

The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization

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Thomas Janoski, Robert R. Alford, Alexander Hicks, Mildred A. Schwartz (eds.): *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization*

Cambridge 2005: Cambridge University Press, xxi+815 pp.

The *Handbook of Political Sociology* represents the first truly comprehensive survey of the history and current state of a little-unified but often very vibrant discipline. Clocking in at just over eight hundred pages, this masterful collection is packed with thirty-two unfailingly competent and often singularly authoritative chapters, written by the likes of Charles Tilly, Gøsta Esping-Andersen, Peter Evans, John Stephens, Frances Fox Piven, and many others. Each chapter provides a detailed analysis of the role of the state – its formation, transitions and regime structure – in its particular approach or sub-discipline. Dedicated to the memory of the late Robert Alford, the *Handbook* opens with a brief introduction by the three other editors sketching the major contours and challenges (culture –post-modernity- and rational choice). This is followed by three main parts.

Part 1, 'Theories of Political Sociology', consists of nine chapters on such topics as rule-making, rule-breaking, and power (by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Crawford), neo-pluralism and neo-functionalism (by Hicks and Frank Lechner), conflict theories (by Axel van den Berg and Janoski), institutionalist and state-centric theories (by Edwin Amenta), culture, knowledge, and politics (by James Jasper), feminism (by Barbara Hobson), linguistic approaches (by Jacob Torfing), rational choice theories (by Edgar Kiser and Shawn Bauldry), and theories of race and the state (by David R. James and Kent Redding). The chapter by Piven and Cloward rightly sets the tone here. The starting assumption is that rule-breaking is a strategy to contest, challenge or break domination, just as rule-making is

a strategy of domination and that the reasons for rule-breaking – and the choice of rules broken – can usefully illuminate the notion of power in social life. Piven and Cloward review a rich array of definitions of power, from Hobbes and Aristotle, to Weber and Russell, up to Dahl, Giddens, Wrong, Lukes, and Tilly. They argue that a distributional focus on 'powerful resources lists' (money, status, skills, and the like) cannot always sufficiently explain political challenges from below. Nevertheless, people poor in those resources, or with a low status in the social hierarchy, frequently attempt (and intermittently succeed) to exercise power, and most often they do so by breaking existing rules. According to Piven and Cloward, the source of this 'poor people's power' lies in the inherent interdependence, or interwovenness, of everyday social life: 'Because cooperative and interdependent social relations are by definition reciprocal, so is the potential for the exercise of power' (p. 39). Piven and Cloward insightfully discuss the prerequisites for the translation of this potential into actual power, and they review a range of historical examples of both rule-making and rule-breaking. In so doing, they amply illustrate the potential for this particular view of power in political sociology, and set a high standard for the rest of the *Handbook*.

Part 2 discusses civil society, viewing it as 'The Roots and Processes of Political Action': It includes contributions on money, social cleavages, and electoral politics (by Jeffrey Manza, Clem Brooks and Michael Sauder), public opinion, political attitudes, and ideology (by David Weakliem), comparative perspectives on nationalism (by Liah Greenfield), the social bases, organisation, and environment of political parties (by Mildred Schwartz and Kay Lawson), organised interest groups and policy networks (by Francisco Granados and David Knoke), corporate control, inter-firm relations, and corporate power (by Mark Mizruchi and Deborah Bey), social

movement organisations and strategies (by J. Craig Jenkins and William Form), and the news media.

Part 3 of the *Handbook* is titled 'The State and Its Manifestations'. It discusses state formation and state-building in Europe (Thomas Ertman), transitions to democracy (John Markoff), the incidence and consequences of social revolutions (Jeff Goodwin), regimes and contention (Charles Tilly), theories and practices of new-corporatism (Wolfgang Streeck and Lane Kentworthy), undemocratic politics (Viviane Brachet-Marquez), and civil bureaucracies in politics and implementing policies (Oskar Ozlak). Markoff's chapter merits singling out for its lucid structure and concise overview of all the major issues of the topic, captured under headings such as 'starting points', 'end points' and 'paths', 'conceptual, theoretical and methodological issues', and so on. Inexplicably, however, post-communist transitions are conspicuous in their near total absence.

Part 4, 'State Policy and Innovations', with just four chapters, is shorter. It discusses comparative and historical studies of social policy and the welfare state (Alexander Hicks and Gøsta Esping-Andersen), women, gender, and state policies (Joya Misra and Leslie King), racial policy (Kent Redding, David James, and Joshua Klugman), and war, militarism, and states (Gregory Hooks and James Rice).

Finally, Part 5 on 'Globalization' provides an overview of political sociology on globalisation in general (Philip McMichael) and of related issues in economic and social policy in global capitalism (Evelyne Huber and John Stephens), immigration and national integration (Janoski and Fengjan Wang), and counter-hegemonic globalisation via transnational social movements in the contemporary global political economy (Peter Evans). The two chapters on social policy, co-authored by two of the undisputed leaders of the field, provide particularly competent overviews of the often con-

tested (or at least ambiguous) roles of globalisation, liberalisation, and retrenchment regarding this crucial area of state involvement, along with the major regime typologies and causal theories. But even though both Esping-Andersen and Stephens have recently started tackling these issues themselves in particularly innovative ways, their chapters here pay too little attention to what could be deemed 'preventive social policies'. This includes topics that are key to understanding the political sociology of today's and tomorrow's knowledge economy, such as new approaches to human capital investment and early childhood education, social policies aimed at boosting family formation, family stability and (indirectly) cognitive skills, behavioural traits in children and labour market entrants, and what is arguably the most influential new welfare state theory of the last few years — the theory of asset-specific skills protection put forth by Torben Iversen and David Soskice (for a short review of these approaches, see Vanhuyse [2008]).

Perhaps inevitably, given the daunting range of topics that could be usefully tackled from a political-sociology perspective, some important political-sociology topics and developments are missing from this *Handbook* or are underdeveloped in its pages. For instance, substantively, the political-sociology aspects of education across different institutional settings seem worthy of a separate chapter – for example, on education financing, or on the use of education by states from the perspective of curriculum development, immigrant absorption, and nation building (e.g. Torres and Antikkainen 2003), and human capital and labour force enhancement (e.g. Vanhuyse 2008). Similarly, the part on 'State Policy and Innovations' would have been even stronger had there been a more systematic discussion of the issues that are becoming increasingly crucial in contemporary social life, such as religious fundamentalism, the role of the state in the knowledge economy,

and the manifold influences of the internet and other forms of technological progress on social and political life. Geographically, developing regions such as Latin America receive considerable attention, but the many comparative chapters, including those on democratic transitions and welfare states, ought to have paid much more attention to the empirical and theoretical place of East Central Europe within political sociology. This may partly be due to the fact that not one of the contributors in this overwhelmingly American-dominated *Handbook* originates from East Central Europe or is based there.

Related to this, this *Handbook on Political Sociology* does not always explore to the fullest the quite considerable overlaps with sister disciplines tackling very similar topics to those covered here, most notably economic sociology and political economy. To give but three examples, the chapters by Kiser and Bauldry on rational choice, by Streeck and Kenworthy on neo-corporatism, and by Hicks and Esping-Andersen and Huber and Stephens on state policy could equally well have fit into authoritative sister volumes, such as Barry Weingast and Donald Wittman's [2006] *Oxford Handbook of Political Economy* or, still more so, Neil Smelser and Richard Swedberg's [2005] second edition of their *Handbook of Economic Sociology*. Indeed, Esping-Andersen's contribution to the first [1994] edition of the latter *Handbook* and Streeck's, Kiser's, and Huber and Stephens's contributions to its second [2005] edition ex-

hibit remarkably close overlaps with these authors' respective contributions to the present volume. This raises the question of whether we are currently witnessing an increasing convergence of, at least, these three social science disciplines (political economy, political sociology, and economic sociology) in terms of topics studied, methods employed, behavioural assumptions, and substantive theoretical propositions. That said, I hasten to emphasise that this *Handbook of Political Sociology* is a definitive must-read for virtually any political sociologist, political economist, and economic sociologist. Practitioners of related disciplines interested in the role of the state are similarly likely to benefit from this truly impressive survey of a theoretically exciting and fast-changing discipline.

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