
BOOK NOTES

Damien Cahill

The End of Laissez-Faire? The Durability of Embedded Neoliberalism

Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2014, 197 pp., \$132.60.

Neoliberalism has been the focus of numerous political economic critiques. Recurrent themes have included its ideological character, its dissemination by corporate-funded ‘think tanks’ and its transformative influence in public policy. In this book Damien Cahill seeks to provide a thorough overall assessment, emphasising that neoliberalism is ‘embedded in three distinct, but related, social spheres: class relations, institutions and ideological norms’ (p.ix).

The economic crisis of the 1970’s – heralding the end of capitalism’s ‘golden age’ – produced material conditions in which neoliberalism could gain increased hold as a means of facilitating renewed capital accumulation on a global scale. So embedded has it become over the following four decades that even the ‘shock’ of the GFC could not unseat it as the dominant political economic form, contrary to the claims of former Australian PM Kevin Rudd and others politicians proclaiming ‘the demise of neoliberalism’. Cahill criticises the idealist conception of neoliberalism, arguing that ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ is quite a different phenomenon than anything to be found in *laissez-faire* ideology. He also now takes the view that right-wing think tanks are only a small part of the neoliberalism story, relative to the broader political mobilisation of corporations and the pressure on capitalist states to ensure business profitability.

To describe neoliberalism as deeply embedded is not to accept its dominance as a permanent state of affairs, however. Cahill emphasises public opposition, as evident in the continued unpopularity of privatisations. So, although regulations designed to ‘rescue neoliberalism’ should not be mistaken for a wholesale retreat from neoliberalism’ (p.ix), he sees some hope for alternatives arising from popular struggles. A Polanyian ‘double-movement’ perhaps?

J. Quiggin, D. Adamson and D. Quiggin (eds.)

Carbon Pricing: Early Experience and Future Prospects

Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2014, 183 pp., \$132.60.

This book, based on papers presented at a University of Queensland workshop in October 2012, is an unfortunate casualty of bad timing and reactionary politics. The carbon price had just been introduced by the Gillard government. So it was thoroughly appropriate at that time to convene a group of economists, sustainable agricultural specialists and policy-oriented scientists to consider how it would play out in terms of economic and industry effects, including impacts on energy use and on farming practices. However, within a year, the newly-elected Abbott government had 'axed the tax'. The book therefore has a somewhat 'might have been' character. To put a more positive spin on it, it is now mainly of interest to those concerned with 'getting it right next time'.

The opening chapter by Ross Garnaut, for example, notes the tension between 'economic principles' and 'the interests of emissions-intensive businesses' and opines that 'the climate change policy debate ... has been marred by several truly awful contributions presented as being the professional work of economists' (p.22). Another mainstream economist, John Freebairn, makes a plea for 'greater certainty about the future path of the carbon tax or price of tradeable permits' (p.86), a plea that now seems deeply ironic. Other chapters develop useful technical analyses. For example, Wild, Bell and Foster present a State-based analysis of the spatially varied impacts of carbon pricing - ranging from light in Tasmania where hydro-electricity is extensive to heavy in Victoria where brown coal is the principal energy source. And, importantly, John Quiggin makes a clear case for having the renewable energy target (RET) irrespective of whether there is a carbon price or not.

One might have thought that neoliberals would favour the use of carbon pricing as a means of 'internalising externalities'. But vested interests and political opportunism dominate over 'the precautionary principle' which Grant and Quiggin end the book by advocating. Thus the long-run evidence-based approach to policy development, which this book admirably presents, is temporarily (?) trounced by opportunistic short-term political economic interests.

Stuart Rosewarne, James Goodman and Rebecca Pearse

Climate Action Upsurge: the Ethnography of Climate Movement Politics

Routledge, Abingdon, 2014, 171 pp. \$140.90.

The UN Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen in December 2009 is widely regarded as a turning point in the strength of the movement for an effective international agreement. Up to then the momentum had been strong. The Kyoto agreement of 1997 and the Rio + 20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development had their strong critics in the environmental movement, but nothing could quite compare with the shuddering halt in Copenhagen. The triple authors of this book reflect on the nature of the movement to this point and on the alternatives that could renew the momentum for effective action.

To situate the political economic origins of the climate change movement they draw, among others, on James O'Connor's theory of 'the second contradiction of capitalism' – elaborating the conflict between capital and nature. They analyse the movement's central concern 'to translate climate science into climate politics' (p.vii) and consider how pragmatism and radicalism are manifest in different parts of the movement. They consider the roles of threat, hope and reconnection as key elements in the language with which climate change is addressed, and the forms of direct action.

An important final chapter considers what can be done to re-ignite and intensify the movement to deal with this massive ethical and political economic challenge. Themes of 'from urgency to strategy' and 'from abstract to concrete action' lead to the identification of three strategic options: climate communitarianism, climate economism and climate statism. Because the activists interviewed by the authors for the book variously incline to each of these three positions, the challenge now is to develop a basis for bringing them together and regaining the momentum *vis-à-vis* the climate deniers and blockers of effective action. In the authors' own words, this means an effective paradigm and policies for 'bridging the metabolic rift created by capitalist order, between society and nature' (p.151). Onward ...

Winton Higgins and Geoff Dow

Politics Against Pessimism: Social Democratic Possibilities since Ernst Wigforss

Peter Lang, Bern: Switzerland, 2013, 477 pp., \$79.80.

This book links an insightful retrospective on Ernst Wigforss, pioneer of social democratic reforms in Sweden, with broader discussion of the political economic challenges arising from modern capitalism.

The Wigforss story is inspiring, showing what a visionary and committed social democrat can achieve. His strategies helped to turn Sweden into a world leader in achieving economic security, with a well-developed welfare state, progressive taxation, effective industry policies and one of the most egalitarian income distributions anywhere in the world. One distinctive feature was the democratic empowerment of organised labour through the Swedish Labor organisation (LO).

In the current era, with declining coverage and power of trade unions across most capitalist nations and with neoliberalism rampant, the prospects for either laborism or social democracy seem so much more elusive. Yet that is precisely where the authors' 'politics against pessimism' comes in. Geoff Dow has written in *JAPE* previously about the diverse currents of political economic thought that challenge the dominant economic liberalism, and he and Winton Higgins show here what can be achieved if the state can draw on those ideas to shape alternative policies and drive progressive reforms.

Allocation according to political criteria, production according to need, decommodification and economic democracy are advanced as guiding principles capable of serving diverse goals of affluence, equality, security, participation and civility. These concerns are presented at length, and the posited interconnections are summarised in some useful tables. Here are important reminders of the goals, strategies and policy instruments for putting 'politics in command' over the amoral marketplace.

Thomas Klikauer

Managerialism: a Critique of an Ideology

Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013, 353 pp., 107.80.

Managing how tasks are undertaken is always necessary in some form. Attractive possibilities include self-management or collective and cooperative management. Capitalist, militarist and bureaucratic structures, however, almost invariably have a more hierachial form. Thomas Klikauer argues that this centralisation of power and top-down managerialism has developed particularly pronounced authoritarian and anti-democratic characteristics in the modern era. Managerialism has shifted from its practical capitalist origins in factory administration to its current form as an ideology and a package of authoritarian practices. It shapes our working lives – whether in public or private sectors – and many aspects of our private lives.

The impact of managerialism, both as ideology and practice, is evident in universities, for example. Klikauer also contends that management schools in the universities are crucial in establishing the key features of modern managerialist ideology: he suggests that they systematically operate to inculcate values that are antithetical to Socrates' famous dictum than 'an unexamined life is not worth living for a human being' (quoted on p.155).

The book's sustained anti-managerialist polemic is relentlessly hard-hitting, but it ends with reflections on more emancipatory and sustainable post-managerial responses and practices. Protestors against corporate globalisation get a brief mention, as does the need to find a way towards 'post-managerial environmentally sustainable living' (p. 277). Indeed, nature always has the last laugh but, in the meanwhile, one is left wondering what could have the capacity to block the steamroller of the managerialist project. According to Klikauer, 'the entire world tends to become exposed to the totality of Managerialism absorbing everyone and everything in its path (p.201). In the end, it seems, there is only 'hope', presumably joined with an understanding of the dominant managerialist project that the book seeks to explain.

Franklin Obeng-Odoom

Governance for Pro-Poor Urban Development: lessons from Ghana

Routledge, Abingdon, 2013, 258 pp., \$160.10.

This book presents a critical assessment of the rapid urbanisation occurring in Ghana, highlighting the character of urban governance and the urban problems and policies that need more critical attention. 'Urban governance' is the label given to a group of ideas and policies including decentralisation, entrepreneurialism and democratisation. While the rhetoric with which these policies are justified is sometimes appealing, Obeng-Odoom shows that the effects of the policies are typically of little benefit to the poor. Improving people's economic opportunities is secondary to providing expanded opportunities for capital accumulation. The resulting problems – unemployment, inequality and poverty; water, waste and health; urban transport, housing and land-uses – are carefully analysed. Conceptually, the author identifies his principal influences as the urban political economy of David Harvey and Manuel Castells, together with the analysis of colonialism and cities by David Drakakis-Smith. It is the author's personal knowledge and engagement with the Ghanaian experience, however, that is the most engaging feature of the work. His critique of neoliberalism, Ghanaian-style, has strong relevance for urban policy in other developing nations and for students of the political economy of cities concerned with a pro-poor perspective.

Frank Giarratani, Geoffrey J.D. Hewings and Philip McCann (eds)

Handbook of Industry Studies and Economic Geography

Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 502 pp., \$180.00.

Economic geography is a crucial dimension of industry studies. Where industries are located, and how they relate to each other in inter-industry networks, has an important bearing on their development, impacts and prospects. This book develops this theme by taking a sector-by-sector approach. It starts with 'heavy industries' (steel, cars), moves on to 'creative and cultural industries' (craft production, TV, video games, publishing, museums, etc.), 'high-technology sectors', 'resource-based sectors' (including agribusiness) and 'knowledge and network-based industries' (including R & D laboratories, air transport and outsourcing).

The dominant research method is compiling data (on trends in industry outputs and employment), and then using statistical techniques (*e.g.* regression, cluster analysis) to identify patterns and trends. The country examples show the (usual) bias towards the USA and, to a lesser extent, the EU; but also include a lone chapter on New Zealand. The individual chapters, unlike those in some other 'handbooks' of previously published 'classic' articles, were all commissioned for the book. Overall, the book can best be described as 'worthy'. It extends the empirical tradition of industry and regional studies pioneered by Alfred Marshall, rather than the neoclassical aspect of Marshall's work on which mainstream economists have focused. The former is more firmly 'grounded' and of more practical value - in helping to shape industry and regional policies, for example.

Lynda-ann Blanchard and Freya Higgins-Desbiolles (eds.)

Peace Through Tourism: Promoting Human Security Through International Citizenship

Routledge, London and New York, 2013, 275 pp., \$153.20.

This volume comprises seventeen chapters by authors from Palestine, Israel, India, Singapore, Japan, the US, the UK and Australia, book-ended by the editors' introduction and conclusions. The amount of tourism taking place in the world has grown enormously during recent decades, so it is important to take stock of whether it operates for social good (promoting understanding, dialogue and development) or for ill (extending exploitation and ecological damage). This is the context in which advocates of *peace* tourism seek 'to enhance environmental and human security through international citizenship' (p1). Themes of being pro-poor and pro-reconciliation mingle with attention to volunteering and ecotourism.

The contributors to this book are far from blind to the impediments, tensions and potentially perverse consequences that can arise. Some chapters reflect on the difficulties in establishing clear definitions, criteria and goals for peace tourism. Others take a case-study approach to particular peace tourist ventures and niches: including a site in Korea that was intended to bridge hostilities in that divided country; a Peace Boat in Japan; visiting where the nuclear bombs fell on Nagasaki and

Hiroshima; engaging with Aboriginal people in Australia; and participating in pilgrimages and peace advocacy in Israel and Palestine. The reader is left with the strong conclusion that tourism is not 'just another service industry': how it is constructed has major social and ecological consequences that political economists, peace activists, tourism operators and holiday-makers need to recognise.

Michael Tuckson

Changing the World: Humanity System Integrating the Social Sciences,

Humanity System Books, NSW, 328 pp., \$25.00.

Michael Tuckson's book aims to 'help us to understand ourselves, our communities, cities, nations and the world', positing that 'when we understand the world better, we will surely want to change it' (p.5). For this purpose, he argues that an interdisciplinary 'humanity system' of knowledge is indispensable. Hence his strong critique of 'a divided academia' (ch.2) in which separate disciplines 'ignore each other most of the time' and contribute only partial and distorted seams of knowledge. Indeed, among social scientists, the advocacy of inter-disciplinary research is commonplace: in practice, however, 'tis more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

This author, coming from a career outside academia, seeks to develop and present his own personal synthesis and prognosis. It is an ambitious undertaking, going beyond political economy to reflect on the historical development of 'humanity systems' which include mental states, culture, knowledge and everything else related to humans. He points out that 'we are now faced with an increasingly interlinked modern global humanity system that is testing humankind's innate moral, logical and sensing capacities' (p.206). The problem is with providing a progressive way forward, given the author's understandable reservations about the existing political process and the limitations of teamwork. Readers interested in his explorations can get more information about the book at www.humanitysystembooks.com

Book notes by Frank Stilwell