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Book reviews

Three Perspectives in Contemporary Economic Sociology

Books reviewed:
Barry, Andrew and Slater, Don (eds) **The Technological Economy** London: Routledge 2005 224 pp. £20.99 (paperback)
Podolny, Joel **Status Signals, A Sociological Study of Market Competition** Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press 2005 296 pp. £22.95 (hardback)
Velthuis, Olav **Talking Prices, Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art** Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005 253 pp. £22.95 (hardback)

Introduction

The economy is back at the centre of sociological analysis. This, of course, only means that it has recaptured the position it once held in the works of the sociological 'founding fathers', Simmel, Pareto, Weber, Marx, and Durkheim. The so-called 'new economic sociology' (NES) is a field that grew out of studies made by US sociologists who essentially used three perspectives: cultural sociology, organizational sociology, and structural network sociology (Swedberg 1997). In addition, one could mention the political economic perspective and Bourdieu's (2005) work. These last two, however, have been less important for the development of NES. More recently the idea of performativity has come into vogue (cf. Swedberg 2004).

In this essay I review three books representing different economic-sociological perspectives drawn from the authors above: performativity, cultural sociology, and structuralism. The books, taken together, show the progress of the field, but they also point to its problems and shortcomings. They focus on the most central mechanism of the economy, markets, which for a long time have been the main issue of NES. The issue of the quality of the products found in markets is another common theme in the works reviewed. Finally I will discuss several major problems in today's economic sociology, and suggest some strategies to improve the situation.

The Structural Perspective

One could argue that the starting point of the structural perspective in NES is an article by Harrison White (1981), *Where do Markets Come From?*.[1] Economic sociology, however, only became a field of study through the famous article written by his student (Granovetter 1985) and by the large number of publications subsequently produced and edited by Richard Swedberg. White's piece has influenced most sociological studies of markets. The main point of this

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perspective is that the social structure and actors' positions in this structure are the basis for explaining the market forms and behaviour. This tradition is partly defined by its use of quantitative methods.

Joel Podolny has analysed the role of status in different markets for more than ten years in a number of often co-authored papers. His book *Status Signals, A Sociological Study of Market Competition* brings some of these texts together. Status in markets is intimately related to uncertainty and functions as a signal because quality of the items traded is difficult to observe. Podolny's central claim is clear: 'the greater market participants' uncertainty about the underlying quality of a producer and the producer's product, the more that market participants will rely on the producer's status to make inferences about quality' (p. 18). An important point of the book is the so-called 'Matthew effect', which Merton (1968) has discussed. This Biblical idea implies that those who gain status, which is a benefit and an advantage in its own right, will gain further advantages in the market due to their status.

The book introduces readers to the recent developments in US economic sociology on markets, and especially the discussion and research on status. It should be said that Podolny has played an important role in putting status on the US economic sociological map. This book is well written, and Podolny's points are easy to understand. He draws on both sociology and economics to build his theoretical apparatus. The first chapters clarify and elaborate on the approach, and the book ends with a concluding chapter that mainly summarizes the content. In between he has included a number of empirical chapters, which analyse different fields or markets, such as shipping, banking, innovation and wine.

Podolny defines status as 'deference relations', which means that one actor accepts a social relation with another. A correlated point is that status, in Podolny's terminology, 'leaks'. This means that when a high-status firm interacts with a low-status firm, the status of the latter increases, while the high-status firm diminishes its own status. In this 'status economy' social interaction cannot be reduced to short-term pecuniary motives. These market actors also consider the value of observable interactions and relations.

Status has economic consequences. We are informed by Podolny how status firms can make more money because their status enables them to charge more for their products or services than firms with less status. Status also influences social interaction, and in one chapter Podolny argues that innovation cannot be reduced to a technological order of evaluation. Instead, he shows how the selection process among technologies is influenced by the status of the innovators. He furthermore recalls the argument that Bourdieu, among others, stresses: namely that those who have power in a market can use it to change the rules of the game.

Podolny also discusses market share, market segmentation, and cost-benefit analysis in relation to status, as well as different forms of status. His approach is articulated and predicts empirical outcomes of, for example, cost and profit. That is, the market position of an incumbent is said to explain what we observe in real markets. One problem, in my view, with Podolny's approach is that he does not discuss its domain of applicability. Though it can be argued that status is central to all markets, it does not follow that every market should be analysed by adopting his status approach. The strength of Podolny's argument, to draw from many different empirical cases, is not without weakness. The lack of in-depth knowledge of the cases makes it difficult to adjudicate the very role of status, as well as what it is exactly that makes some actors gain in status. We have instead to rely on Podolny's definitions, which are not validated by the actors themselves who, he claims, pay attention to status.

The book has a surplus value beyond the individual papers since it enables Podolny to elaborate on the notion of status. Still, the way of writing books 'backwards', as it were,

i.e. writing a book based on a number of papers that have already been published, may make it less likely that the author will engage with more profound issues that one expects from a book. It is, for example, clear that Podolny has not addressed issues of ontology and epistemology in relation to status. Let me finally say that I think the status perspective is interesting, and its profoundly sociological character makes it a useful starting point for a genuinely sociological theory of markets.

The Cultural Sociology Perspective

The cultural sociological perspective on economy is associated with the works of Viviana Zelizer and Paul DiMaggio. But it is wrong to see this as only a US-based perspective. Karin Knorr Cetina and more recently Olav Velthuis, to take two European authors, also stress the role of culture, though using somewhat different theoretical schools than the US sociologists. The main point of this perspective is that culture is used for explaining our observations of the economy.

In his book, *Talking Prices, Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art*, Olav Velthuis addresses the neglected, though central, issue of prices. Though one can hardly think of markets without prices, few economic sociologists have made serious attempts to increase our understanding of, for example, their role in the economy. Velthuis studies prices in the contemporary art markets in Amsterdam and New York. His research is based mainly on interviews with art dealers, which Velthuis has complemented with observations, as well as quantitative material. This study also informs the reader of historical developments in art markets in an easy-to-read way that is dense with examples from the empirical field. The main point is that markets are cultural constellations and that exchange in markets is highly ritualized (p. 3).

It is an excellent choice to study prices in a 'cultural industry'. This type of industry is often characterized by what Bourdieu sees as an 'inverted economy', in which 'real' artists cannot make money in the art market (cf. Bourdieu [1992] 1996: 148–9). Moreover, artists and galleries are often involved in long-lasting and complicated social 'contracts'. A further observation is that there is an unclear correlation between price and 'quality' in many cultural industry markets.

It is my conviction, based on reading this book, that the insights that can be gained from an investigation of 'setting prices' is of great interest to researchers studying the large number of markets, for example status markets (cf. Podolny), in which there is no standard that can be used for evaluating independently the value of a commodity. Velthuis brings in the galleries' identity and status, though he does not use these terms, as important dimensions for explaining pricing in the studied markets.

Velthuis emphasizes what other students of art have shown, namely that prices and, more generally, money are separated from the discourse on art in artistic and aesthetic spheres. Prices in the markets Velthuis has studied are instead embedded in scripts and narratives. A script is conceptualized as a conventional cognitive manual to be used in price setting, which includes the technique, size and the career of the artists. Scripts enable actors to handle the sensitive issue of economic valuation and transactions by using a less personal discourse. This also means that prices in art markets are not set in the way Walras ([1926] 1954: 83–4) suggests, as if by an auctioneer (though auctions are also arranged in art markets). The sociology of prices, as presented by Velthuis, draws more on artists' careers and the scripts become part of the construction of 'cultural goods' (p. 89). Prices, we are also told, can additionally be used for ranking actors, with the consequence that prices can contribute to create order among market actors.

Though Velthuis has studied two markets, his approach is not designed to be comparative. The ambition is to understand prices, not the differences between these two markets. The research design, however, is not ideal. This study could have benefited from more than simply interviewing art dealers. He could have also talked, at least in the early phase of the study, to artists and buyers, who face the galleries 'upstream' and 'downstream' in the production chain of art. Artists and buyers are important since they represent sellers and buyers in relation to dealers. This strategy would, most likely, have increased our understanding of the dynamics of prices even more. This, however, is just a minor problem.

It is seldom the case that ethnographic studies are combined with quantitative studies. Velthuis does this, which means that his hierarchical regression analyses are grounded in the meanings of real actors. In other words, the results can be interpreted using the meanings of the actors themselves, and not just, so to speak, the researcher's meaning. By using this statistical tool, Velthuis is able to sort out the effects on prices at two levels: that of galleries and that of the individual artists and their works. Thus, the gallery owners' stories on pricing and prices that is a result of Velthuis' fieldwork are tests against the quantitative material; his finding is that the two kinds of empirical material correspond.

This book, in sum, is a major statement of the cultural perspective and should be praised for addressing the important issue of prices. I think this study is very good, and Velthuis, as I see it, shows how the meaning of art is a result not only of culture but also of social structure. What I suggest by this is that the meaning of art is partly a reflection of the interaction between the buyer and the seller. Prices, moreover, must be seen as one dimension of the meaning of artworks. It is easy to see the advantage of the cultural perspective, and especially when it is used in combination with ethnographic methods, since it gives the readers insights into fields that they know little or nothing about.

The Performativity Perspective

The performativity perspective has its origin in Science and Technology Studies (STS). The idea that that the economy is 'performed' gained momentum among economic sociologists after 1998, when Michel Callon published *The Laws of the Market*. One central point that Callon makes is that the economy is not a passive object that social scientists develop theories about. In fact, Callon claims that we have got it wrong; it is the other way around: the theories we have developed are implemented in the world so that it mirrors these theories. This is what Callon refers to when he says that the economy is performed. Callon's idea, moreover, implies that we should conduct anthropological studies of economists and the corresponding body of knowledge represented by economics, rather than of 'the world'.

The book by Callon was for a long time the only available source on this tradition. We should therefore welcome the volume, *The Technological Economy*, edited by Andrew Barry and Don Slater. This book contains nine chapters, including an illuminating interview with Michel Callon, and one informative introduction written by the editors. Most of the texts have been published elsewhere, but together they provide a good overview, statement and discussion of the 'performativity perspective'. Not every contribution is based on Callon's theory, but all shed light on it. The texts focus on the connections between technology and the economy, yet market and knowledge are the two most central issues in virtually all of the chapters.

The volume aims at combining science and technology studies with economic sociology. The editors stress the role of knowledge, both of and in the economy. Knowledge is a neglected issue in contemporary economic sociology. Friedrich Hayek (1945) discussed the role of knowledge in the economy, and Daniel Bell (1973) discussed it in a more general way, but Barry and Slater take the issue further and state

that the economy is knowledge based, which essentially means that 'new knowledge and other immaterial goods is thought to be increasingly important to economic success' (p. 1). They argue that innovation, creativity and new technology must be understood as forms of knowledge. An underlying point is that knowledge, such as academic knowledge, is performed, which means that this knowledge creates what it is about. This is a different approach from the more traditional one, which stresses the analytical or descriptive elements of academic knowledge. Knowledge, in their view, also includes practice.

In addition to the interview, Callon contributes to the volume with a co-written chapter on the collective construction of quality orders of commodities. The argument is that the actors taking part in the market process co-construct the product. The chapter by Clark, Thrift and Tickell shows, in a similar fashion, how the financial media co-construct the objects they report on. The book also raises the issue of politics, and especially the relation between politics and economy. One central question is to what extent political matters are excluded from economic calculations. Callon's notion of 'framing' is useful to describe the dimensions that are both included in and excluded from the analysis. Thus, inclusion and exclusion reflect, we are told, the political dimension of the economy and economics. The political dimension should be interpreted in the light of the increased reflexivity of markets, which Barry brings up in his chapter. Celia Lury, in her chapter on brands and marketing, also discusses reflexivity, as well as the objectivity of the 'things' marketed. Her chapter throws light on the importance of including the consumer markets in sociological market studies, and she, like Callon, points to the changing status of the goods as a result of their interaction with consumers. This point, one should remember, is implicit already in the idea of diffusion of fashion discussed by Simmel ([1904] 1971).

Don Slater's excellent chapter is a bridge between cultural ethnography and the more abstract approach of Callon. This chapter clarifies many of the underlying tensions that we can see in the recent debates on Callon's theory, and Slater rightly points out that Callon's perspective tends to make the semiotic fallacy, namely to draw conclusions about practice from discourse. I think that the book would have been even better with more of this kind of critical discussion of Callon's approach.

I would finally like to highlight a chapter, which does not draw on Callon, by Karin Knorr Cetina: 'From Pipes to Scopes, The Flow Architecture of Financial Markets'. This chapter makes a distinction between two types of markets: network architecture, which means that markets actors are connected to each other, and flow architecture, which means that actors are disconnected from each other. The global finance market is a typical flow market, according to Knorr Cetina. This means that much of actors' lifeworld is cut off and instead, so to speak, becomes incorporated into the technical system. Her finding is that 'the reality on the screen becomes the traders' lifeworld' (p. 127). This book is useful for those who need an introduction to Callon, but it also has the depth to attract the more advanced reader.

The Sociology of Markets

Over the last ten years or so, markets have become the central issue in economic sociology. A market can be defined as a social structure for exchange of rights, which enables people, firms and products to be evaluated and priced (Aspers 2005: 427). Markets are tangible units of analysis and have for good reason been chosen as the main focus of empirical, theoretical and normative discussions. I think, however, that sociologists have not done enough to integrate markets into a larger framework; nor have studies paid enough attention to profound distinctions that can be made between types of markets.

What I think is clear from reading these books is that though economic sociology has made vital contributions to our understanding of the economy, and especially markets, it has not produced a coherent theory of the economy to rival that which economists have produced. We should consider why this is the case, as I do here without discussing the fragmentation of sociology into many different and disconnected sub-disciplines.

Economic sociologists have not done enough to make us understand the economy in relation to the rest of society. To reveal not only this connection but also the economic logic was the ambition of, for example, Parsons and Luhmann, who developed genuinely sociological theories that integrated the economy as one part of a larger whole. However, these two authors failed to make us understand the economy at a more tangible level. New economic sociology, which for example is manifest in studies of markets, has been more successful in this respect. The downside of this approach is its ambition to merely add some meat to the 'economic man'. Economic sociologists do this by always relating their findings to those of 'mainstream' economics. This form of positioning and argumentation, partly based on a 'straw man' fallacy, since the developments within economics are becoming more heterogeneous, is not needed to convince the sociologist – and I doubt that the economist has to be reminded of what he already knows. This 'hang-up' about economics only perpetuates the dismal situation of economic sociology in relation to economics. Only a few contemporary thinkers have been able to fundamentally challenge the economic perspective and launch theoretically grounded sociological programmes. Bourdieu (2005) is perhaps the most prominent example, though Harrison White (especially 1992) should also be mentioned.

Can the three perspectives that I discuss here contribute to a more coherent economic sociology? Can they, for example, be combined? I think that they can, though it would be a huge theoretical undertaking to do this successfully. To accomplish this task I suggest we need to do two things. On the one hand we must view the economy from a distance and emphasizing the similarities of, say, market structure, and the basic preconditions of markets, such as lifeworld and generalized trust. On the other hand we must use in-depth studies to analyse the emergence of markets and competition, examining how different cultures and social structures create the differences we observe between markets.

Moreover, contemporary social science must account for its impact on the world that it studies. Though Callon stresses this, and focuses on the role of economic knowledge, Husserl ([1936] 1954) and, much later since, Giddens (1984, 1987) and Bourdieu (both of whom draw on Husserl) have already introduced this way of reasoning (Aspers forthcoming). It is likely that the knowledge of social science, in the form of theories, brings about some of the cultural and structural differences we observe in real markets. The culture perspective, as I see it, is important for helping us understand the similarity across markets, i.e. the cultural foundation of the market economy, the lifeworld, and the taken-for-grantedness that is needed for economic transactions, but much of this has already been discussed by Durkheim ([1893] 1984). Thus culture should not only be used for showing dissimilarities between markets.

There are good reasons for using social structure as the starting point for analysing markets. The problem with many of the studies that use the social structure perspective is that they have taken the lifeworld of markets for granted. These studies have also neglected culture as an explanation of differences between markets. A further problem with the structural perspective is that it tends to reify structure. I claim that both structure, as well as culture should be seen as meanings that are socially constructed. We should, in essence, not assume *a priori* that the differences observed between markets are due to social

structure or culture; this is, in the end, an empirical question.

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Notes

1. This article was published in the same issue as, and just above, Oliver Williamson's (1981) article on the transaction cost approach. These two texts illustrate the fundamental difference between the atomistic economic approach and the relational sociological approach.

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General reviews

Becker, H.S., Faulkner, R.R. and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, B. **Art from Start to Finish: Jazz, Painting, Writing, and Other Improvisations** The University of Chicago Press 2006 234 pp. $62.00 (hardback) $24.00 (paperback)

'OK, now we know all about artistic institutions. We know about their relations to their environing societies. We know how

their making and reception are affected by class and all those other things. But what about – you know – what about the artwork itself?' (p.xiii). This book is a collection of twelve essays by a variety of scholars and artists provoked by this question, and, it turns out, more specifically by the question of 'how do we know when an artwork is finished?'

The essays ranged from the poor to the excellent via the bizarre. Many lacked focus. I was disappointed in the essays by Faulkner and DeVeaux – the former simplistic and unexciting, the latter founded on an exceedingly unconvincing conception of the jazz recording. Menger's piece was dense to the point of being inscrutable, although it is not clear how much of this can be put down to convoluted translation from the French. By contrast, on a positive note, I found Larry Kagan's reflections on his sculpture, which manipulates not only material but also its shadow, to be genuinely thought-provoking. As for the bizarre, it was refreshing to find a piece as off-the-wall as Michael Joyce's in an academic collection such as this, although ultimately, I couldn't help but feel that the piece was 'showboating' to the detriment of its content.

But is 'when is an artwork finished?' really an interesting question? Becker proposes the 'Principle of the Fundamental Indeterminacy of the Artwork', recognizing, for example, amongst other things, that artworks are perceived differently by each member of their audience. But this seems obvious – the latter point especially (all the more so for a Chicago sociologist such as Becker) – and I'm not sure we need to announce a 'principle' to this effect. Perhaps, then, the lack of focus of the essays can be attributed to the main question asked, to which we all know the basic answer (an artwork doesn't finish; it's indeterminate). In other words, without the question being made more specific, the issue strikes the reader as something of a 'straw man'. This is touched on by the cryptic, although ultimately fascinating, interview with artist Max Gimblett which forms chapter ten. Gimblett expresses dissatisfaction with ideas of 'finishing', and hints that a more profitable tack would be to consider when and why an artist decides to 'stop' an artwork (p. 193). This would eliminate the question of indeterminacy resulting from differing receptions of a work, and focus on the narrower, although no less interesting, question of an artist's decision, rather than some universal state of 'done-ness'.

One thing which must not go without comment is the book's hopelessly sloppy production (in fairness, an aberrance in my experience of this publisher). For example, several cross-references – presumably to be filled-in after the final pagination of the book – are left to read '***' (pp. 84, 94, 106, 108, 111). Further, although Pierre-Michel Menger's piece on Rodin is occasionally correctly identified as being Chapter Two, it is also erroneously referred to as Chapter One, including, rather inauspiciously, an occurrence on page one of the book (pp. 1, 94). Puzzlingly, Chapter One is also correctly attributed elsewhere on the very same page. Finally, in a book with Becker, Berliner, DeVeaux, and Faulkner on board, I was surprised to see Winton [sic] Kelly's name misspelled: a small, but perhaps symptomatic, point.

This book does not hang together well as such; with its lack of focus, it reads something more like a journal 'special issue'. Yet although it disappoints as a package, it is none the less a sporadically fascinating read, containing several pieces well worth detailed attention.

Alexander Hawkins

Benson, Rodney and Neveu, Erik (eds)
Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field
Cambridge: Polity Press 2005 267 pp.
£55.00 (hardback) £16.99 (paperback)

This edited collection is the fruit of a seminar funded by the France-Berkeley Fund that took place at the University of California-Berkeley campus in May 2000. It brought together media research scholars

and followers of Bourdieu's approach from both sides of the Atlantic.

There are too few cross-border collaborative ventures in social sciences for this collection not to be welcomed. The volume opens with a lecture by Pierre Bourdieu on the political and the journalistic fields, never before translated into English, and then unfolds with a mix of chapters from those present at the seminar. American contributors include Rodney Benson, who offers a chapter comparing the French and American journalistic field, Eric Klinenberg, who uses field theory to analyse the emergence of youth media organizations in the USA, and Daniel Hallin, who contributes with a more reflexive and theoretical piece on field theory. The co-author of *Comparing Media Systems* contrasts the contributions of Jeffrey Alexander's differentiation theory and Bourdieu's field theory to communication research and notes that the latter is closer to critical political economy than the former.

In his contribution, Michael Schudson questions some aspects of Bourdieu's analytical framework while locating it in the context of the sociological tradition of journalism research. The issue of 'autonomy' of the journalistic field is central to the work of Bourdieu and his followers. As Michael Schudson writes, it is a question that cannot be taken for granted and needs to be properly addressed: 'from the perspective of democratic theory, just how autonomous should journalism be?' (p. 215). Bourdieu did not hide his hostility to market forces, which he saw as a threat to journalistic autonomy. But this is a paradoxical position to adopt by someone coming from a country where journalists are notoriously subservient to political personnel and where the state heavily dominates the public sphere. Was Bourdieu barking up the wrong tree? And could the market help free the French media from their political prison-house?

The translated pieces from French researchers who rarely have access to the Anglophone market will be of particular interest to Anglo-American readers. These include Eric Darras's comparative study of an American and French political TV show (*Meet the Press* and *L'heure de vérité*), Julien Duval's analysis of economic journalism in France, and Erik Neveu's learned discussion of the relationship between Bourdieu and various twentieth century schools of thought, such as semiology, the Frankfurt School and British cultural studies. Neveu goes back to Bourdieu's writings on hermeneutics and his analysis is particularly helpful in dispelling certain myths about the French sociologist's work. Neveu also sheds light on the practical aspect of the relationships between Bourdieu, semiologists and proponents of the British cultural studies tradition, analysing the ebb and flow of translations and invitations amongst these scholars. This piece is a useful reminder of the subtlety of Bourdieu's position on media and culture. The volume contains two samples of Dominique Marchetti's work: the first piece is an abstract of his case study of the contaminated blood scandal in France and the second is an analysis of the subfields of specialized journalism. Dominique Marchetti wrote his thesis under the direction of Pierre Bourdieu in the 1990s and his research is both rigorous and imaginative. His work provides the best possible illustration of how to apply Bourdieu's theoretical framework to media and journalism studies.

The opening paragraph of the book makes a reference to Habermas's notion of the public sphere, which is a sign of the editors' hopes for Bourdieu's approach. Can the notion of field repeat the public sphere's phenomenal success in media and communication studies? Catching up with the German philosopher in terms of his impact both in academia and at policy level might be a tall order. (For instance, Habermas's influence is clearly visible in the recent communications of the European Commission on the poor state of the 'European public sphere'). Habermas had the good fortune of having his work translated in the early days of media and cultural studies, when theoretical frameworks were far and few between. Media studies has since split into different 'subfields' and thus it might be too late for

another wide-ranging and all-inclusive theoretical framework. Bourdieu's concept seems more relevant to certain areas of communication studies, such as journalism research, than cultural studies. The public sphere is a concept that is abstract enough for academics to provide their own interpretation , which helped launch a cottage industry in the academic presses of the 1980s and 1990s. No such luck with Bourdieu who spends most of his time closing down 'erroneous' interpretations of his work. But the French sociologist is already making a significant impact in media studies and his approach, as illustrated in this volume, represents one of the most sophisticated sociological approaches to journalism research.

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Clarke, Lee **Worst Cases: Terror and Catastrophe in the Popular Imagination**
University of Chicago Press 2006 213 pp. £14.50 (hardback)

Thanks in large part to recent events, catastrophe and disaster are no longer exotic outliers in sociological enquiry. A sure sign of the ascendance of this domain is that some sociologists have begun to pitch this work to a popular audience. Lee Clarke's book explores the making and imagining of 'worst cases' – by which he means large-scale disasters with far reaching societal impacts – and his book is aimed at just such a broad and populist readership. Clarke examines what worst cases are, how they are imagined and predicted, why some events come to be considered a worst case while others are not, and the social and political fallout from these catastrophes. His central argument is that, while worst cases may be spectacular, they are a normal and common feature of life that can starkly illuminate how societies are organized. This is an important, if no longer sociologically surprising, message. But Clarke's primary audience is not to be found within professional sociology. His book does not seek to advance the field so much as to raise the profile and broaden recognition of the insights that sociological analysis offers in times of crisis, threat and fear.

Targeted at a popular audience, the book does well to introduce some of the more salient issues that animate debates in this domain, along with some of the better known North American literature. Clarke's commentary is broad and wide ranging, settling for brief moments on the limits of probabilistic thinking, the politics of risk communication, how cultures constrain imagination, inequities in risk bearing, processes of blaming and scapegoating, the societal preconditions of disaster, and the construction of heroes, to name just a few. For more academic readers, the rapid movement of the text, urgently moving from one issue to the next, is likely to offer too swift an analysis of some distinctly problematic and hotly contested fields. Equally, the relatively slim referencing and footnotes indicate the readership being targeted. For a popular audience, however, Clarke seems to have pitched it just right. The text is lively, engaging, avoids excessive detail, and carries a faint hint of polemic. Clarke illustrates his points with a litany of fascinating examples, both actual and hypothetical, and uses the terrorism of September 11, 2001 as a constant reference point. These descriptions add colour to the text, but at times can crowd out the points they are meant to illustrate, with innumerable new cases and scenarios introduced right up to the closing pages.

One of the key themes running throughout this book is that worst cases are, by their very nature, so far beyond the range of ordinary experience that they are unimaginable, inconceivable and therefore rarely predicted, particularly by political elites. The apparent paradox presented by this position in light of the book's core argument – that catastrophes are at once both mundane and outrageous – to my mind presents a set of tensions that are not fully resolved by *Worst Cases*. Equally, some important issues posed in the opening chapter could have been explored in greater depth – the nature, formation and consequences of 'the popular

imagination' of the title, for instance. None the less, with this book Clarke has done a good job of bringing sociological accounts of catastrophes and worst case scenarios to a wider audience. Current and future events are unlikely to let this domain drift back to the margins of social science.

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Davie, G., Heelas, P., and Woodhead, L. (eds) **Predicting Religion. Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures** Ashgate 2003 253 pp. $84.95 (hardback) $29.95 (paperback).

The dominant paradigm of the sociology of religions – secularization – is inherently predictive, forecasting the future demise of religion as a structuring social force. With this paradigm increasingly challenged, the editors of this volume asked twenty experts on religion in the contemporary UK (and Sweden) to offer predictions for the future of specific religious institutions, traditions, and movements. The book begins with three essays on secularization theory by José Casanova, David Martin and Oliver Tschannen, which, as might be expected, argue for a more refined and prudent use of the concept, without discarding it entirely. The empirical contributions to the book, however, taken as a whole, suggest that, in the British case, future trends will continue to uphold the orthodox theory of secularization: Christian institutions will continue to decline to the point of near extinction; the religious yearning will continue to exist and even flourish, but increasingly in 'soft' forms of spirituality with authority centred on individual subjectivity and expressed in vague beliefs and commodified practices which will have no impact on the social structure. Secularization will thus be complete: from being central to the organization of society, to becoming an autonomous institution within a functionally differentiated society, religion will cease to exist as a socially relevant institution, to be replaced by a diffused, pantheistic spirituality providing personal meaning and bodily solace in a rationalized capitalist economy of which it is an integral part. Extrapolating from long-term statistical trends, Steve Bruce (ch. 4) predicts the virtual demise of Christianity in Britain by 2020. Bryan Wilson (ch. 5) continues in the much the same vein, noting that the sizeable material assets of the institutional churches are increasingly becoming a 'hollow shell from which the formerly encapsulated life form has largely escaped' (p. 70). The following chapters on religion and social networks show that reconfigurations of the social structure have already killed the social base of Welsh Nonconformism (Chambers, ch. 6), and caused the disappearance of religious socialization among non church-goers (Hirst, ch. 7). If charismatic movements offered the promise of a revival of Christianity, their weak theology and organization have made them unsustainable in the long term (Percy, ch. 8). Government outsourcing of social programmes to religious groups, the commodification of spiritual services, and the privatization of social life have already seriously diverted energies away from traditional forms of engagement in church life, and threaten the very membership structure of the churches (Cameron, ch. 9). With the self becoming the primary locus of religious authority, as shown in the cases of gay, lesbian and bisexual Christians (Yip, ch. 11) and cyberreligion (Pilgrim, ch. 12), the moral and spiritual influence of the churches is further undermined. Quakerism risks fracturing or dissolution as the majority of its adherents refuse any form of religious authority and share no common belief (Pilgrim, ch. 12). Wicca as an initiatory tradition risks being trivialized and diluted by the growing commodification of witchcraft and paganism (Pearson, ch. 14). The New Age movement risks petering out when its largest cohort of practitioners, the Baby boomers, age and eventually die off – a trend which is, however, offset by the increasing diffusion of New Age ideas and practices in mainstream society, and even within its health and

educational institutions (Heelas and Steel, ch. 19). This case, together with a study of state-religious collaborations in the Inner Cities (Taylor, ch. 10), are the only two chapters which suggest new forms of religious impact on social structures. But the spiritual beliefs of the non-religious majority, though they certainly exist, are vague and unarticulated – 'there must be *something*' (Hunt, ch. 13); in the case of widespread paranormal beliefs, they 'play only a peripheral role in shaping peoples' self-identity and outlook on life' (Sjödin, ch. 17) and, in the case of astrological belief, it is broadly held but shallow, and 'is of little consequence for the functioning of major social institutions in particular and the social system in general' (p. 224). It would appear, then, that Alexis de Tocqueville's prophecy was true: egalitarian democratic culture leads to a generalized, diffused pantheism which collapses all distinctions between man and God, animals, and the world, leading to a homogenous culture of mediocrity (Green, ch. 15).

The chapters are short, readable, and cover a wide range of communities and scenarios. The book's main weakness it the parochial White Britishness of its concerns and themes. The absence of studies from other parts of the world (except Sweden) can be understood for reasons of space and coherence – but I am struck by the glaring omission of studies of British immigrant religions such as Hinduism, Afro-Caribbean Christianity and, of course, Islam, reported to be Britain's fastest-growing religion. To what extent would such studies confirm or modify the picture of inexorable secularization?

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Hedgecoe, Adam **The Politics of Personalised Medicine: Pharmacogenetics in the Clinic** Cambridge University Press 2004 208 pp. £ 45.00 (hardback) £ 19.99 (paperback)

The acronym 'ELSI' short for 'ethical, social and legal implications', is often used to describe the range of issues investigated by sociologists of science and medicine in relation to new developments in biomedicine or science.

The problem with such a focus is that it remains largely blind to the politics of new developments, as well as to the interplay of regulatory battles and commercial negotiations that contribute to a new scientific discovery reaching clinical practice. The merit of Adam Hedgecoe's *The Politics Of Personalised Medicine* is that he avoids such exclusion by focusing on the political manoeuvres from industry, scientists and clinicians which have led to the clinical use of new pharmacogenetic treatments.

Pharmacogenetics involves the development of drugs specifically tailored to an individual's genetic make-up. In the years following the decoding of the human genome in 2000, hype surrounding pharmacogenetics reached a near-religious fervour among biotech and pharmaceutical executives, as industry insiders expressed the faith that pharmacogenetic drugs would help rescue an industry marred by scandals over the safety of pharmaceutical drugs.

Their hopes have not yet come to pass, and some doubt they ever will. In the case of pharmacogenetics, excessive hype has exceeded both the science and the clinical efficacy of the drugs. Medically and clinically, the early promise surrounding pharmacogenetics has waned, along with the fervour of some early proponents.

Here is where Hedgecoe's central point emerges. From a functionalist or positivist perspective, the hype surrounding pharmacogenetics was simply misplaced or inaccurate. But from the perspective which Hedgecoe employs, the hype, or expectation as he prefers to call it, surrounding any technology is best viewed as central to constructions of how the technology is used, regardless of whether initial expectations were misplaced or excessive.

Hedgecoe is helping to build an emergent field known as the 'sociology of expectations' which explores how the rhetoric surrounding new technologies affect their

construction, as well as their clinical and commercial usefulness. A simple but powerful point is emerging from this work: technological promise *always* serves as a form of capital – regardless of whether or not that promise is fulfilled or lost during the process of technology's journey to the market or the clinic.

Hedgecoe's book focuses on two case-studies of the use of pharmacogenetics: efforts to tailor Alzheimer's treatments to those carrying the apolipoprotein E (also known as the APOE) gene, and efforts to introduce Herceptin, a targeted gene therapy drug for the treatment of breast cancer, to clinical use in the UK.

The first case-study yields the most productive insights, particularly through Hedgecoe's illumination of the discrepancy between what scientists and clinicians view as the ethical problems raised by applying pharmacogenetics to the treatment of Alzheimer's. A key concern for bioethicists, sociologists and clinicians is the extent to which knowledge of one's genetic make-up affects the ability to make independent reproductive and life choices. Hedgecoe illustrates that investigations of such questions by social scientists and ethicists have failed to reach the scientific literature on pharmacogenetics, where ethical considerations remain largely absent.

Hedgocoe's second case-study looks at the politics of Herceptin's introduction to UK, something particularly timely given the recent media attention surrounding the NHS's funding of the drug. Though the focus on Herceptin is valuable for illustrating the internal structure of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) – 'the most unpopular organisation that has ever been created in healthcare in this country', as an informant tells him (p. 122) – it is also in relation to the analysis of NICE that one of Hedgecoe's limitations becomes apparent.

In order to emphasize the political nature of many NICE decisions, Hedgecoe posits a dichotomy between the scientific 'evidence' of a drug's efficacy, and the politics of its appraisal and use, noting that two narratives – one of evidence, and one of politics – are visible in NICE decisions. A more fruitful focus might have been to dispel, rather than to reify, the idea of a sharp division between the politics and evidence of NICE decisions, through seeking to illuminate how all medical evidence is in part politically manufactured.

This limitation aside, Hedgecoe's study both illuminates new perspectives on pharmacogenetics, and serves as a welcome corrective to work within medical sociology which, by focusing on 'ELSI' aspects, implicitly depreciates the role of politics in medicine.

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Inda, Jonathan Xavier (ed.)
Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics
Blackwell Publishing 2005 280 pp. £50.00 (hardback) £16.99 (paperback)

I first read Foucault in the spring of 1983, wrote him into my doctoral dissertation, and then escaped to a world in which no post-structuralist theorizing (I'd also dallied with Derrida) was required. Returning to academia two decades later, I was fascinated to find that there was a Panopticon lurking in every other seminar, and that 'The Foucault Effect' (borrowing from the title of Burchell *et al's* original anthology on governmentality) had reached many of the parts that Marx, Durkheim and Weber hadn't, including the development discourse that I was blithely reproducing in my own work as an applied anthropologist and unwitting agent (subject?) of neoliberal governmentality. Needless to say, I'm still trying to figure out how and why Foucault came to govern such large swathes of academic discourse in my absence. And as a man who has been living and breathing modernization, I'm also struggling to find someone who can tell me what modernity isn't.

In addition to a few confessionals of this kind, there are a number of clues scattered in and around Jonathan Xavier Inda's collection of 'Foucauldian anthropologies of modernity'. This comprises ten essays and the editor's introduction, all written by anthropologists working in North American universities. Many of their papers have already been published, and some anthologized, elsewhere. These include Paul Rabinow's oft-cited 'Artificiality and Enlightenment' (1992), reflecting on the Human Genome Initiative; David Scott's equally well-known 'Colonial Governmentality' (1995), illustrated by Sri Lanka; Aihwa Ong's 'Graduated Sovereignty in South-East Asia' (2000); James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta's influential 'Spatializing States' (2002), which imagines an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality; Adriana Petryna's 'Science and Citizenship under Postsocialism' (2003), about the management of the aftermath of Chernobyl; and Karen-Sue Taussig, Rayna Rapp and Deborah Heath's 'Flexible Eugenics' (2003), which discusses heritable dwarfism in the USA. Other essays appear to have been written (or at least rewritten) for this book: Peter Redfield's 'Foucault in the Tropics', on alternatives to the Panopticon in colonial French Guiana; David Horn's 'Performing Criminal Anthropology', about the development of this science in nineteenth century Italy; Diane Nelson's 'Life During Wartime', about the underside of biopower in Guatemala; and João Biehl's 'Technologies of Invisibility', which examines AIDS policy in Brazil.

At the end of his opening piece, 'Analytics of the Modern', Inda describes the book as 'essentially an introduction to a particular way of thinking and style of analysis: one that draws attention to the heterogeneous forces – forms of knowledge, types of authorities, and practical mechanisms – that seek to shape the conduct of individuals and populations in order to effect certain ends'(p. 17). That's a fair description, and there's certainly plenty of intellectual stimulation to be had from these particular anthropologies of modernity. Otherwise I felt a little cheated by a lack of transparency about the way in which this hybrid volume was put together, and found myself imagining alternative readers that would allow for more focused debate of some of the issues that it raises. Of course Foucault isn't just good to think, he's also good to eat (if that's what academic audits and textbook sales figures boil down to), and a mean critic might suspect that this book was born of these modern transformations of an ancient need. Englund and Leach argue (in *Current Anthropology*, 2000) that the metanarratives of modernity conspire with the audit culture to favour 'instant ethnography' and the kind of research that supports these simplifying narratives in the first place. Readers of this collection and others like it can judge for themselves whether or not this has been the real Foucault Effect on anthropology.

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Lehmann, David and Siebzehner, Batia
Remaking Israeli Judaism. The Challenge of Shas London: Hurst Company 2006 295 pp. $65.00

This important study of the complex interaction between ethnicity, religious reform and political mobilization should be set within the context of two separate but related debates in sociology. The first concerns the relationship between the modern state and the ethnic diversity of society. The second concerns the global development of what may be termed 'pietization' that is the growth of norms of everyday conduct that express religious revivalism or 'fundamentalism'. With reference to the first debate, political scientists are familiar with the unique complexity of the Israeli state, which the authors describe as 'the Israeli enclave arrangements'. This system of separate ethno-religious groups can be traced back to the 'millet system' of the Ottoman Empire when the various people of the

Book enjoyed relative cultural and legal autonomy. This pattern of communal separation and juridical distinctiveness was perpetuated under the British mandate when the various communities ran their own affairs within the spheres of the family, civil law and education. On the eve of Independence in 1947, the leaders of the religious communities negotiated special exemptions (from military service) and special arrangements for religious education with Ben Gurion. As a result, the ultra-Orthodox parties have been able to dictate the membership of the Religious Councils, thereby controlling the administration of marriage, funerals, dietary regulations and so forth. Secular Jews who wish to marry outside the control of the rabbinate may have to travel to Cyprus to achieve a legal union. Control of education lies at the heart of the enclave system in which ultra-orthodox Jews (*haredim*) have successfully protected their children from exposure to the educational curriculum of secular Zionism, apart from certain basic educational prerequisites such as mathematics and literacy. In the Israeli enclave society and its multi-party state, religious groups (of every shade of orthodoxy) compete for government funds to support the study of the Torah, to secure subsidized housing, and to enjoy welfare and health benefits.

Modern Israel was settled by both Zionist *sabers*, who created the secular *kibbutz*, and by religious Jews. Although they are diametrically opposed in ideological terms, they came to constitute the Ashkenazi elite that has ruled Israel since its foundation. After the 1956 Suez Crisis and the Six Day War in 1967, the number of Sephardim from Morocco, North Africa, Iraq and Iran increased significantly. These Sephardi Jews are the descendants of the communities that were expelled from Spain in 1492. These migrants have had no direct experience of the Holocaust, and they have also had little contact with democratic politics, capitalist labour markets or modern education. Their religious practices appeared to involve healing, pilgrimage, saint-worship, superstition (the evil eye), and folklore. The Sephardim became second-class citizens who were not allowed to marry into higher-status Ashkenazi families, and their children became an underclass of Israeli society, failing at school and drifting into delinquent, drug-dependent youth cultures.

Enter Shas. The alienated Sephardic vote had been harvested initially by the right-wing Likud Party which challenged the Labour Party's earlier control over the Sephardic constituency. However, as Likud embraced neo-liberal policies the Sephardic electorate switched their vote to Shas, and as a result Shas gained six seats in 1992 and nine seats in the Knesset in 1996. In the late 1980s the Moroccan-born political leader of Shas Arieh Deri was accused of taking 'kick-backs' from government grants for a *yeshiva* (a centre for Torah learning). His conviction further fuelled the claim that Israel was a stratified society in which Sephardim were treated as racially inferior to the dominant group. With this resentment in the background, Shas won nineteen seats in the Knesset in 1999. Although their vote declined to eleven seats in 2003, Shas remains the fourth largest party, commanding control over the 'ethnic vote'. With seats in the government, Shas is able to channel resources into its own communities as a reward for electoral support, thereby reinforcing the enclave structure of Israeli politics.

Why is this case study important for political theory? Theda Skocpol laid the foundation for a revival of political theory by showing in her research on revolutions that the state cannot be reduced to society, but acts instead as an autonomous historical force. The Israeli state perhaps proves the opposite state-in-society theory that has been championed by Joel Migdal in his *State in Society* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) Migdal's argument is that states vary in effectiveness depending on their ties to society; states are not unitary actors but clusters of institutions and groups with conflicting interests; state policies reflect contingent pressures from their broader social context;

and finally state and society can under some circumstances stand in a mutually corrosive relationship. Lehmann and Siebzehner briefly consider social capital theory to suggest that Shas does not make a significant impact on social cohesiveness, but, following Migdal, a case could be made that Shas, along with other enclaves, actually damages the functions of the state. One lesson from the recent crisis in Lebanon may well be that Hizbollah rather than acting as a valuable element of civil society replaces the state, thereby reinforcing sectional interest. The general lesson of any enclave society is that these enclaves preclude any effective policy response to ethnic stratification and do not create social capital.

The second topic of this study – the sociology of religious revivalism – turns out to be more interesting and innovative than the political sociology of enclaves. Lehmann is already well known for his work on the complex relationships between charismatic movements, church reformism, fundamentalism and popular religion in Brazil and Latin America in his *Struggle for the Spirit* (Polity Press, 1996) and in part this study of Judaic revivalism continues the earlier project. Shas is closely associated with the reform of the legacy of traditional Sephardic practice in which Shas followers take on the practices and beliefs of the *haredim* in order to resist secularization and to rescue Sephardic youth from the clutches of MTV, pool clubs, bars, and American consumerism. Shas piety can be regarded as an illustration of Max Weber's notion of rationalization, because it prepares young people for life in a secular society by giving them specific norms to regulate their behaviour. These pious norms include not only how they should dress and what they may eat, but who they can date and eventually marry. Perhaps the most important aspect of this ethnography of Jewish piety is the claim that all social reproduction is biological reproduction; this social fact explains why religious movements place such an emphasis on sexual conduct, selection of marriage partners, fertility and family life. While Shas stands for the continuity of Sephardic tradition, in fact the rationalization of religious norms involves the elimination of much traditional activity. Paradoxically as the Sephardic *haredim* in one sense are moving into mainstream ultra-Orthodox life, they also embrace aspects of popular culture including the use of the media to spread their message. In this respect the Israeli religious scene is probably no different from anywhere else. The globalization of religion appears to involve three inter-related developments: revivalism, especially where lapsed individuals become committed returnees; the cultivation of personal piety involving religious norms of dress, belief and behaviour; and the interaction of reformed religion with elements of popular culture, involving a certain degree of religious commodification. In the new religious market place, there is considerable competition involving among other things product differentiation of religious lifestyles and the development of 'brands'.

Remaking Israeli Judaism is thus an important sociological contribution to understanding how ethnic enclaves interact with religious fissures in civil society and how such a fragmented civil society is managed or not managed by a secular state. How and whether the secular Zionist state can withstand these ethno-religious pressures may in turn shape Middle East politics more generally. One might draw the conclusion that a differentiated, diverse and effervescent civil society may not be the optimum condition for a successful and effective state.

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Malešević, S. **The Sociology of Ethnicity**
Sage Publications 2004 200 pp. £70.00 (hardback) £20.99 (paperback)

The Sociology of Ethnicity by Siniša Malešević provides a thorough and balanced account of the sociological foundations of the study of ethnicity. In nine substantive chapters, Malešević surveys an impressive

range of contributions from the literature on ethnicity according to the sociological traditions in which they are situated. From neo-Marxism to symbolic interactionism and neo-Weberian approaches to rational choice theory, Malešević adroitly demonstrates the relevance of sociological theory for the contemporary study of ethnicity. His presentation is as critical and engaging as it is easy to read and logically organized. It is invaluable reading for sociologically inclined students of ethnicity.

Malešević's book is a sociologically driven account of ethnicity. The reader searching for chapters labelled 'primordialism' or 'constructivism,' 'race' or 'nationalism' – according to the fashions of the ethnicity industry – will be disappointed. Instead, Malešević firmly situates the current scholarship on ethnicity within the respective sociological traditions from which it has emerged. Each chapter presents a comprehensive and critical analysis of a different theoretical approach to ethnicity. Malešević's account provides his readers with a compelling reminder of the theoretical moorings of today's scholarship on ethnicity.

While the theoretical richness of the text is its main strength, it is also its weakness. Malešević is successful in his bid to construct a clear theoretical framework for engaging the scholarship on ethnicity. But his framework is a bit too clear. In his resolve to remind the reader of the contemporary relevance of the sociological canon, Malešević has to do a bit of cajoling to get his scholars to form ranks according to the framework he has supplied. To be sure, making these connections transparent is a worthwhile exercise for any student of ethnicity. But are today's contributions any less valid if these connections are less clear, crisscrossing, or even contradictory?

The marked differences Malešević presents are in part an artefact of the organization of the book into chapters that explore – but also amplify – such differences. Chapter by chapter, Malešević thoroughly and critically subjects each theoretical approach to intense scrutiny from various epistemological and ontological perspectives. By the conclusion (where a fresh barrage of critical salvos greets the reader), the question becomes which theory will remain standing in this survival contest of the theoretically fittest. (For those keeping score, Malešević's 'neo-Weberian elite theory' comes out on top.) At times, Malešević lets ethnicity slip from his crosshairs. This is a book about ethnicity, not theory. The theory should help the reader understand ethnicity rather than supplant it as the object of analysis.

Malešević deserves credit for drawing his readers' attention to the important and in many cases fundamental differences that distinguish these various approaches to the study of ethnicity. But this need not be a contest. Without slipping into the abyss of postmodern relativism (of which Malešević is rightly critical), one can appreciate that the perspectives he so carefully explores provide insight on different dimensions of ethnicity. The ethnicity scorned by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century bears little resemblance to that described by Edmund Leach in Highland Burma in the 1950s or interrogated by Homi Bhabha in the postcolonial world at the end of the twentieth century. Ethnicity, in all its permutations, is a moving target. Different approaches are useful for elucidating different dimensions of a complex phenomenon that transforms itself across time and space with amoebic alacrity. Malešević has helpfully reminded his readers of the richness of the traditions in which this contemporary scholarship is grounded. It is ultimately for his readers to determine how to move forward with the continued study of ethnicity.

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Page, E. and Jenkins, B. **Policy Bureaucracy: Government With a Cast of Thousands** Oxford University Press 2005 214 pp £45.00 (hardback)

Page and Jenkins are 'public administration specialists' who conducted 140 interviews

with middle-ranking English civil servants at the beginning of the century. Their focus was on the manner in which officials are recruited, form aspirations, acquire expertise, formulate roles and engage in the routine work of policy-making in diverse departments. Material from the interviews was complemented by published and unpublished papers and framed by theoretical preoccupations flowing from what might be called the core, classical works of organizational sociology, and chiefly the writing of Blau, Gouldner and Weber. Page and Jenkins extracted themes from those and other writings to question bureaucrats about the reconciliation of demands for compliance with superior authority, on the one hand, and, on the other, the latitude which those demands allowed for the play of creative discretion and innovation. Questions drove answers, and the book's evidence consists of quotations from *verbatim* transcripts that purvey individualistically-grounded accounts of work and relations, the whole amounting to an accessible, uncomplicated description of the demographics, tasks and administrative structures of policy-making in the intermediate ranks of English bureaucracy. We are told that officials tend to remain professionally in the same department over time; that their expertise is constructed in post – an expertise which masters policy process rather than substance; that that process may itself be classified as *production* jobs (the drafting of documents and briefings); *maintenance* jobs ('tending a particular regime or set of institutions'); and *service* jobs (the provision of advice); and that instructions about how to carry out work are characteristically imprecise and general enough to afford some latitude for individual initiative in the phrasing of what is done.

Policy Bureaucracy is well written; it contains new data; and it could serve admirably as an introductory manual for journalists and for recruits to the civil service, but its review in a sociological journal does require one to wander a little across the borders of customary delicacy, restraint and modesty. The authors make the repeated claim that they have explored *terra incognita* (on pp. xv, 2 and 19, for instance). It is a claim made possible only by the strict segregation of universes of academic discourse, by discipline not talking to discipline or department to department, even within the same small institution. Routine, middle-level policy-making is *not* a sociological *terra incognita*, and there are a number of qualitative studies that could have informed the book and enhanced its analytic sophistication and grasp.

Difficulties arise because *Policy Bureaucracy* is not fully embedded in the wider literature on policy-making. No conception is conveyed of how the Civil Service in England and Wales has for some twenty years been affected by a cultural revolution of restructuring, re-orientation, population movement, and radical shifts in modes of communication. There is no description of the flux which appears to be undermining many bureaucratic structures and habits of work. There is no discussion of how work processes are articulated, integrated and driven forward by the central administrative mechanism of committees, steering groups and working parties. There is little on the routine manner in which different officials, acting as what are called 'stakeholders', negotiate the substance and form of policy. There is no sense of the importance of contingency, uncertainty, openness and emergence in policy development. Neither is there any sense of the way in which officials can artfully (in Karl Weick's phrase) 'enact their environment' to generate an appearance of external pressure to which they and their ministers may be obliged to succumb. In short, *Policy Bureaucracy* is somewhat deficient in historical sensibility and phenomenological adequacy.

As worrying is the book's lack of reference to recent writings about transformations in the social organization of government. Edward Page is Sidney and Beatrice Webb Professor of Public Policy at the London School of Economics, but his *Policy Bureaucracy* makes no allusion at all

to ideas about governance, accountability and management developed by his colleagues Bridget Hutter, Peter Miller, Michael Power, Nikolas Rose, Colin Scott and others. One matter which those colleagues underscore is the decline in the capacity of civil servants to exercise professional self-regulation and the emergence in its stead of an audit culture and a system of performance management which mistrustfully regulate them by direct and indirect means. The writers on the new governmentality tend sometimes towards *a priori* reasoning, and *Policy Bureaucracy* could have served as a profitable opportunity empirically to explore the strengths and limitations of their ideas, but no such opportunity was seized. Its agenda was shaped instead by a fusty theoretical programme which was not, in the words of the current Home Secretary, quite 'fit for purpose'.

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Shilling, C. **The Body in Culture, Technology and Society** London: Sage 2005 256 pp. £60.00 (hardback) £19.99 (paperback).

In 1993 Chris Shilling published a book, *The Body and Social Theory*, that has become a central reference point for 'body studies'. He has written much of relevance and interest since but to me this new and very impressive book feels like the natural successor. It seeks to review the field of theorizing around embodiment in recent years, to revisit Durkheim, Marx and Simmel, to formulate an agenda and theoretical framework for future work, and to exemplify the utility of that framework by way of a review of empirical material in body-relevant domains (viz. work, sport, music, eating and IT).

Shilling's argument is as follows: (1) Durkheim, Marx and Simmel each approximated a view of the body as a 'multidimensional medium for the constitution of society'; that is, they claimed both that the body, as a source of needs, desires and action, shapes society, and that society, in turn, shapes the body, sometimes to the detriment of bodily needs and potential; (2) contemporary theories, specifically constructionist, phenomenological and structurationist theories, have tended to pursue relatively narrow agendas which do not converge and have, as a consequence, lost sight of this bigger picture; (3) a version of critical realism ('corporeal realism') is necessary to restore the multidimensional picture; realism is important because it allows us to conceptualize body and society as analytically distinct levels of reality, each with their own distinct emergent properties and powers; (4) the aforementioned mutual influence between body and society can be demonstrated across a range of contexts (work, sport etc.) by reference to existing studies.

The book is exciting, ambitious, well-written, comprehensive and, in many respects, persuasive. I recommend it to anyone with any level of interest in 'the body'. It is very good. Nevertheless, I was not wholly convinced.

My first reservation is that Shilling dismisses constructionism, phenomenology and structuration theories very quickly and on the basis of contestable readings. Both Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and structuration theory have a reasonable claim to being able to deliver what Shilling wants from a theory in my view. Furthermore, I am not convinced either that critical realism incorporates the insights of phenomenology, as he implies, or that the debate between structuration theory and critical realism is quite as clear cut and resolved (in favour of the latter), as he suggests.

My second reservation is that much of the work for Shilling's project, including theoretical work, remains to be done. I am happy to agree that body and society have analytically distinct properties and that each impinge upon and shape the other. Having agreed upon that, however, we must then establish what those properties and shaping influences are, and it seems to me that

Shilling is much looser, eclectic and potentially incoherent in his thinking here. To give one example, we may agree that Durkheim, Marx and Simmel each have concepts of human nature, society and the interaction between the two, but they clearly have very different and competing conceptions, as Shilling notes, and we must therefore decide between them. Shilling doesn't do this and he introduces many more conceptions of human nature and society besides. The next step in Shilling's project must be to establish just what properties and powers he would attribute to the body and society, against the backdrop of the conflicting accounts he assembles here.

My final reservation concerns the notion of interaction between body and society. We need to look at this idea in more detail and, in particular, to address the issue that 'society', whilst real and characterized by emergent properties, is not an actor and therefore does not interact with anything except in a metaphorical sense. As Marx noted, it is embodied human agents who interact. Similarly, we should be mindful that the analytic distinctions proposed by critical realists are 'only' analytic; they are 'purified' abstractions (individuals abstracted from society and their socialization, social structures abstracted from the agents who 'do' them) which do not directly map onto empirical reality. Moreover, we should note that interaction, for all that realists invoke it in their explanations, does not sit easily in their ontology as it is neither body/individual nor, on their account, society. Perhaps another way of saying this is that we need to take a closer look at the ways in which body and society shape one another. Shilling points to a possible route when he invokes the homo duplex model of the agent, seeming thereby to suggest that conflicts between social and bodily demands are thrashed out within the lived experience of the agent, a view which might be furthered through a consideration of the notion of 'internal conversations' that has been deployed, in a realist vein, by Margaret Archer. However, I suspect that notions of the embodiment of structure and the socialisation of the organism, as developed in structurationist accounts, may also prove invaluable. In short, I think that Shilling is genuinely on to something here but there is still much more to do if his project is to be fulfilled.

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Smith, P. **Why War? The Cultural Logic of Iraq, The Gulf War, and Suez** Chicago University Press 2005 254pp. (hardback) $35.00

Norhstedt, S. and Ottosen, R. (eds) **Global War – Local Views: Media Images of the Iraq War** Nordicom 278pp. (paperback) €30.00

War is a generally under-studied social phenomenon in British sociology. This is particularly unfortunate in the current era as new forms of warfare have appeared which both represent a profound historic transformation. Although none are British, the recent publications by Philip Smith and Stig Nohrstedt and Rune Ottosen are to be welcomed, therefore. They attempt to bring war into the very centre of the sociological imagination by providing an analysis of public, governmental and, above all, media interpretations of contemporary conflict. Given the centrality of the media to all military operations today, their aim of providing a critical analysis of the media is timely and important.

Philip Smith's starting point is a rejection of realist explanations of warfare. He denies states go to war on grounds of rational self-interest. For Smith, war is not the product of rationality but of cultural frameworks. Smith postulates the existence of three kinds of 'genres' which structure state policy. Smith defines the three genres as 'low mimesis' when potential opponents are not demonized, 'tragedy/romance' when the regrettable inevitability of war is recognized or 'apocalypse' when enemies become evil. Drawing on this framework to prove a thesis of strong

cultural determinism, Smith analyses the Suez crisis, the Gulf War of 1991 and the Iraq War of 2003. In each case, Smith tries to show how the dominant genre drove state policy. Thus, in the Suez, British and French policy was propelled by an apocalyptic understanding of Nasser. In the Gulf War, Saddam was universally comprehended in apocalyptic terms but, in 2003, while the US and British policy were patterned by the apocalyptic genre, the French assumed a low mimetic mode. Smith's discussions of Suez, the Gulf and Iraq are interesting throughout and the inclusion of Suez in his book provides pertinent historical depth – if not irony. It is poignant to see that the arguments which the Americans cogently raised against the French and British in 1956 are precisely the ones which the USA dismissed in 2003. As Hegel notes, history repeats itself, though unfortunately not always as farce.

No one in Britain familiar, with Tony Blair's 45 minute claim, will dispute that Smith is correct to emphasize the role of interpretation and rhetoric in policy-making, nor in noting that states draw upon recurrent motifs to legitimate themselves. It is illuminating, for instance, that Hitler was mobilized as an analogy to justify Suez in 1956, the Gulf in 1991 and Iraq in 2003. States do draw on common symbols in order to justify their actions. Yet, Smith's position is far more radical than this. Smith claims against realism, not simply that cultural understandings inform policy or are used rhetorically to justify state action. On the contrary, genres actually direct state policy independently of a state's political or economic interests. Thus, he claims that at any historical point, states might have adopted alternative courses of action. Imagining various counterfactuals for Suez, the Gulf and Iraq, Smith asserts that what drove states in each particular case was the genre which they had adopted. They could have done otherwise but did not because they were determined by a genre. Unfortunately, Smith never proves the strong thesis of cultural determination. Nowhere does he demonstrate that a particular genre was decisive nor, crucially, does not consider why certain interpretive frameworks may have become dominant in the first place. A realist would of course claim that, in every case, genres crystallize because they reflect the state's political and economic interests. Indeed, Smith himself has to concede the significance of political interests in explaining the dominance of particular genres. Thus, Smith describes that the favourable view which the USA and others had of Saddam Hussein in the 1980s 'lies not just in the objective interests of these nations but also in the narrative frames through which they were filtered' (Smith 2005: 101). Here the genres do not determine alone but are, at best, one factor among others in influencing state policy. Smith consistently retreats to a weak version of his thesis.

This does not mean that Smith's cultural analysis is fruitless. However, it does require revision. The cultural frameworks – the genres – do not determine state policy in themselves. However, in the face of any emergency, governments look to international organizations such as the UN, their allies and to domestic institutions and constituencies for support in determining the appropriate line of action. In the course of these interactions, the government, ministries, departments, parties, the heads of other states and, of course, the media will gradually reach agreement (or not) on their collective interests in the crisis. They will mobilize shared symbols – such as Hitler and the lesson of appeasement – to gain support, to co-ordinate their policies and to signify their allegiance to one another. Consequently, the processes of collective understanding, interpretation and negotiation, which Smith describes, are fundamental to the fateful decision to fight or not. However, his claim that states are determined by autonomous cultural frameworks misrepresents the nature of international politics. States are not determined by culture, although collective understanding plays a crucial role in the development of state policy. Nevertheless, Smith's work is a very useful and interesting piece.

Smith's book has a distinctive approach from the Nohrstedt and Ottonsen collection but its thematic connection to that volume is demonstrated by common reference to a striking media event. On 1 May 2003 President Bush strode out onto the flight deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* to announce the cessation of hostilities in Iraq. Recordings of the event now have a pathos which was never intended at the time. Significantly, his strut on the deck, dressed in flight suit, deliberately referenced the popular American film of the 1980s *Top Gun* and its star, Tom Cruise. It was a bizarre case of life imitating art, illustrating the way in which the media have now become active players in international conflict, influencing policy and the public perception of conflict. The incident highlights the central theme of Nohrstedt and Ottosen's collection: the political importance of media representations of the Iraq War. In the Nohrstedt and Ottosen collection, the contributors analyse how the Iraq War was represented in a variety of mainly European countries, examining print and television media both quantitatively and qualitatively. There are some wonderful vignettes including a discussion of Saddam Hussein's gilded toilet brush to expose the orientalism of Austrian reportage. Soberingly, although most of the countries discussed in the collection have a liberal government which supports a free press, it is notable that the media interpretation of Iraq closely matches that of government and popular opinion. There is very little dissent from the majority view. This is especially worrying in the case of the USA where Toby Miller shows how financial imperatives drive the major media networks to fawn to governmental and popular opinion, even to the point where they are willing to collude with the state. Thus, US networks broadcast US Special Forces' footage of their 'heroic' rescue of Private Jessica Lynch, not from barbaric captivity, as they claimed, but from an unguarded civilian hospital in which she was being treated by Iraqi doctors. Liberal capitalism in the form of media corporations may have every interest in stimulating authoritarian and nationalistic demagoguery rather than providing an antidote to it, as conventional wisdom often claims. Although the collection does not include a discussion of Britain or France, it addresses a fundamental issue and provides a useful framework for analysis.

Leon Trotsky once reputedly stated that, 'You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you'. These two books, converging on a similar theme of the interpretation and representation of war, should persuade British sociologists to concentrate on a human activity which is now taking a disturbing interest in all of us.

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Taylor, D. and Balloch, S. **The Politics of Evaluation: Participation and Policy Implementation** Policy Press 2005 261pp. £55 (hardback) £22.99 (paperback)

'What matters is what works', we are told, in today's eminently practical world of evidence-based, ideology-free public services. To find the evidence of what works, we need expert professionals crunching numbers. The point of finding the evidence – like all those nineteenth-century 'Blue Books' that Mr. Gradgrind pored over in Dickens' *Hard Times* – is to be able to replicate success. Doesn't all that sound like commonsense? Well, apart from the technical stuff, to be left to the methods anoraks? Whatever could be 'political' about it?

Plenty, say the contributors to this volume, all of whom have seen hard service in the vast and lucrative army of academic evaluators in Blairite England, and tell their battle stories in this volume. Who defines exactly what is to count as evidence of 'progress'? Who decides what happens to jobs, contracts, funding, organizational responsibilities and programme design after positive or negative evaluations? Who wins out when there are tensions between different visions about how to evaluate public services, for instance as between central and

local players or between audit-type number-crunching and touchy-feely stuff? All that is politics, even if not in the ordinary-speech sense of party competition for votes. And because, as Carl Friedrich long ago pointed out, 'power hides', getting to grips with such underlying politics means stepping into a recondite world of devil-in-the-detail indicators, manoeuverings and power-plays among various kinds of bureaucrats, and impatient politicians who can't see a goalpost without endlessly shifting it this way and that.

The better chapters in this book succeed in uncovering those processes and pointing out some of the ironies and unintended consequences that they produce. For example, Peter Squires and Lynda Measor show that the criteria for evaluating young offender projects were almost all defined in terms of bureaucratic activity – counts of forms filled out, meetings held, and the like, in true Circumlocution Office style – which ironically screened out the one thing that *did* make the process work, namely the personal qualities and efforts of the particular individuals on both sides of the front line. Peter Ambrose brings out the ambiguity of the centrally-defined indicators used to evaluate the success of urban regeneration, and the tendency to mix up structure, process and outcome. Peter Beresford shows that user involvement and participation in evaluation isn't necessarily as benign and empowering as all the hackneyed mantras of 'user involvement' imply, and Audrey Lethard, examining evaluation of interagency working in health and social care, shows how the bureaucracy keeps one jump ahead of the evidence by constant change that keeps the evaluators running behind. Some of the other chapters are more in the style of policy histories or project autobiographies, useful for future historians of early twenty-first century government in England but less angled to answering the analytic questions as to how the politics of evaluation works.

How is this book itself to be evaluated? Its jacket proclaims it to be 'exciting,' but a reader would need a lower-than-average excitement threshold for that over-used adjective to be fully merited here. It does not offer any radical new theoretical perspective on evaluation, so at best must be a footnote to the early classics of writers such as Carol Weiss and Aaron Wildavsky (the first cited once, the latter not at all). The statement that 'evaluation is politics' is merely banal unless accompanied by a clear analysis of all the various ways and means in which politics comes in, which is only partly achieved here. And if evaluation is politics, it is also true that politics is evaluation, yet the question of how politics in a democracy or other type of regime functions as an evaluative system is not even asked here, let alone answered. The distinctiveness or otherwise of the Blair-era politics of evaluation can't really be assessed from this book, which is based on contemporary case material and does not venture into the non-English parts of the UK, let alone quite different regimes and state traditions. Further, the book does not quite succeed in delivering a knockout blow to the number-crunching, audit-style approach to evaluation, of which most of its authors clearly disapprove, because a truly knockout blow would require using its own methods to show the limitations of that approach. 'Exciting?' No. Useful? Yes.

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Wilson, S. **The Struggle Over Work: The 'End of Work' and Employment Options for Post-industrial Societies** Routledge 2004 228 pp. £65.00 (hardback)

Shaun Wilson's book focuses on policy debates around basic income versus full employment. He grounds this in a survey of social theorists who have identified an 'end of work', a concept which has been used to support basic income models.

Jürgen Habermas characterizes work as 'instrumental', irredeemably tied to the logic of the system rather than the lifeworld. As Wilson argues, this leaves Habermas with an overly negative and undersocialized picture of work. By contrast Alain Touraine

develops an analysis of social movements linked to a theory of different 'societal types'. For Touraine, in post-industrial societies the labour movement (and its demands for full employment) no longer offers positive change and may obstruct it. New social movements such as environmentalism now represent the prime challenge to the post-industrial system. This more sociological theory is not without its problems. As Craig Calhoun (in *Social Science History* 1993, 17(3)) has pointed out, this sharp distinction between 'new' and 'old' social movements obscures the complex histories of both.

Wilson (2004:51) finds Offe's work the most convincing of the three 'end of work' theorists that he analyses. Offe relies less on grand theories and more upon an empirical analysis of 'disorganized capitalism', such as the rise of informal and service sector employment. Wilson accepts some of Offe's analysis, such as the argument that unions' loss of formal power (e.g. under a right-wing government) can undermine their ability to organize collectively. The main point where Wilson disagrees with Offe is over Offe's claim that a work-based society is no longer possible (nor, probably, desirable).

Having discussed these theorists, Wilson moves on to consider three policy models in greater depth. The first – the US model – he disposes of primarily through economic and policy critique. US welfare (such as it is) now supports people in work, rather than out of work, creating the threat of crisis when there is a downturn in employment. However, Wilson also points out that the US model does contradict claims about an 'end of work'.

The basic income model returns us to the post-industrial theorists. Wilson argues convincingly that many of these theorists overestimate the changes experienced; data do not suggest a dramatic, large-scale decline in employment. Evidence suggests that work remains important to many people's social identities. However, Wilson perhaps overstates the current common ground between basic income and 'end of work' theses. Feminist cases for basic income need not rely on the latter, while other radicals such as Alex Callinicos (*An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto* Polity, 2003) support basic income as a challenge to capitalist rationality. A form of basic income was supported by Hayek and Friedman, and the policy may again be co-opted by neo-liberalism (Wilson 2004). The recent collection *Redesigning Distribution* (Verso 2005), co-edited by basic incomes proponent Philippe von Parijs, contains an essay by pro-market adviser to Tony Blair, Julian Le Grand. And tax credits in the UK and USA, far from representing a step towards basic income, seem more like a continuation of state subsidies to low-paying employers.

Wilson's preferred scenario, a return to full employment policies, stresses that contra neocons and basic income supporters, we can have jobs *and* equality. Much of his prescription for trade union renewal makes sense, but I am less convinced by the possibility of resurrecting Keynesianism. The book's structure sometimes unnecessarily separates policy and theory, and feminism is largely absent from the theory section. Surprisingly, while Wilson cites the 'late Marx' as progenitor for 'end of work' theories, he does not link Marx's other conception of work as creative self-expression to his arguments for its continued centrality. However, this is an interesting and useful attempt to connect grand sociological narratives with policy analysis.

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