

Color, Fieldwork, and Design Anthropology —A Review of *Paradoxes of Green: Landscapes of a City-State*



LI Bin*

School of Architecture, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing 100102, China

***CORRESPONDING AUTHOR**

Address: 8 Huajiadi South Street, Chaoyang District, Beijing, 100102, China

Email: libin@cafa.edu.cn

ABSTRACT

What is the agency of color in comprehending urban landscape space? How could we use ethnography and fieldwork as a method of design research? Why is Design Anthropology considered an emerging field bridging description and action? The color of green in urban environments is sometimes not that green environmentally. This review targets the book *Paradoxes of Green: Landscapes of a City-State* in which this paradox can be well observed in an arid city-state—Bahrain of the Gulf region. Based on a year-long fieldwork informed by walking, the author Gareth Doherty read the layers of green and different hues in Bahrain's urban landscape. With nuanced observations and encounters, Doherty interpreted a thick description of this arid geography, its cultural history and the present values of greening the city. The book considers white and beige the environmental colors to facilitate the possibilities of green in Bahrain. Situated in Landscape Architecture, Urban Studies, and Anthropology, this multidisciplinary piece of work would inform both academics and broader audience on understanding the urbanism of landscape around us and how “green” plays the role in it.

KEYWORDS

Urbanism; Landscape; Fieldwork; Color; Green; City-State; Sustainability

HIGHLIGHTS

- Reviews a monograph on a walking ethnography of color and urban landscape.
- Contextualizes “to be green is to be good to the environment” criticized in the book.
- Different hues serve a variety of metaphorical, environmental, and social meanings.

TRANSLATED BY LI Bin, ZHANG Chenxi, ZHOU Jiayi

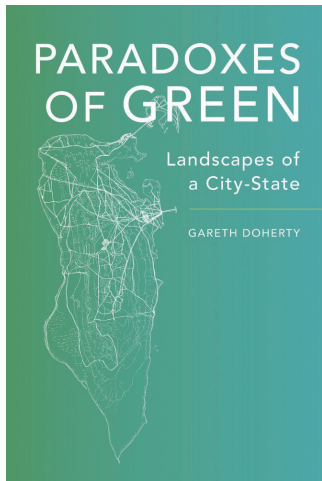
1 Introduction

In *New Geographies, 3: Urbanisms of Color* published in 2011, a body of articles was put forward on the essences of color in shaping urban space.^[1] Color is not just an adjective to an object, rather, it is the key to frame multidisciplinary work and to discuss the social-political, geographical, cultural, and artistic perspectives of design. In the article “Color and the City,” a quote from architect Bruno Taut highlights that: “Color is not expensive like molded decorations and sculptures, but color means a joyful existence....” Taut made use of colors in Berlin's social housing during the 1920s for generating

“a sense of belonging” for the post-war society and social life.^[2] For designers, architects, and planners, color may contribute to a perspective more than the dominating “visual” as color is “social” as well.

2 Meanings of “Green”

Green is one such color that can be said to carry many layers and meanings in art, culture, and space, for instance, representing some important glimpses of classical Chinese art and cultural life. In “Sancai,” literally “three colors” and a pottery decoration art



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① Gareth Doherty is Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Director of the Master in Landscape Architecture Program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

1. The cover of *Paradoxes of Green: Landscapes of a City-State*
2. The scene of a sand storm in March 2008
3. An advertisement of Bahrain's green space in contrast to the real scene

developed since the Tang Dynasty, green has been one of the three leading colors to serve the highlighting parts of pottery pieces. Another example is the “Blue-Green Shan Shui Painting,” a style of Chinese landscape paintings taking varied hues of greenish mineral pigments as raw material. “Landscape” means “the mountain and the water” (Shan-Shui) in classical Chinese language, and green is the major color of mountainous landscapes and their reflected resonance—the design of gardens. In contrast to Shan-Shui is the design of imperial architecture such as those in the Forbidden City. Mainly built with reddish and golden colors, green is largely missing since rather few garden spaces were planned in the imperial city. For contemporary urban spaces, people may associate green with greenery, and to have a large amount of greenery with being sustainable to the urban environment. In metropolises under a relatively dry climate, along roadside or in a park, one may observe a large amount of water used for irrigating lawns, yet to sustain the lawns is significantly energy- and infrastructure-consuming.

If shifting culture and geography from China to the Persian Gulf, one may wonder: What are the meanings of “green” in this fairly arid geography, and a city-state of Arabic culture, and how would green and other colors contribute to shaping the desert urban environment? On the opening line of *Paradoxes of Green: Landscapes of a City-State* (Fig. 1), the author Gareth Doherty^①, upon his ethnographic research in Bahrain, posits a paradox that the “green” we experience in cities is not that sustainable as it may require costly resources and infrastructural supports, especially in places like Bahrain of the Gulf (Figs. 2, 3). Taking Bahrain as the place of study, Doherty expands the meanings of green and other colors from the environmental to the cultural, and by looking at both aspects, reconsider the relationship between urban greenery and sustainability. The book explores how to search for the meanings of color in landscape and urbanism, the critical reconsiderations on urban greenery, and the ideas toward the emerging academic field of Design Anthropology.

3 Field “Walks” as Fieldwork

One contribution from Doherty is the attempt of using “walk” as an ethnographic fieldwork method for studying landscape and urbanism. In the introduction chapter of *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, geographers Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst point out the fact that while “walking” is the “action” many ethnographers take on for research, it is rarely thought of and reflected on.^[3] In *Paradoxes of Green*, Doherty reflects on his walking approach, from following straight lines drawn on a map to later walking along “greens” as much as possible. Walking is a comprehensive method. It involves body movement of the walker, observations the walker makes in motion, conversations the



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4. The production landscape of date palms in 1960s
5. The desert plants accommodated to the arid environment

walker has en route, and hence, walking is ethnographical. When ethnographic walks combining with green (and other related colors) of the urban environment, as Doherty did, an ethnography of urban space is developed and shaped by both the observer and the observed subjects.

This method can be further said as “a multilayered ethnography,” to borrow the definition from the author. For Doherty, the color green is more than a defined color, and it is relational. It seems that Doherty chose Bahrain to study the “urbanism of landscape” related to green because firstly, it is an arid territory walkable in its scale. The juxtaposition of desiring green spaces and supplying the greens can possibly be observed at a compressed scale; And secondly, this city-state is culturally connected to the power of green. Between 2007 and 2008, Doherty lived in Bahrain and conducted a body of fieldwork presented in the book. During the year living in Bahrain, he walked in this city-state on a daily basis. These walks were connected through green and green-related landscape and urbanism, informing him where and what to observe, bringing him to encounter with people. Green is not just the subject (landscape) studied, but also the agency of the methodical approach.

Doherty uses varied hues of green, and other related colors, to set up the structure of the book. Those colors are the physical adjectives of an object (landscape) as well as serving metaphorical, social, and cultural meanings of the everyday-practiced urban landscape. Each hue represents one layer of ethnography, and each of them closely influences one another. Related to methods of viewing the landscape, he points out the importance of having the “vertical” or the sectional perspective, as the addition to the “horizontal” or the aerial perspective. This sectional approach is related to ethnographical walks as a way of reading urban

landscapes in detail. One extended question could be: How does this detailed approach work together with the large-scaled overseeing of the earth’s surface, and what kind of findings can be resulted in through the combination of approaches?

4 The Importance of “White”

How do other colors relate to green? The relational characteristics of colors are analogous to the relational thinking of landscape, infrastructure, and urbanism. On water infrastructure where the blue supplies the green, Doherty describes the freshwater situation and the treated sewage effluent that is majorly used for green spaces. How to more effectively use water is nevertheless a question of how to manage the green in a more effective manner. One of the hues of green is the changing phenomenon related to date palm plantation (Fig. 4). This dominated vegetation represents a production landscape suitable for local climate yet it does not appear visually very green. Doherty further picks up a strip of greenbelt, Manama, as a case study to point out this typical paradoxical situation: the intention of conserving the greenbelt of date palms has been constantly challenged by new developments that are green in color. At the same time, desert plants, buildings, and facilities in the color of beige in fact are those majorities accommodating the arid environment the best (Fig. 5). Hence, it is the “unsustainable” beige making a restricted amount of “greenness” in Bahrain possible.

The major argument of the book is the reconsideration of “to be green is to be good to the environment.”^[4] This reconsideration leads to the importance of “white.” One perspective to comprehend white is that it is a “thick” color. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz

uses the term “thick description” to explain how an anthropologist interprets a cultural study.^[5] White is the color of thick descriptions in this book, representing the overlay of all colors. At certain sections of the book, readers may feel like reading a book written by an anthropologist, though the subject is not about an ethnic group, but an urban landscape and the urbanism of it. Doherty contributes to his study with a perspective of space and spatiality, which expands ethnographic research from studying social life to studying objects and things, as well as landscape spaces. This situates the book in between disciplines of Landscape Architecture, Urban Studies, and Anthropology.

As green can be seen as a synecdoche for landscape, white can be understood as a synecdoche for urbanism, relating to infrastructures and cultures where the landscape immerses in. The findings of the urbanism of landscape converge through varied hues of green to the color “white.” However, in the arid environs of Bahrain, green can be arguably said related to urbanism when the landscape space is more beige and white in color. Green embeds the infrastructural and cultural agencies for future urban transformation.

5 Toward the “Action” of Design Anthropology

Paradoxes of Green guides the readers to be “immersed” in Bahrain’s urban landscape on the ground as the author did in his fieldwork. The book is multilayered storytelling in that Doherty’s writing puts together collages of conversation with people, as well as his own observations, archival statistics, and at the end of major chapters his considerations and reflections. His observation on Bahrain’s urban green is not always familiar to those readers living in a temperate environment. For instance, he depicts that in an arid environment where the ordinary landscapes are in beige color, it is common to add the color of green to buildings and houses to contrast the beige desert (Fig. 6). The way toward interpreting the strange familiar aligns with ethnographic inquiries in anthropology.

A few perspectives in the book could be expanded in order to encourage the readers to know more about it. Doherty considers the book sitting within “Design Anthropology” as an emerging field, and it is a shift from “description” to “action.”^[4] Design Anthropology has become a tool in discussing the urbanism of landscape, how ordinary people spatially and culturally practice their daily life. If ethnography can be used as a design process, it could be interesting to know how Doherty, through his multilayered ethnography informed by walking, may suggest design ideas or actions. Or, is the research process a body of actions already? The



6. Contemplating the Bahrain urban landscape through the green tinted windows (photos on the left page), and a green carpet in front of a house (photo on the right page)

readers may be keen to know more in detail about how the author’s study contributes to this emerging field by reading the colors of the city and landscape. What the book could lead to is a discussion on methods and findings, and this discussion may lead to a design action informed by ethnography.

Readers would benefit from reading this book from its first line through to its conclusion. It is a rich and thick landscape narrative where green and its expanded colors help the readers frame the nuanced and detailed stories on Bahrain’s urban spaces. The paradoxes of green the book unfolds are also in a sense of laid-back humor, much like how Doherty embraced serendipity and unplanned circumstances during his fieldwork year. This is a book more than just for designers and researchers; it provides an immersed observation of a specific (arid) geography, its culture, and people, how everyday landscapes are lived and practiced, and how people may read it through the lenses of color. And hence, it is a book beyond just for academics, as it is for people living with everyday landscapes in varied geographies around the globe.

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色彩，田野工作，设计人类学——《绿的悖论：一个城市国家的景观》评论

李宾*

中央美术学院建筑学院，北京 100102

*通讯作者

地址：北京市朝阳区花家地南街8号

邮编：100102

邮箱：libin@cafa.edu.cn

摘要

如何以色彩为媒介理解城市景观空间？如何以民族志与田野工作的方法进行设计研究？为何设计人类学被看作是连接文字描述与行动的新学术领域？从环境保护的视角来看，某些城市环境中的“绿”是不可持续的——《绿的悖论：一个城市国家的景观》一书针对波斯湾地区的干旱城市国家巴林提出了这一悖论。在为期一年的步行田野工作中，该书作者加雷斯·多尔蒂分层解读了巴林城市景观中的绿色及其他色调，同时通过对周围环境细致入微的观察和深入访谈对这片干旱地区的历史文脉和城市绿化的当代价值进行了“深描”。作者将白色和米色视为巴林的环境色，并认为正是这两种色彩构成并维持着城市中的绿色空间。这部跨学科的著作定位于景观、城市研究和人类学的交叉领域，期冀为学术界和更广泛的受众提供一种理解景观中的城市生活，以及“绿色”如何在其中发挥作用的范式。

关键词

景观与城市生活；田野工作；色彩；绿色；城市国家；可持续性

文章亮点

- 评论一本通过行走民族志研究色彩和城市景观的著作。
- 就书中批判的“在视觉层面变绿即对环境有益”进行延伸论述。
- 不同色调具有各自的象征意义和环境与社会内涵。

翻译 李宾，张晨希，周佳怡

1 引言

2011年出版的《新地理3：色彩都市主义》一书囊括了一系列文章以论述色彩在塑造城市空间方面的必要之处^[1]。色彩——物体的一项物理属性——可成为以社会政治、地理、文化和艺术视角构建多学科设计框架的关键所在。其中，《色彩与城市》一文引用了建筑师布鲁诺·陶特“色彩虽然不如模制装饰品和雕塑那样昂贵，但可以展现出趣味性……”的观点，同时介绍了他于20世纪20年代参与建设的柏林社会住宅项目。在该项目中，陶特凭借杰出的色彩运用方法，为一战后的德国民众在社会和社交生活中建立起“归属感”^[2]。对于设计师、建筑师和规划师而言，色彩脱离了纯粹的视觉属性，同时具备了社会属性的内涵。

2 “绿”的含义

“绿”是这样一种颜色——在艺术、文化和空间层面具有多重含义，在中国古典艺术和文化生活中亦是重要一瞥。譬如在“三彩”——兴于唐代的陶瓷装饰艺术中，绿色作为三种主要的装饰用色之一，往往点缀于陶器的精妙之处。又如绿色之于“青绿山水”，即一种以青绿色矿物颜料进行绘画的中国山水画风格。在古典中文语境中，景观意为山一水，而绿色正是山水景观及捕捉自然神韵的山水派园林的主要色调。与此形成强烈反差的是紫禁城等皇家建筑群的设计，由于其中园林空间较少致使建筑群中绿色所占比重较小，整体色调以红色和金色为主。在当代，人们或许会从绿色联想到绿化，并认为城市环境中的绿化多多益

善；然而人们或许已经发现，在气候相对干燥的城市中，灌溉路边或公园内的草坪需要耗费大量水资源。事实上，草坪的长期维护不仅消耗能源，并且依赖大量基础设施的支撑。

当我们将目光从中国的文化和地理条件转向波斯湾地区，对于一个气候条件相当干旱且由阿拉伯文化主导的城市国家，“绿”意味着什么？如何运用绿色与其他色彩塑造沙漠城市环境？在《绿的悖论：一个城市国家的景观》（图1）一书的开篇，作者加雷斯·多尔蒂^①基于亲身参与的巴林民族志研究提出了一个悖论——人们在城市中所体验到的“绿”是不可持续的，尤其是对于地处波斯湾的巴林而言，维持这种“绿”需要消耗大量资金、资源，以及大量基础设施的支持（图2，3）。在书中，多尔蒂将巴林作为研究区域，将绿色和其他色彩的含义由“环境属性”扩展至“文化属性”，并从这两个角度重新审视城市绿化与可持续性之间的关系；进而探讨在景观和城市生活中寻找色彩含义的途径，对城市绿化进行批判性反思；最后，作者表达了对设计人类学这一新兴学术领域的看法。

3 场地“行走”的田野工作^②

多尔蒂以“行走”的研究方法对景观和城市生活开展民族志田野工作。在《行走的方式：步行开展民族志学研究与实践》一书的介绍章节中，地理学家蒂姆·英戈尔德和乔·李·维尔贡斯特指出，虽然“行走”是许多民族志学者在研究中所采取的“行动”，但很少有学者会反思这一行动本身^[3]。《绿的悖论》一书中记录了作者对自身步行调查路径的反思：起初他在地图上绘制直线，并试图沿着这些路线行进；而后转变为尽可能沿着城市中的绿色空间开展行走田野工作。行走是一种综合性的研究方法——要求研究人员发生身体位移，并沿途进行观察和访谈，因此可以认为行走本身就是一种民族志研究方法。作者的亲身实践表明，以行走的研究方法探究城市环境中的绿色（及其他相关色彩），研究人员和研究对象可以共同建构起描述该城市空间的民族志。

多尔蒂将行走进一步定义为“一种多层次民族志研究方法”。他认为，绿色不只是一种确定的颜色，更具有关联性。作者选择巴林来研究与绿色具有相关性的“景观中的城市生活”，或许是出于以下原因：首先，巴林的国土同时具备干旱的气候条件和适宜步行的尺度，因而可以在较小的研究范围内探究绿地空间的供需关系；其次，绿色的力量贯穿了这个城市国家的文化脉络。多尔蒂于2007~2008年间定居巴林，期间每天步行开展田野工作。他用步行路径串联起绿色和与绿色相关的景观

和城市生活，沿途确认观察地点、观察对象和访谈对象，并将这一系列田野调查记录在书中。在该研究中，绿色不仅是研究对象（如景观）的代称，更是研究方法的媒介。

不同色调的绿色和其他相关色彩共同构建起本书的结构。这些色彩不仅是实体（景观）的物理属性，也成为某种日常城市景观的象征，承载社会与文化内涵。每种色调都表示一类民族志元素，且它们密切相关。作者指出在以景观为研究对象的调查中，可用“纵向”或剖面视角作为“平面”或鸟瞰观察的补充视角。结合剖面思维开展行走民族志研究有助于更细致入微地探究城市景观。继续拓展这一思路或能引发以下思考：如何将这样细致的研究方法应用于更大尺度的地理范围，以及不同研究方法的组合可以收获怎样的研究成果？

4 “白”的重要性

其他色彩与绿色有何关联呢？不同的色彩产生的关联正如景观、基础设施与城市生活那般可产生联想。例如作者在书中所描绘的，借助水利基础设施以“蓝”补“绿”的现象，即考虑到巴林当地的淡水资源条件，处理后的污水大多用于浇灌绿地。因此，水资源的高效利用与绿地的高效管理关联紧密。在巴林，绿色的某种色调变化源于枣椰树种植业的演变（图4）。这种以枣椰树为优势树种、适应当地气候条件的生产性景观，在视觉上显得并不绿色。以巴林麦纳麦市的一条枣椰树绿带为例，作者指出了一种典型的矛盾——枣椰树绿带的保护常常受到视觉上更绿的城市开发项目的冲击。实际上，米色的沙漠植物、建筑和设施才是真正能够适应干旱环境的城市景观元素（图5）。正是这些“不可持续”的米色构成并维持着巴林为数不多的绿色空间。

书中重点反思了“城市在视觉层面变绿等同于对环境有益”这一观点^[4]。这种反思引发了对“白”的重要性的探讨，多尔蒂认为白色是一种“有深度”的色彩。笔者以为他运用了“深描”——一种由人类学者克利福德·格尔茨提出的人类学文化研究解释方法^[5]——阐释了白色即为各种色彩的叠加。因而读者阅读书中的某些段落时可能会产生正在阅读一本人类学论著的错觉，尽管本书所探讨的主题不是民族本身，而是人们体验的城市景观及日常生活。书中作者结合空间和空间性视角，将民族志的研究对象从社会生活扩展至涵盖物质实体和景观空间，使得本书同时具备了景观和城市研究等设计学科与人类学学科的特质。

绿色喻指景观，白色则喻指城市生活，两者均与景观所依存的基础设施和文化息息相关。通常，可以将城市环境中日常景观应用的研究结果以不同色调的绿色呈现，这些色彩终将共同融于“白色”。然而，在干旱的巴林，景观空间在视觉上以米色和白色为主，引发了对于绿色与城市生活的关联性的反思。在这里，绿色更多地承载了基础设施与文化间的媒介作用，促进未来城市转型。

① 加雷斯·多尔蒂为哈佛大学设计研究生院景观学系副教授、景观学硕士项目主任。

② 由于《绿的悖论：一个城市国家的景观》中涉及的行走民族志方法属于设计人类学学科，且强调访谈和观察，本文中“fieldwork”一词译为“田野工作”。

5 注重“行动”的设计人类学

《绿的悖论》邀请读者如作者田野工作时那样沉浸式体验巴林的城市景观。在书中，多尔蒂以多层次叙事的写作方式记录了对当地居民的访谈、自己的观察及档案统计资料，并且在主要章节结尾处进行了思考和反思。他笔下的巴林城市景观对于生活在温带气候环境中的读者来说或许有些陌生。例如，作者观察到，干旱环境中的景观普遍是米色的，但为了与同为米色的沙漠形成对比，建筑与住宅通常会利用绿色进行点缀（图6）。书中对陌生事物浅显易懂的解释方式与人类学中的民族志研究方式有着异曲同工之妙。

笔者认为多尔蒂可以进一步扩展书中的一些观点，以鼓励读者更深入地了解相关议题。他将本书归为“设计人类学”这个新兴学科，强调了从“描述”到“行动”的转变^[4]。设计人类学已成为探讨城市环境中日常景观的一种研究工具，用以探究人们如何在空间和文化层面开展日常生活。如果民族志被视为设计生成过程的一部分，那么读者或许有兴趣了解：多尔蒂如何利用多层次行走民族志研究指导设计实践与行动？抑或，研究过程本身是否已构成了实践行动的一部分？又或许，读者希望深究作者在城市和景观色彩的研究中的成果细节对这一新兴领域的贡献。再如，本书也许能引发对于作者研究方法和结果的探讨，进而催生出基于民族志研究方法展开的设计实践。

从头至尾阅读本书将使读者获益良多。本书构建了一个丰富且深入的景观叙事框架——借由绿色及其他相关色彩向读者详尽地展示巴林的城市空间。正如多尔蒂淡然面对田野工作期间的意外发现和突发事件那样，作者在书中以一种悠闲幽默的语气向读者娓娓道出绿的悖论。本书以具有特定地理条件（干旱气候）的区域及其文化与居民为研究对象，沉浸式观察并记录了人们在日常生活中如何与景观互动，以及人们可以从色彩的角度来理解城市景观。因此，笔者认为本书不仅对设计师和专业学者有所助益，也适合其他生活在全球各个地区、生活于不同景观中的人们阅读。

- 图 1. 《绿的悖论：一个城市国家的景观》封面
- 图 2. 2008 年 3 月巴林发生沙尘暴的情景
- 图 3. 巴林某处绿色空间广告效果与实景的对比
- 图 4. 20 世纪 60 年代的枣椰林生产性景观
- 图 5. 适应干旱环境的沙漠植物
- 图 6. 左侧照片为透过绿色玻璃俯瞰的巴林城市景观，右侧照片为住宅门前的绿色地毯