertz 1972: 26).

Isn’t the policy-fight often a game in which, partly due to the sheer complexity of the field, what you stand to lose may outweigh what you rationally stand to gain in a utilitarian sense – a game in which men’s cocks and their social statuses take on a significance that cannot be accounted for by the monetary values of the exchanges? Locally, we can observe instances such as the nuclear-free policy, the privatisations and the dramas of elections – internationally, the ‘shock and awe’ as Baghdad fell, the apotheosis of greed in deregulated financial markets, the euro-crisis, failed climate-change negotiations, and the popular rage for constitutional reform in Tahrir Square. It is through such events that we learn how to ‘read’ our predicaments, how to know what we feel and why we feel it, in a world that has no universal lexicon for talking about meanings and feelings or about what happens next – let alone any applicable calculus.

One of the difficulties for an anthropology of the world of policy – especially an ‘analysis of *contemporary power*’ – is that the anthropologist is embedded in the game – possibly dangerously so. Geertz was an outsider looking in; Foucault chose historical examples. I believe it is possible, but I know it is very difficult, to lay bare the discursive practices or interpretive meta-narratives of the political world in which one acts – or suffers – here and now. And I don’t think that the present text achieves that difficult task.

This book is to be welcomed all the same. Public policy, in academic terms, is not really a discipline in the traditional sense. It deals with complex problems that necessarily require cross-disciplinary intelligence. As a practical enterprise, policy-making is too important to be left in the hands of economists and politicians. And so the intervention of anthropologists is important.

In the Afterword chapter, Dvora Yanow helped to put the problematic of this text into perspective for me. While anthropology has expanded beyond its traditional, localized studies, to move also into realms that are urban, organizational and trans-local, North American public policy teaching has been hampered by ‘a strongly entrenched realist-objectivist hegemony’ (Yanow, reviewed text, p.301). She points particularly to the Harvard MPP.

Some Australasian public policy academic programmes do suffer from con-

servative outlooks; but the 'realist-objectivist' model is not hegemonic in this part of the world. Many now adopt a critical, cross-disciplinary perspective, using qualitative, interpretive and advanced theoretical approaches. So, the contribution of this text to policy studies seems 'mainstream' to me; whereas it may be a useful tool for students in other centres who need to break some molds.

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