

decentralisation be tried? Should post-conflict countries be built from the bottom or the centre? What is the role of tribal chiefs in decentralisation; should they be sidelined or embraced, given that they are supportive in some cases and non-cooperative in others? Should a situation where an active central state supports local governments be read as ‘successful’ decentralisation, given that decentralists consider autonomy a virtue? Is it an oxymoron to ask for strong central state support for successful decentralisation? Do rich local governments suffer the ‘resource curse’, comparable to that arising in countries where a rich endowment of mineral creates unbalanced development? It is unfortunate that the editors, who are well versed on questions of decentralisation, did not provide a concluding chapter to share their thoughts on these issues.

The appeal of the book is that its provision of many examples of how decentralisation is lived, in real life, supplies the ingredients for further exploring the slippery and contested concept of decentralisation.

Politics, Disability and Social Inclusion: People With Different Abilities in the Twenty First Century

Peter Gibilisco

VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2011

Reviewed by Frank Stilwell

This book discusses the politics of social democracy, neoliberalism and the third way from a distinctive perspective, emphasising social justice in general and the politics of disability in particular. It engages with the theory and practice of contemporary economic and social policies from the viewpoint of someone whose primary concern is with social inclusion for people whose lives are otherwise outside the mainstream.

The author’s own life story is itself engaging. Peter Gibilisco was diagnosed at the age of 14 with Friedreich’s Ataxia, a progressive disease that causes physical impairment, including markedly deteriorating eyesight, muscular growth and co-ordination. Consigned to a wheelchair by the age of 23, he could have been forgiven for giving up on the quest

for any life approaching normality. However, alongside his commitment to enjoy fulfilling personal experiences, he decided to embark on a university education. After completing a bachelors degree specialising in sociology at the University of Melbourne, he undertook a Master of Arts degree at Monash, and subsequently enrolled in a PhD at the University of Melbourne where he received the strong support of his supervisor, Tim Marjoribanks. He completed the PhD which was awarded in March 2006. Along the way he has shown great courage in travelling interstate to interview leading Australian social scientists (such as Hugh Stretton in Adelaide and John Quiggin in Brisbane) and in trying to live a full and purposive life despite his progressive physical deterioration.

The book is the product of his research and writing for the PhD and is a vehicle for bringing his thinking and concerns to a broader audience. It is divided into ten chapters. An introduction sets out the central aspects of his arguments, which are broadly social democratic in temper, but emphasising the need to extend social democracy with a more explicit emphasis on social inclusion. The next three chapters compare this social democratic perspective with neoliberal and third-way politics. Chapter 5 then looks at the political economy of globalisation and the way in which it relates to neoliberalism and third-way politics. Throughout these chapters the central theme is a strong critique of the homogenising assumptions that pervade neoliberal and third-way perspectives, making them particularly problematic from the viewpoint of the special needs of people with disabilities.

Chapters 6 to 9 probe the latter aspects with a more prescriptive orientation, setting out what a more proactive approach to social inclusion would need to involve. Here is a critical view of the biomedical model of disability and a more positive and enabling social perspective on the challenges of overcoming discrimination – in educational institutions, employment practices, public policies and even the spatial forms of our built environment. The author provides a detailed identification of the economic, legal and social obstacles to people with disabilities, a critique and advocacy of particular policies such as provision of adequate support workers and employment options tailored specifically for different abilities. There are separate chapters on social policy, employment policy and the political economy of education for people with disabilities. A conclusion and comprehensive bibliography completes the volume.

The book has a primary focus on the Australian context, but the general argument has a broader relevance. The author integrates his own experience with discussion of broader societal processes, leaving the reader in no doubt that this is a work of great personal commitment and integrity. The author's own success in higher education is, of course, the inspiring backdrop to the unfolding narrative.

Will this analysis and advocacy make a difference? No doubt there are major structural obstacles relating to employment, education and service provision, but the author shows how people with disabilities can create opportunities even in these difficult circumstances. And there are always possibilities for reform, given the necessary political inclination and will. It is to the credit of the relevant minister in the current ALP government, Bill Shorten, that he, more than any other recent Australian politician, has been willing to give political backing to these concerns. Peter Gibilisco may take heart from this experience, notwithstanding the continuing problems of explicit discrimination and implicit exclusion that he enumerates in his book.

**The Wages of Destruction:
the Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy.**

Adam Tooze

Allen Lane, London, 2006, 800 pp.

Reviewed by Frank Stilwell

This book is a masterly account of the Nazi economy, starting with its development during the 1930s after Adolf Hitler's accession to power and ending with the ultimate failure of the fascist war machine. It is compiled from detailed research and presented with impressive command of the narrative historical art. From start to finish – and that is a very long journey – it is compelling reading. So, although the book is now a few years old, it warrants attention among *JAPE* readers, particularly those who are interested in the potential power and capacity of a state to radically transform an economy or society – for good or evil.