



BOOK REVIEWS

CONTENTS

**Democracy as Problem Solving: Civic Capacity in Communities Across the Globe**, by Xavier de Souza Briggs. Review by Timothy R. Wojan ..... 891

**Community Cohesion in Crisis? New Dimensions of Diversity and Difference**, edited by John Flint and David Robinson. Review by Caryl Bosman ..... 893

**Natural Disaster Analysis after Hurricane Katrina: Risk Assessment, Economic Impacts and Social Implications**, edited by Harry W. Richardson, Peter Gordon, and James E. Moore II. Review by Marla Nelson ..... 895

**Production Networks and Industrial Clusters: Integrating Economies in Southeast Asia**, edited by Ikuo Kuroiwa and Toh Mun Heng. Review by Adelheid Holl ..... 896

**The Economics of Regional Clusters: Networks, Technology and Policy**, edited by Uwe Blien and Gunther Maier. Review by Jonathan Brookfield ..... 898

**Globalization and Regional Economic Modeling**, edited by Russel Cooper, Kieran Donaghy, and Geoffrey Hewings. Review by Roger Bolton ... 899

**Global Catastrophes and Trends: The Next Fifty Years**, by Vaclav Smil. Review by C. Gregory Knight ..... 901

**The Sociology of Southeast Asia: Transformations in a Developing Region**, by Victor T. King. Review by Eric C. Thompson ..... 903

**Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society**, edited by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter. Review by Robert Oliver ..... 905

**Invented Edens: Techno-Cities of the Twentieth Century**, by Robert H. Kargon and Arthur P. Molella. Review Jennifer Hurley ..... 907

**The Measure of America: American Human Development Report, 2008-2009**, by Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kristen Lewis, and Eduardo Borges Martins. Review by Lisa M. Montiel ..... 909

**Coast Lines: How Mapmakers Frame the World and Chart Environmental Change**, by Chris Perkins ..... 910

**Democracy as Problem Solving: Civic Capacity in Communities Across the Globe**, by Xavier de Souza Briggs. 2008. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. 400. ISBN 978-0-262-02641-3, cloth, \$70; ISBN 978-0-262-52485-8, paper, \$28.

*Democracy as Problem Solving* will be of considerable interest to regional scientists studying urban sprawl, economic restructuring, or social policy related to youth. These topics are the focus of six comparative case studies—three from the United States mated with studies from India, Brazil, and South Africa—examining the processes by which these complex problems are addressed

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cooling consensus, but review of the scientific literature shows no such consensus. It was debunked by Peterson, Connolley, and Fleck (2008), whose paper was published in September 2008, perhaps too late to come to Smil's attention. Similarly, Smil dismisses fears about possible onset of a global thermohaline ocean circulation collapse, and notes that thermohaline circulation is not responsible for the Gulf Stream anyway, and also that the Gulf Stream does not warm European winters (p. 221, citing Seager et al., 2002). While the dominant atmospheric role in driving the Gulf Stream is correct, the assertion that it does not warm European winters was subsequently challenged as a miscalculation that Smil missed (Rhines and Häkkinen, 2003; see also [www.realclimate.org](http://www.realclimate.org)). Smil also questions the retrospective appraisal of the human role in Easter Island by Jared Diamond in *Collapse* (2005) as a "simplistic explanation" (pp. 223–224). Not getting all the details right in a comprehensive synthesis is certainly a risk.

Issues such as these should not seriously detract from the *Global Catastrophes and Trends* core message: change is inevitable and *sometimes* anticipated. Understanding relative fear, measuring the real odds, thinking and acting rationally, taking opportunities that already exist, and using coping strategies—all suggest that our demise is not inevitable. Nevertheless, do not just sit there, worry!

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**The Sociology of Southeast Asia: Transformations in a Developing Region**, by Victor T. King. 2008. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies [NIAS] Press, and Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 334 + xvii. ISBN 978-87-91114-59-5, cloth, £50; ISBN 978-87-91114-60-1, paper, £16.99.

Victor King has done a great service to the social sciences and Southeast Asian studies in producing *The Sociology of Southeast Asia*. His book provides a very broad, accessible, and extensively referenced overview of many important themes of sociological research focused on the region from the mid-twentieth century to the present. He highlights in particular contributions of European (especially Dutch) and Singapore-based sociologists, while at the same time giving due to the very influential streams of American sociological theory and practice in the region.

In the first two chapters, King provides the context for sociology in Southeast Asia. The first chapter dwells primarily on the perennial issue in Southeast Asian studies of whether or not Southeast Asia in fact constitutes a useful or valid frame of reference for social or historical research. As in the case of most debates covered in the book, King does not push a very strong agenda or point of view, but overall concludes that since 1945 and especially with the formalization and expansion of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to include the ten main nation-states of the region, Southeast Asia "continues to be valuable in scholarly discourse" (p. 19). In the second chapter he shifts to defining and describing the academic discipline of sociology in the region. Overdependence on imported social theory grounded in Euro-American cases (but taken as universal) along with difficult, dependent relations of academia with suspicious authoritarian states are blamed for a relative lack of theoretically rich sociology (pp. 21–32). King also introduces the

historical–sociological school of Wim Wertheim and successors in the Netherlands as an alternative tradition to that of the more broadly studied American sociology (pp. 32–35). Although he does not press for Wertheim’s approach and methods in an overweening fashion, at many points in the text King refers back to historical–sociological methods as particularly import or useful in developing Southeast Asian sociological insights.

In the next two chapters, King carries out a concerted analysis of two contrasting mid-twentieth century paradigms—modernization theory and underdevelopment and dependency theory. While neither would be considered a dominant theoretical framework for understanding Southeast Asian societies in contemporary (early twenty-first century) sociology, both continue to have influential resonances in sociological theory today (often in modes of a somewhat vaguely configured theories of “globalization” that King discusses more briefly in his concluding chapter). King’s review provides an excellent overview for any student of Southeast Asian—or more broadly “Third World”—sociology.

Chapters 5–7 address socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and patron–client networks, respectively. King places socioeconomic class analysis in the context of fairly recent political economic configurations (e.g., import substitution and export-oriented industrial strategies) and the development of nation-states deeply involved in economic policy setting and sometimes directly in economic investment, industrialization, and other activities. He covers a wealth of valuable research and illustrates the local dynamics of class formation in case studies on Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. He presents ethnicity and patron–client relationships as organizational principles that cut across class divisions within societies (pp. 130, 156). In his discussion of ethnicity, he provides a brief but valuable theoretical overview followed by much longer case studies. In chapter 7, he presents patron–client relationships primarily in relationship to corruption and with regard to how idioms of patrimonialism are deployed rhetorically in contexts where the actual moral imperatives and practices of patron–client reciprocity are highly attenuated (e.g., p. 158). While both the chapter on ethnicity and the chapter on patron–client relations are valuable contributions to their respective subjects, they are somewhat narrowly framed windows on these particular topics (as compared to prior chapters). Readers interested in either ethnicity or patron–client relations in Southeast Asia should read these chapters as useful but not comprehensive statements on the subjects.

Similarly, King’s last three substantive chapters cover a wealth of valuable sources and topics, but do not present arguments structured as strongly as the ones found in the earlier chapters on political economy. This may be attributed to the author’s own strengths and inclinations with regard to sociological analysis (perhaps as well to the disposition of academic sociology in Southeast Asia—as compared, for instance, to anthropology—to focus on social organization and socioeconomic class–type relationships rather than ideological–cultural structures such as gender and religion; it’s also possible the latter may be addressed in more elaborate fashion in a forthcoming, “culturally focused companion volume,” which King tells us is already in production, p. 255). It may also be attributed to the relative newness of the “Asian values” debate, gender analysis, and rapid urbanization, making them more difficult to cover summarily than the already historicized theories of modernization and underdevelopment of the book’s early chapters.

In chapter 8, King provides an exposition of “Asian values” discourse—which in fact is almost entirely played out in Singapore and Malaysia (the region’s two most successful national economies, which then parlay that success discursively into a rejection of “Western” values and an assertion of cultural and political autonomy). This is paired with a rather thin discussion of “religion” more broadly. For those interested in the Asian values discourse promoted principally by Malaysia’s Mahathir Mohammad and Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew, the chapter provides a very useful overview of the issues at stake. Overall, though, it is perhaps the book’s least successful chapter with regard to presenting key themes in Southeast Asian sociology.

Chapters on gender and urbanization (9 and 10, respectively) are both valuable but less than comprehensive references for those interested in the respective topics. Here again, both gender and urbanization are framed primarily in terms of their connection to and organization with respect to political economy (e.g., the title of the chapter primarily about gender is “Transformations of the World of Work: Gender Issues”).

It is perhaps far too easy to dwell on absences and lacunae in reviewing such an ambitious undertaking as Victor King attempts—to review the vast field of sociology in such a diverse region as

Southeast Asia. As suggested earlier, some very important topics, such as nationalism and religion, are dealt with only briefly and indirectly. Discussion of rural sociology and rural social organization is also conspicuous in its absence (indicative of how sociologists and other social scientists decisively shifted their attentions from rural to urban settlements as their subjects themselves moved in large numbers from rural to urban places over the past century). None of this, however, should detract substantially from King's extraordinarily valuable contribution in providing a rich treatise on the sociology of Southeast Asia. Social scientists, other scholars, and particularly graduate students who work on the region would do well to obtain a copy of this text as a useful reference work. For those who work on other regions and are interested in comparative material, King's overview can be recommended as a broad introduction to issues and concerns of sociologists working in Southeast Asia.

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**Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society**, edited by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter. 2008. New York: Routledge. 345 + xii. ISBN 978-0-415-42288-8, \$120.

Any book with the words heterotopia, public space, and postcivil in its title has some difficult explaining to do. Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter's edited collection is a densely woven (split into 7 parts containing 21 individual essays) and a wholly ambitious attempt to explain the richness and continuing utility of Michel Foucault's perplexing term "heterotopia." Foucault's famous text "Des espaces autres" ("Of other spaces"), a lecture he gave in 1967 to the *Cercle d'études architecturales* (Circle of Architectural Studies) provided the springboard for the book, and the European Association of Architectural Education (EAAE) colloquium, *The Rise of Heterotopia*, which met in May 2005 helped to solidify the content. (The lecture was published in Foucault, 1984; Dehaene and De Cauter's new translation appears in the book as the first essay after their introduction.)

According to Dehaene and De Cauter, "in our contemporary world heterotopia is everywhere" (p. 5) but "not everything is a heterotopia" (p. 6). They challenge us to try imagine, locate, and recognize the power of heterotopia that exists between the realms of the public (political) and private (economic). This is not an unworthy cause, but it should be noted that the demands placed on the reader are considerable. The individual contributions in the book pull in ideas from a diverse set of authors including Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Antonio Gramsci, Jürgen Habermas, Arnold Van Gennep, Victor Turner, Edward Soja, Hannah Arendt, and Frederic Jameson to name a few. It is a style of book that is certain to generate blank stares from undergraduate students and provide fodder for hours of debate in graduate student seminars.

The new translation of Foucault's "Des espaces autres" at the beginning of the book is useful for two reasons. First, it reminds the reader that Foucault was interested in space and in particular counter-spaces (or counter-emplacements) that upset taken-for-granted assumptions about the form and function of space. In particular, he was intrigued by those places that existed for people in crisis or derivation (heterotopias of crises and heterotopias of deviance). Which spaces are sacred or forbidden, or require a special form of entry (i.e., retirement homes, mental institutions, prisons, barracks)? Which spaces are set apart (i.e., cemeteries, vacation villages)? More critical though is Foucault's insistence that heterotopia has a function either to create a space of illusion (to reveal the simulated, fake, illusory nature of what we think is real space) or to produce a space of compensation (a space that is as perfect and ordered as our space is messy and disordered). In her contribution to the book, Christine Boyer refers to this function as the double logic of heterotopias, and readers will welcome her close reading of Foucault and her application of the double logic of heterotopia to Rem Koolhaas and Eli Zenghelis's exhibit *Exodus or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture* in 1972. The second reason why the translation of "Des espaces autres" is helpful rests in the 32 endnotes that Dehaene and De Cauter provide to help us understand some of the difficulties of Foucault's text. While I would have preferred that the editors provide a literature review revealing *their* understanding of the core ideas expressed in the text, the detailed endnotes help fill in the gaps left unexplored in other popular readings. For example, Dehaene and De Cauter point out that