

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Planted Flags: Trees, Land, and Law in Israel/Palestine*, Cambridge Studies in Law and Society by Irus Braverman

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which to study informal notions of identity as well as the rights and privileges that emanate from social relationships rather than institutional processes or territorial boundaries. Çelik, on the other hand, delves into the long microhistory of an “urban fragment” in the center of Algiers to highlight continuities in the ideologies behind Ottoman, French, and postcolonial architectural designs and urban practices. Her account of the permanent reordering of the center of Algiers’ landscape mirrors Grangaud’s description of the dissolution of the networks of the *hawma* under the weight of rationalizing urban grids in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. In the two accounts, the irrevocable erasure of premodern forms of social and spatial organization epitomizes the indelible legacy of colonialism and exposes the deep imbrications between colonialist and nationalist appropriations of the city—with clear implications for our appreciation of the commonalities between the two programs and narratives.

IRUS BRAVERMAN, *Planted Flags: Trees, Land, and Law in Israel/Palestine*, Cambridge Studies in Law and Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Pp. 272. \$88.00 cloth.

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In 1584, Richard Hakluyt, a special advisor to the English Crown, authored a confidential report entitled “Discourse on Western Planting,” urging Queen Elizabeth to authorize overseas colonization to stem the empire building of rivals France and Spain. Hakluyt’s “Discourse” is a seminal document in English colonial history, but what is perhaps striking to the modern reader of this text is Hakluyt’s use of the term “planting” to describe colonization. This usage, however, had a compelling logic, as recounted in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in which “to plant” assumed three basic meanings by the late 16th century, one referring to cultivation of botanical species, a second referring to the formation of colonies or settlements, and a third referring to the anchoring of objects to the ground. While cultivation, settlement, and occupation would characterize the planting of English colonies on the American landscape, similar planting metaphors resonate on the contested landscape of Israel/Palestine in Irus Braverman’s impressive book, *Planted Flags*. Braverman reveals how, echoing Hakluyt, planting—notably, tree planting—has emerged as a central motif in rival efforts to settle and control the territory at the core of one of the world’s most intractable disputes.

*Planted Flags* tells a story about the conflict between Zionist Jews and Palestinians by reference to the divergent fortunes of two arboreal landscapes that dominate the visual rhythms and physical geography of Palestine/Israel, pine forests and olive groves. To the casual observer, pine forests and olive groves appear as innocent representations of the region’s natural environment. For Braverman, however, these landscapes reveal far more than what is directly observable. Legible in these landscapes are the colonizing efforts of Zionism and its inscriptions of dominance on the land marked by the planting of pine forests and the steadfast efforts of Palestinians to remain in place, signified by the metaphor of olive trees rooted to the land. The author focuses on the role of law and relations of power between the two groups in shaping the development of these two “treescapes,” arguing that trees have emerged as material instruments as well as symbolic “flags” demarcating the two sides in this ongoing clash. How is it, she asks, that conflict between Zionist Jews and Palestinians is reflected and reinforced through these two juxtaposed landscapes, and how does the law play a role in regulating the planting of trees and shaping patterns of development on the land?

To answer these questions and frame her argument, Braverman, a law professor at SUNY Buffalo, draws inspiration from critical legal geography and its central idea about the impact of law on territorial space and about the use of law as an instrument of territorial control. The author synthesizes an impressive range of this literature in revealing how the law is visible in the materiality of landscapes and trees and makes a broader point about the nature of landscapes as products of human agency and choice. Motivating such choices are the ways in which groups of people imagine and give meaning to landscapes. In justifying their place on the landscape, Zionists imagined the ancient landscape, where Jews supposedly flourished before their diaspora, to be one cultivated with conifers, and thus in the pine Zionists found the botanical metaphor of their continuity with and rootedness to the land. By contrast, in reconstructing their own historical place on the landscape, Palestinians have measured their anchors to the land through the metaphor of the tree most responsible for sustaining them over centuries, the olive. Pines and olives thus convey different meanings and symbolize different experiences for the two groups. In the highly charged environment of Palestine/Israel, the dominance of one treescape over another is the result of a set of planting choices and, more important, the power to make such choices. The law is a critical tool in establishing treescapes because those who control the law can use it to promote cultivation of certain trees and prohibit that of others, thereby shaping the choices for tree planting. In this sense, the law has profoundly material and spatial impacts that are visible on the land.

*Planted Flags* traces this genealogy of law, power, and landscape through the colonization efforts of the Zionist movement and its development arm, the Jewish National Fund (JNF). By 1901, the JNF was not only buying land for Jewish immigrants and helping redeem a landscape that Zionists beginning with Theodor Herzl in 1898 argued was barren and neglected but was also seeking to anchor Jews more firmly to the territory. This aim of rooting Jews into what was depicted as a fallow landscape found expression in the planting of pines. Since 1901, the JNF has planted more than 240 million trees, mostly pines, in Israel/Palestine, fundamentally altering its landscape (p. 164). Not only did Jewish immigrants find in conifers the affirmation of their continuity with Eretz Israel, but as Braverman explains, the pine also created an Eastern European landscape that most early Zionists would have found familiar (p. 89). Consequently, land redemption had as one of its key elements the forestation of the landscape with conifers that supposedly thrived in the time of the ancient Jewish Kingdom and were part of the more recent landscape where most Zionist immigrants were actually born.

Following the birth of Israel in 1948, tree planting became even more widespread and aggressive as a tool of colonization and conquest. After 1961, the JNF emerged as the state's lead agency for forestation and in this role pursued two basic tasks. First, it spearheaded the growth of forest cover to conceal the historical memory as well as the material remains of Palestinian villages depopulated and razed following the 1948 war (pp. 98–100). Second, the JNF deployed pine forests as barriers to preempt the growth of Palestinian towns that remained in Israel as well as Palestinian land development outside these urban boundaries. In pursuing this aim of restricting urban growth, the JNF often sited pine forests at the edge of Palestinian towns, concealing their redemptive character behind the environmentally friendly designation of them as forest "reserves." Such designations, however, were easily reclassifiable, and the trees could be removed when the need arose for Jewish land development. Travelers to northern Israel today can see the results of this campaign. In Palestinian cities inside Israel such as Sakhnin, pine forests are positioned right at the edge of the city, signifying that growth is not possible, while conifers interspersed with new Jewish towns dominate the surrounding landscape. In this way, the power of law, by classifying forests as "reserves," works in tandem with the material power of trees as physical objects in order to shape patterns of land development while creating a metaphor of domination on the landscape itself.

The instrument of law enabled these aggressive uses of forest in redeeming the landscape. In Israel, the power of the new state to transform land and property law resulted in large inventories of land being reclassified as “state land” and then reallocated for Jewish settlement and forestation. This practice of creating state land has also been decisive in reshaping the landscape of the occupied West Bank, but there the mechanism differed. Braverman provides a cogent summary of the legal history underlying this practice, which has its origins in the Ottoman Land Law of 1858. The Ottomans passed the law to increase tax revenues by promoting the tenure of underused land among Palestinian fellahin. Although Israeli authorities have retained the Land Law of 1858, they have inverted its logic by focusing on the *absence* of ownership on the landscape to transform such land, supposedly without owners and cultivators, into state property. Nevertheless, by focusing on the absence of land ownership, much of it on West Bank hilltops, Israeli authorities have found a “legal” basis—many would say, legal subterfuge—for creating state land suitable for Israeli settlement. Between 1979 and 1993, Israel used this mechanism to establish Israeli state property on 40 percent of the land in the West Bank (p. 171). Today, roughly 60 percent of the West Bank is Israeli state land.

This preference for creating state land from absence has resulted in active combat against olive trees. Whereas in Israel state land is used to plant pines, in the West Bank state land is used to denude the landscape of olive groves. With so much of the West Bank designated as Israeli state property for the settlement of Israeli citizens, Israeli authorities have taken to uprooting large numbers of Palestinian olive trees that they claim were grown illegally (p. 129). The power to define “trespass” plays a decisive role here. Braverman describes how the Israeli Civil (Occupation) Administration employs inspectors to patrol the West Bank in search of olive trees that have encroached state property. On finding such trees, the authorities uproot them.

These uprooted olive trees, however, are only part of a more macabre story occurring daily on the Palestinian landscape and inspired by notions of belonging and encroachment. Settlers, steeped in their own imagined visions of who rightfully belongs to the land and who is trespassing, take this policy a step further by uprooting Palestinian olive trees not only on state land but also on Palestinian private property. As Braverman insists, such lawlessness may be the work of a younger and more ideologically motivated settler constituency, but there is a certain way in which this activity conforms to the broader institutional logic of Zionism and its historical project of settling the Palestinian landscape. The author argues that Israeli policing in the West Bank is trying to stop these incursions, and no doubt there are some dedicated law enforcement officials attempting to protect Palestinians as they farm and harvest olive trees. Yet few serious prosecutions have resulted despite large numbers of violations. Braverman provides a chilling account of how this institutional logic becomes part of criminality on the ground when she recounts the unusual trial of six young defendants from a settlement outpost near Bet El who were accused of attacking Palestinian olive harvesters and damaging their olive trees. Braverman managed to speak to one of the defendants, who when asked by the author why she had damaged the olives trees replied defiantly, “I have nothing against the trees; this is about land—it’s our land not theirs” (p. 147).

This last point, in which readers hear settlers in their own voice, highlights what ultimately makes the narrative of *Planted Flags* so compelling. Braverman employs a “legal ethnography” in crafting the empirical foundations of her story about landscape and conflict. This fieldwork, comprising scores of often riveting interviews with a range of Israeli, Palestinian, and North American actors, is extraordinary. Indeed, at the very beginning of the book, readers are introduced to one of these interviewees in the person of David Kishik, an Israeli official working in the West Bank who admits to Braverman how olive trees “look so naïve,” but later in the conversation emphasizes how the olive tree “is the enemy soldier” (p. 2). Braverman uses this anecdote to emphasize throughout her narrative how trees and landscape are enlisted

as recruits in what she continually describes as a war. Sadly, the cycles of planting and uprooting signifying the nature of power on the ground in this conflict show little sign of abating, and Braverman admits to a pessimistic conclusion: trees are likely to continue their role as flags planted into the ground demarcating lines of domination and difference upon a war-torn landscape.

MARWAN M. KRAIDY, *Reality Television and Arab Politics: Contention in Public Life*, Communication, Society and Politics Series (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Pp. 270. \$85.00 cloth, \$24.99 paper, \$20.00 e-book.

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It is often tempting to reach a verdict on an academic book based on a cursory sampling of a few basic components, such as the introduction, conclusion, and bibliography. In the case of *Reality Television and Arab Politics*, the temptation is to devour the whole book. The depth of the author's research is partly reflected in his ability to craft a series of multifaceted narratives that prove nearly as compelling for the reader as the highly charged events narrated in the book seem to have been for their diverse protagonists. From the Kuwaiti wedding party guests glued to their mobile phones for news of a *Star Academy* contestant, to the finalists of *Super Star 2* at the Libyan leader Mu'ammār al-Qadhafī's soirée under canvas, to the Bahraini parliamentarian accusing the *Big Brother* format (adopted on Arab television as *al-Ra'is*) of imposing an imperialist nightmare on free people, Marwan Kraidy quotes voices emerging from the fracas over reality television to highlight the way it "touched a constellation of raw nerves" (p. 37) over what constitutes reality in Arab settings and how reality is represented. In doing so, he shows that reality television is far from a trivial subject.

Despite its vivid recounting of staged scenarios and unstaged conflicts that end up being mediated in print as well as on screen, *Reality Television and Arab Politics* steers clear of a positivist or linear approach to its subject matter. On the contrary, the author engages deeply with theories of modernity and its associated tensions, including the relationship between religion and state, nationalism, gender norms, and the development of representative forms of governance. Kraidy's argument is that the reality television genre has particular resonance in Arab contexts because it "violates boundaries of identity and authenticity" (p. 13), "stirring the public-private nexus" (p. 143) at a time when contestation over such boundaries has been stoked to fever pitch by foreign interventions and injustices across different parts of the Arab world. Driven by the business imperative of boosting income from telephone voting and from advertisers keen to reach affluent youth in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, reality television's routines for involving viewers have a particular impact. According to Kraidy, the genre's protracted weekly, or even daily, repetition of liberal practices habituates followers to expand public space and use it in new ways. The idioms of contention that viewers adopt as a result are part of the polemics and controversies associated with modernity. Thus, "reality TV is a social laboratory where various versions of modernity are elaborated and contested, a courtroom of sorts that hosts modernity's endless trial" (p. 18).

The controversies Kraidy investigates are all the more fascinating for the insights they provide on Arab countries with widely differing political systems and social mores, notably, Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. In successive chapters he shows the links and divisions within and among these polities, including, importantly, an explanation of the