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ONLINE BOOK REVIEW

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Zooland: The Institution of Captivity
Irus Braverman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012)

Irus Braverman's book *Zooland* begins roughly in the 1970s when zoos in the United States were taken to be sites of conservation and preservation of animal species. Today's zoos, Braverman writes, are primarily about stewardship and pastoral care of animals. As such, zoos are involved in extremely complex administrative and regulatory networks dedicated to the classification and recording of animal DNA. Zoos move their animal populations around the world to ensure the best reproductive results. In many cases, zoos are self-appointed Noah's Arks dedicated to sustaining animal diversity for future generations. Zoos are also often involved in work that protects the environments in which animals naturally occur, and so have become ambassadors fighting against land clearance and habitat destruction. These new zoo activities, which collectively seek to preserve animal diversity, represent a new ideology that informs the practices of zoos confronting the challenges of 21st century's environmental degradation.

I was reminded of this expansive and grand zoological mission last year when I took a group of undergraduates to Australia for a month of teaching. There we talked to Rebecca Spindler, the current director of Sydney's famous Taronga Zoo, about the zoo's goals and objectives. Rebecca explained to us that she manages Research and Conservation Programs focusing on wildlife ecology, behavior, reproduction and health to inform best conservation practice. She also talked about the decision-making that goes into whether the zoo will focus on one endangered animal over another, or if and when the protection of a certain species is sacrificed for the general good of the zoo's collective responsibility to ecological well-being. And she explained to us the huge networks of activists, scientists, and international regulatory agencies involved in the practices seeking sustainable animal populations. One of the species she is particularly involved in is the Tasmanian Devil, whose populations have been severely reduced due to a new cancer linked to the destruction of its habitat. Zoos are now the public face to a massive behind-the-scene international network of knowledge, genetic materials, conservation efforts, and exchange of living beasts.

Braverman's *Zooland* engages with the new zoos of the 21st century. It is an innovative book, adding a new chapter to understanding how zoos evolve. Specifically, it fleshes out the global regulatory network that I glimpsed at Taronga Zoo and gives inside views to the people, animals, and processes involved. It encourages readers to think about the zoo's role in mediating peoples' ambiguous and dynamic relations with animals supposedly wild and environments ostensibly natural. It also shows the reader how we – the recipients of the zoological experience – participate in ways both knowing and unknowing in the orchestrated spectacle of animal encounter, consumption, and learning. Drawing upon Foucault, Braverman's ethnography of North American zoos presents an innovative, bold and in-depth study of how zoos are conceived, managed, organized, spatialized, recorded, managed, and governed.

While primarily based on interviews and insights gleaned from elite zoos in the United States, the author situates this US-based interpretation in a more globally connected zoological world. Braverman also engages with the culturally informed relationship between humans and non-humans, building upon the work of theorists such as Donna Haraway and Sarah Whatmore who seek to explore the emotional, psychological and material relations that both divide and blur articulated differences between people and animals. The degree to which Braverman's analysis of US zoo management and US society's imaginary about animals is applicable to zoos and peoples in non-western contexts is not explored and leaves me, the reader, wanting more.

Of particular interest for legal anthropologists will be chapter 6, which explores the laws and regulations pertaining to zoos. The chapter presents a dizzying array of official laws and less official industry and professional standards shared among zoos that are accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). As Braverman discusses, "zoo laws" "casts a broad net that captures the bricolage of zoo-related norms – from federal laws and state regulations through case law and institutional treaties and finally to the zoo industry's standards and guidelines" (p. 127). Precisely because of the lack of accessible and comprehensive official laws with respect to zoo management, the AZA has been forced to fill in the gaps and establish norms that reflect members' high level of professionalism. Unfortunately, and this fact really shocked me, only 10% of all zoos in the United States are accredited. This means that the other 90% are not held to the same high standards for the animals in their care. What goes on in these zoos? What abuses and negligences are allowed to go undetected? And what goes on in other countries that presumably have an even lower rate than the United States of AZA accredited zoological institutions?

Braverman argues that part of the problem is that some laws apply only to animals, some laws only to humans, and most make no accommodations whatsoever for the unique human-animal relationship that permeates the public spaces of zoos. Zoos thus become unique hybrid human-animal locales,

where the legal status of zoo animals vis-à-vis humans is highly contested. For instance, a lion is deemed a wild animal and cannot be owned as one would own a horse or a dog. This creates ambiguities when things go wrong (say the lion eats the popcorn vendor) in applying the usual sets of legal definitions, legal precedents, and legal remedies.

Chapter 6, and the book in general, highlight the degrees to which legal regulations infiltrate spaces and places and practices and experiences to which many people are typically oblivious. And this is where the critical thinking of Braverman's legal geography approach forces readers to engage with the realities of official state law's inadequacies and the emergence of new forms of governance that arise to fill the vacuum. As elite zoos have become embedded in international and global regulatory frames and networks, the inability of state law to manage animal conservation and care becomes more and more apparent. The central question becomes: how to regulate and enforce industry standards that include over a hundred countries with different levels of resources and knowledge?

If one extrapolates these legal problems from the care of animals within zoos, to the care of humans within societies, one begins to appreciate the wider implications of *Zooland*. Official state laws are failing their citizens in many countries on many fronts. In the United States, education, health, incarceration, immigration, taxation, and gun control are some of the more obvious arenas of legal inadequacy. How will these old gaps in governance be filled in? Will new spaces of legality emerge, and if so, will people be able to recognize them? Whose normative standards and ideological positions will prevail? Will legal and regulatory practices be determined at a global level? Given such legal uncertainties, one could argue that the growing numbers of impoverished people in the US and across Europe are feeling more like neglected animals than the hopeful recipients of special pastoral care such as the Tasmanian Devil. Modern zoos may have come a long way over the past century in terms of presenting, managing and preserving some animal species. But the societies in which zoos are situated, and the people that zoos supposedly serve, are arguably losing ground.