As a sociologist who began graduate school in a political science program I have often been struck by the frequent disconnect between political science, political sociology and social movement research. This disconnect, in part, is driven by the nature of academic disciplines and the development of increasingly focused research questions in the pursuit of cumulative knowledge. It is also an artifact of the preferred subject of study unique to each discipline. To oversimplify, political scientists are generally more inclined to focus on the process of politics, political sociologists the state, and social movement scholars on activists. While most researchers would recognize the interconnections between these three broad foci, it can be difficult to integrate them into a single study or research program. There are exceptions, however. In fact, multiple authors in this volume have published influential works on social movements. Movement scholars can continue to benefit from further engagement with concepts and findings produced by political sociologists not directly engaged in the study of insurgents.

One challenge when trying to bring together insights from multiple fields is the sheer number of theoretical orientations within each field—and this is especially the case in the field of political sociology. As the editors of this volume rightly acknowledge, this intellectual diversity creates a particular challenge in producing a volume of this sort and they have chosen a fairly eclectic approach to highlight and maintain this characteristic of the field. In the brief introduction to the volume they explain, “We have not attempted to impose a conceptual order on the area by selecting one of a number of possible paradigms and asserting, or tacitly assuming, that the one they have selected is, is becoming, or should be the dominant or only legitimate paradigm. Political sociology remains a highly diverse intellectual endeavor. This volume remains a companion rather than a lexicon or dictionary” (p. xxi).

The forty-two chapters represent a wide range of theoretical, methodological and substantive orientations. Slightly over one-third of the chapters are written by scholars based in the United States while the remaining contributors represent the United Kingdom, continental Europe, and Australia. Given the historical differences between American and European sociology the diversity of authors is a clear strength to this volume. An abstract at the start of each chapter provides readers an opportunity to glean the key argument and content of the chapter. This feature is particularly useful for a volume of this size and scope since readers are likely to seek particular topics rather than read it from cover to cover.

The volume has four sections: approaches to power and politics, states and governance, the political and social, and democracy and democratization. While every chapter in this volume is strong and worth reading, I will only provide a brief description of the topics covered and identify a few chapters that will be of particular interest to social movement scholars.

Part I—Approaches to Power and Politics—contains eight chapters that collectively demonstrate the diversity of thought within the field. Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Foucault each are represented in individual chapters. Different conceptions of power, arguably the central concept of the field of political sociology, are discussed in another; in addition to chapters on world society, comparative political analysis, and institutionalism. Amenta’s chapter on historical institutionalism identifies the benefits of examining historical processes and developing mid-range theories of political phenomena—an argument that surely resonates with many social movement scholars.

Part II—States and Governance—is divided into three sections. The first chapters examine the nature of the state, state formation, and political corruption. Beetham’s essay on political legitimacy reminds us of the importance of this concept, not just in the writings of Weber, but also in making sense of ongoing struggles in Egypt, and across the Arab world. The second section turns our attention towards political parties, interest groups and elections. The final section addresses war, terrorism, global security and the penal system.

Part III—The Political and Social—is also separated into three sections. The first set of chapters cover civil society, culture and the state, trust and social capital, and the media and politics. The next set focus on the politics of identity and action. These eight chapters deal with gender, class, ethnicity, race, nationalism, religion, body politics, and imagined communities. The third set of chapters in Part III examines citizenship vis-à-vis gender, welfare and individuality. Lister’s discussion of how citizenship is gendered is just one example from this volume that highlights the importance of critically examining and interrogating the implicit and explicit assumptions of concepts, perspectives, and policies.
Part IV—Democracy and Democratization—is divided into two sections: social movements and structures of participation. The four chapters in the social movements section examine protest and political process, global social movements and transnational advocacy, global governance and activism, and rural social movements. Each of the social movement chapters provides a useful overview of the selected topic and will be especially useful to social movement scholars new to the field or seeking to gain insight into different aspects of global and/or transnational movements. The final chapters of the volume in many ways extend discussions begun in earlier chapters by examining human rights, democratization, feminism and democracy, and capitalism and democracy.

Overall, The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology is a well-conceived and well-executed volume that demonstrates the breadth and depth of scholarship in the field. Although at times the diversity of perspectives, theoretical orientations, and topics in the study of political sociology can be overwhelming, this volume demonstrates that this eclecticism can ultimately be a strength—hopefully spurring new insights and syntheses across disciplines.


*Charlotte Ryan  
University of Massachusetts, Lowell*

Organizing is largely an oral process. Accordingly, accounts of movement strategizing are often fragmented; available records too incomplete or skewed to capture how a network of collective actors emerged and strategized within historical constraints. Alice Mattoni’s longitudinal, mesolevel study of Italy’s precarious workers’ movement, *Media Practices and Protest Politics: How Precarious Workers Mobilize* contributes significantly to our understanding of how new movements emerge.

Mattoni analyzes the rise of Italy’s precarious workers’ movement from near invisibility in the early 2000’s to national and international prominence by the 2011. Besides conveying the movement’s imaginativeness—organizers create San Precario, the patron saint of vulnerable workers; and Serpica Naro, (San Precario scrambled) an imaginary designer fabricated for Milan’s fashion week—Mattoni’s work stands out for multiple reasons that I elaborate below.

For those unfamiliar with the concept of precarity, Mattoni shows how this umbrella concept connects disparate attacks on quality of life. The concept allows collective actors rooted in constituency-specific or issue-specific struggles to express their commonalities. In an environment that marries fear and individualistic competition, Mattoni’s account of how issue and constituency-specific campaigns united within an overarching conceptual framework is helpful in itself.

Mattoni’s book is also valuable for those unfamiliar with the vast literature on social movements in other disciplines, especially in the field of communications. Movement communication research by Barker-Plummer, Couldry, Dagron, Halleck, Livingstone, Rodriguez et al. rarely appear in sociology-focused studies. Mattoni offers a refreshing counter to this trend, but even more importantly, her analysis is fused with a different sensibility because she understands communication holistically. For example, she demonstrates how precarious workers mesh traditional media and new social media. And she shows the dense interweaving of media with other forms of communication, including face-face, and one-one conversations. Mattoni joins communication scholars producing essential research on social movements (See also Frey and Carragee, *Communication Activism*, Hampton: 2007, 2012; Napoli and Aslama, *Communication Research in Action*, Fordham: 2011).

Mattoni’s involvement with precarious worker mobilizations at the mesolevel in five distinct events over the course of five years helps her describe how collective actors engaged in conjunctural analyses in which they assess themselves and their relationship to dominant social forces. The activists see strategic choices as options balanced against existing constraints. Speaking of the Milan fashion week protest, an organizer Mattoni interviews explains for instance, “The interesting and important thing is that before performing our actions, we study, we do intelligence work, and we try to understand where we have advantages, our strong points. What does it mean to have strong points? To have particular information, to know how the (fashion) circuit works, to have people who work in certain places or newsrooms” (p. 46).

I also appreciate how Mattoni incorporates practice theory to explain how the daily actions of collective actors link campaign activities to larger strategies. Practice theory has been criticized as determinist in that it can be used to demonstrate how individuals’ daily routines reproduce subjugation. In focusing on the oppositional practices of counterhegemonic collective actors, Mattoni shows that for every dominant practice the possibility exists for collectives to create counterpractices.
Finally, Mattoni’s study stands out for its richness as a piece of longitudinal scholarship: Mattoni’s close engagement with the movement helps her capture the interplay of media coverage with movement-generated coverage, and the inextricable play between communication in meetings and in external media. Moreover, her interviews with movement leaders illuminate their intentions and strategies as well as their later reflections.

In short, Mattoni’s book is valuable for those interested in workers’ or youth movements, media-movement interaction, interdisciplinary synthesis, and/or practice theory. Two issues are worth mentioning, not as flaws in Mattoni’s work, but as unresolved questions in social movement studies. The first is an issue of inequalities within movements working to challenge inequalities. Mattoni numbers undocumented immigrants among the most precarious of Italy’s precarious workers: “Being an illegal immigrant working precariously in the construction sector is very different to being an Italian citizen working as a short-term translator for a publishing house” (p 24). Similarly, the language of the precarious workers’ movement embraces all who are precarious, not simply Italians. Yet, the organizers’ choices of cultural symbols—such as San Precario and the Serpica Naro Fashion Show—are precisely brilliant because they resonate deeply with Italian culture. In so doing, they risk distancing workers from elsewhere. Identity practices include messages but also cultural artifacts, a dilemma for movements in a time of global migrations. What resonates with one constituency distances another.

The second recurring question centers on an ongoing tension in how we build useful theory. Practice theory illuminates how daily actions reinforce existing social patterns, or conversely, how movement counterpractices can rework social arrangements. But at what level must a practice be understood to be replicable from one movement actor to another? Sharon Kurtz called for identity practices; Hinson and Healey call for strategic practices (www.strategicpractice.org); Becky Lentz and other communication scholars identify discourse practices specific, not only to arena (political vs. economic) but to process (regulation vs. legislation). How, then, should theorists identify practices without proliferating a never-ending list?

In her reflections, the Serpica Naro organizer names media knowledge practices and media relational practices in tandem, and Mattoni in her conclusions goes to lengths to show their interconnection. More importantly than how one names practices is that they are recognized as historically specific and shared in context, in relationships. Ultimately, this is what Mattoni’s book helps us see.


Rachel V. Kutz-Flamenbaum
University of Pittsburgh

This interesting and timely ethnography provides an overview of the origins, structure, and tactics of a social movement organization called Billionaires for Bush. It also seeks to explain the influence and appeal of this organization’s use of satirical tactics. Haugerud positions the Billionaires as both representative of a particular form of activism—satirical performance—and as an influential forbearer to recent forms of economic protest, specifically the Occupy movement. Haugerud makes these connections by beginning and concluding the book with incisive analysis of the role of wealth in American culture and the relationship between wealth, politics, and inequality. Throughout the book Haugerud supports her argument by juxtaposing the group with real billionaires and politicians. In creating these profiles of “billionaires,” Haugerud helps readers draw connections between recent economic policies that disproportionately benefit the wealthy, a popular culture that valorizes the rich, the ideology of the American dream, and social movement activism of the past decade.

Within this framework, Haugerud states that the book seeks to understand, “Why do individuals who are passionately committed to the common good turn to irony at this historical moment?” (p. 11). By integrating an economic analysis into her ethnographic data, Haugerud contextualizes the mobilization of the Billionaires. She asserts that the Billionaires for Bush specifically, and satirical protest more generally, are unique manifestations of a historical moment characterized by economic crisis and rapidly increasing wealth inequality. She positions the Billionaires as both a spotlight that draws attention to this economic reality and a salve that comforts and amuses the masses as they come to understand the reality of their economic precariousness. She states, “The Billionaires’ ironic humor blunts the hard edge of the American dream—‘there are only winners and loser now’—replacing it with a vision of solidarity and collective obligations toward the least fortunate among us. This requires turning the moral tables on the ultrarich and questioning what some among them believe to be their
legitimate privilege. Hence, we get the Billionaires’ ironic tagline, ‘Because we’re all in this together, sort of.’” (pp. 34-35). Her intuitive interpretation of the Billionaires’ impact on their audience helps to explain the group’s popularity and helps explain the appeal of satirical performance activism in general.

The incisive economic critique and prescient understanding of audience response are real strengths in this book. The empirical chapters are also quite interesting. Haugerud offers a thorough review of the Billionaires’ history, the breadth of their campaigns, their remarkable quantity and quality of media attention, and their rapid growth. Chapters 3 and 4 give detailed and thought-provoking historical narratives that trace the roots of the Billionaires to precursor groups in the 1990s through their height in the 2000s. By providing insight into organizational ties and ideological motivations, Haugerud helps ground the Billionaires within the broader framework of progressive politics in the U.S. Chapter 6 also offers a compelling account of the Billionaires’ relationship to the media. These empirical chapters are richly detailed and engaging. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of information about her methodology.

The book touches on many topics relevant to social movement scholars, including an account of issues relating to organizational growth and structure (chapter 4), the impact of participation on movement activists (chapter 4), and how political actions affect primary and secondary audiences (chapter 5). Her comparison of how a small constellation of satirical groups (the Yes Men, Reverend Billy, and the Church of Stop Shopping, and the Billionaires for Bush) offers insight into how satirical performances are communicated to audiences and how variations in performance affect audience response (e.g., not getting the joke, hostility, or affable amusement). Unfortunately, Haugerud doesn’t offer a meta-analysis that links various actors together in a cohesive whole of satirical protest. Furthermore, her review of literature on humor is less developed than a book on this topic deserves. She asserts in chapter 7 that satire flourishes when other forms of criticism are inhibited. While this may be true, a longer historical perspective or a broader view of the movements of the 2000s might have yielded points of comparison on which this claim could have been tested.

Overall, the book does a better job analyzing the current political and economic economy than it does explaining the manifestation, effect, and implications of satirical activism. Satirical activism has become a core part of movement repertoires over the past decade, yet it is not new. Movements of the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s provide numerous examples of satirical actions, including famous Yippie Stock Exchange action in 1967 (when activists throw dollar bills onto the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange), and the Guerrilla Girls inaugural protest outside the Museum of Modern Art in 1985 (where female artists wearing gorilla masks protested the museum’s underrepresentation of female artists). In short, it is not clear that satirical protest and groups are simply manifestations of the capitalist crisis. Taking a more historically inclusive look at this distinct and varied form of activism would have provided the reader with a better understanding of the origins and relevance of satirical activism and its relevance in America.


Hilary Schaffer Boudet
Oregon State University

Andrew Sherman’s analysis of the politics surrounding 21 failed attempts to site low-level radioactive waste (LLRW) facilities in the U.S. in the 1980s and 1990s attempts to answer two questions that are of interest to scholars in the fields of contentious politics: (1) What determined the level and type of local opposition to proposed sites for LLRW disposal? (2) What effect did local opposition have on implementation? These questions are embedded within a larger framework aimed at understanding the creation and (ultimately failed) implementation of the LLRW Policy Act (LLRWPA) of 1980 as an example of the “the implementation vulnerabilities of devolution and the political power of local collective action in the U.S. federal system” (p. 3). At the same time, the book makes important contributions to social movement theory, enhancing current trends in the field by focusing on the dynamics of contention as opposed to static structural factors, examining variation in mobilization levels as opposed to selecting successful mobilization efforts, and embedding the actions of mobilized groups in a larger political and social context.

Perhaps of most interest to the audience of Mobilization, chapters 4 and 5 closely examine the drivers of local collective action in the 21 counties selected as potential LLRW disposal sites. Using an analysis of local newspapers and interviews with key players, Sherman argues that neither the advice of siting experts nor the findings of social movement scholars adequately
account for variation in the frequency and type of opposition across the cases. Siting experts, as exemplified in the much-maligned Cerrell Report, overemphasize the role of sociodemographic factors like population size, density, stability, income, education and political ideology, neglecting the important role played by local political actors in framing the issue in terms of the unfair siting processes used by state officials. In contrast, social movement scholars overemphasize the role of preexisting structural factors in the community like political opportunity and mobilization structures, neglecting the important role played by dynamic processes like social appropriation, identity shift, threat/opportunity attribution, brokerage, certification and category formation in shaping mobilization efforts.

Sherman’s emphasis on dynamic factors is accomplished by carefully constructing matched comparisons with similar structural conditions but with variation in the level and type of collective action. His method and focus here are appropriate and generally convincing. However, his attempt to test and reject with quantitative analysis the two competing hypotheses offered by (1) siting experts and (2) social movement scholars is less convincing. First, his operationalization of the concepts from these two literatures is weak. For example, Sherman inappropriately employs the League of Conservation Voter’s (LCV) congressional rankings on environmental issues. He uses them as measures for political orientation to test the “siting-expert hypothesis” and as measures of political opportunity to test the “social movement scholar hypothesis.” It is an inadequate measure in both cases. In terms of political orientation, the Cerrell Report and others have had much more to say about actual political ideology in shaping opposition to siting proposals. Why not use a more direct measure of this concept based on voting patterns? In terms of political opportunities, the concept is much broader than an LCV score would suggest. A more encompassing measure or multiple measures of this concept would have aided his arguments. Finally, methodologically, he uses Poisson regression and bivariate ordinary least squares regression models to test these theories. With only 21 cases, such strategies—as Sherman admits—weaken his conclusions. In fact, Sherman is at his best when he relies on his extensive in-depth knowledge of the cases to discredit static explanations, as in chapter 5, which I found to be the strongest in the book. And, despite all his attempts, two static conditions remain relevant in terms of suppressing opposition – the presence of an existing nuclear power plant in the county and geographic divisions. I have identified similar static conditions in some of my own work on opposition to siting (McAdam and Boudet, 2012). In fact, the reality of explaining mobilization is likely somewhere in between Sherman’s suggested dichotomy—i.e., it is the combination of static and dynamic conditions that come together to create episodes of contention.

Chapter 6 focuses on the complex relationship between local opposition and site implementation progress. Connecting mobilization to policy outcomes has been a difficult and often overlooked task in social movement research. Sherman shows that early and active local opposition is neither necessary nor sufficient to block implementation of LLRW disposal sites. His cases demonstrate three paths to implementation failure: (1) early and active local collective opposition, (2) continued movement towards implementation of the site despite local opposition, and (3) state-level government opposition in the absence of local action to avoid serving as host to a national LLRW disposal facility.

Sherman’s book not only outlines several potential pitfalls and promises of devolution in the case of LLRW, but also pushes theoretical boundaries in social movement studies. While better measures and methodologies to test and reject explanations of opposition offered by siting experts and social movement scholars could have enhanced his work, this well-structured and engaging book still makes an important contribution to the field.


Chelsa Starr
Eastern New Mexico University

Christian Scholl’s book will be of interest not only to those who study the antiglobalization movement, but also to those who study the dynamics of movement-countermovement interplay elsewhere, such as Occupy movement. In general, the volume aims to show various arenas of contestation where the battle is between protesters trying to make a movement or action visible and authorities are trying to render it invisible. The use of the word barricade in the title is both substantive and symbolic. One tactic of the antiglobalization movement has been to erect physical barricades in order to prevent delegates from reaching summit meetings. More philosophically, the barricades represent the reality that there are two sides to the conflict with no ideological middle ground, as middle-ground...
positions serve to diffuse the visibility of dissent and strengthen the position of antiprotest elements. The book crosses subdisciplinary perspectives for a very good reason: this approach best fits the data. The main data come from participant observation and interviews with anti-globalization protesters over several years and protest events. The author moves beyond resource mobilization and new social movement theory by theorizing protest as action, interaction, and reaction between those on both sides of the barricades.

The book details four interactive processes that the author has identified from participant observation in anti-globalization summit protests during the first decade of 2000. Specifically, the four processes are tactical interaction, diffusion, innovation, and adaptation (p 16). In his critique of social movement theorists’ focus on the nation state, he argues that the nation state is reproduced by the process of taking it for granted, leaving world-scale processes unexamined. In addition, four sites of struggle are identified, in which the four major interactive processes are illustrated: bodies, space, communication, and the law.

Making the postmodern concrete, the author focuses on the control of, and on the transgressive actions of protesters’ physical bodies as central to the theatre of protest. Humor is discussed extensively as a movement tactic. The strategic use of bodies includes protesters dressing up as clowns, making the riot police less likely to arrest them because of their non-threatening appearance and humorous antics. Creation of a carnival-like atmosphere of play served to make it easier for protesters to break the bemused, and then startled, police lines at one summit. In addition, there are “black bodies” who autonomously use property damage as a form of protest. The author, while not condoning the tactic, argues that to prevent it would take away from the transgressive nature of the protests, making protests less visible. The overall effect is of several uncontrolled bodies disrupting the attempts of the police to contain the scope of the protest. The author is less concerned with how these events are orchestrated than with their cumulative effects as classes of interactions.

In terms of physical space, the central role of the location of both the summit meetings, the press areas, and the “designated” protest areas are examined. The book provides a critique of liberal approaches to studying and doing protest, noting that permits, advance announcements of activities, and other police-supported requirements for protesters are really efforts to define, contain, and neutralize the protest. The placement of journalists in a central location away from the protests and the designation of “press zones” are the authorities’ tactics to prevent news coverage of transgressive protest tactics, rendering protest invisible. Another focus is the control of physical space and transportation routes around the area of protest. The author examines the movement-countermovement dynamics as the summits moved from city to rural conference sites, and in how the police controlled protester’s access to those sites. These tactics include police building walls around access points to globalization summit sites and then announcing that protesters must stay a certain distance from the wall, gate, or entrance. These tactics seek to neutralize the visibility and effectiveness of the protest.

Authorities also set up roadblocks to prevent buses transporting protesters from arriving at rural summit locations. Pre-emptive detention of protesters was used as a tactic in Italy to eliminate participants’ presence by removing them from their homes before the day of the protests. These neutralizations combine to render protest invisible, but they spark counteractions by protesters in response. The focus of the book on control and evasion of social control leads to a view of globalization summit protests as interactive dances between authorities and protesters, dances that never quite end.

In terms of communication, the author explores the psychological space that is contested between protesters, authorities, and the media. In regulating communication through limits of sizes and wording of banners and signs, authorities seek to limit the range of expression. The processes of cooptation are also discussed in terms of their role in dividing “good protesters” from “bad (noncompliant) protesters”. Protesters responded to media cooption and blackouts by creating alternative news sources using the internet and social media. In addition, horizontal networks and leaderless decision making deprived the mainstream media of the spokespeople that they craved, showing a weakness of these activities, at least for mass communication. Police also control dissent by issuing communications to host towns of globalization summits, using scare tactics and urging local residents to stay away from protest activities. Authorities make every effort to prevent journalists from covering protest from the protesters’ point of view, which has led to an alternative, but not mass, media.

In the section on the law, the author chronicles police efforts to criminalize protest and protesters. The asymmetry of police and protester violence is pointed out, even in the face of the symbolic property destruction of black bloc protesters. The author critiques the discourse of violence by describing that which is merely transgressive. Lastly the use of antiterror and other international laws and local ordinances outside of
that is what Bessire and Fisher have done with ought to demand our attention as scholars. Yet technology to insist that older media, like radio, would brazenly turn against the onward march of internet on all facets of society, but fewer still would deny the transformative impact of the death of old media are greatly exaggerated. Few


Peter Hart-Brinson
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

To paraphrase Mark Twain, the reports of the death of old media are greatly exaggerated. Few would deny the transformative impact of the internet on all facets of society, but fewer still would brazenly turn against the onward march of technology to insist that older media, like radio, ought to demand our attention as scholars. Yet that is what Bessire and Fisher have done with their edited volume, Radio Fields, a book with the explicit goal of identifying “the ways that radio offers a rich terrain for exploring the concepts, methods, and praxis of contemporary anthropology” (p. 2). Unlike the internet, radio is a medium that is present in almost all societies around the world. Moreover, radio is a technology that requires neither wealth nor literacy to be used by listeners or by broadcasters. From this global perspective, the editors’ call for further study of radio is not anachronistic, but clearly warranted.

Bessire and Fisher describe the chapters of the book as being “loosely organized along five conceptual axes”: The Voice; Radio and Nation; Community and Radio; Transnational Circuits; and Language and Perception (p. 20). The purpose of identifying these five major themes of the book is to describe something of the “field” that is mutually constituted by radio technology and social life. The word “field,” here, does not carry the Bourdieuan connotations familiar to sociologists; instead, the field is an “unruly ethnographic site” (p. 4) in which technology and culture, media and social life, are inexorably intertwined. The five axes of the volume, therefore, either help or hinder—depending upon your point of view—the reader to make sense of the complex ways in which radio is embedded in and transformative of social life.

Taken as a whole, this collection of ethnographies does what many good anthropological works do: it unsettles the very definition of its object, radio, through immersion in different cultural contexts. Most readers in advanced Western societies will imagine this book to be about a form of mass media through which music, news, and commentary is broadcast to large audiences from public or private corporations. But ethnographies of radio fields here also include: the use of two-way radios by Ayoreo villages in Bolivia and Paraguay to share updates of their daily lives and health; the similarity between radio and the phenomenological experience of digital podcasts, streaming audio, and MP3s in Britain; and the illegal piracy of radio stations as a social movement tactic in Oaxaca, Mexico. The diverse case studies in this volume reflect well on contemporary anthropology’s continuing power to humble our erstwhile feelings of expertise on a topic.

But what does this collection of studies on the many meanings and uses of radio contribute to scholarship on social movements and social change? If the reader is not already interested in radio or a believer in the importance of media as a constitutive aspect of culture, the pay-off of this volume may not be worth the investment. The relatively atheoretical use of the term “field” robs the book of a strong organizing principle or theoretical claim that would impart broad relevance across anthropology, sociology, and political science. Aside from the five conceptual axes of the book, there is little discussion of how exactly radio fields are constituted or what it teaches us about the relationship between radio, politics, and everyday life.

For example, studies of media must always wrestle with a paradox, and Radio Fields embodies it. On one hand, some studies in this volume make a sort of McLuhanesque argument about the fundamental importance of media technology for shaping human society and culture. Laura Kunreuther, for example, shows how the emergence of commercial FM radio in Nepal contributed to the emergence of democracy there simply because of its capacity to allow citizens to “raise their voice.” Other studies, by contrast, seem to subordinate technology to preexisting cultural norms and practices, effectively showing how radio is only made meaningful when we use it for particular social purposes. Do we use radio, or does radio use us? The notion of a radio field seems perfectly suited to contribute to such broad theoretical discussions, so in this respect, it seems that an important opportunity to develop our conceptual vocabulary has been missed.

This volume is at its strongest, and may be of most use to social movement scholars, when it engages radio’s basic dimension of aurality and its political implications. Kunreuther’s study of raising voice in Nepal, for example, contains penetrating insights about voice and how it matters in politics. Anderson Blanton’s ethnography of Pentecostal radio preaching in Appalachia is riveting in its explanation of how preachers use
audio technology to lay healing hands on non-present listeners. And Debra Vidali-Spitulnik argues persuasively for scholars to attend to the phenomenology of aural sensation and language to gain insight into culture.

Such studies, along with those that examine the role of radio as a technology of protest or a tool of community empowerment, complement much of the recent scholarship on the role of music and singing in social movement mobilization. The ability of speech and music on the radio to amplify one’s voice, to spark intense emotions, to draw symbolic boundaries, to spread information, and to assert autonomy, makes radio a potent weapon for marginalized groups to wield in struggles for change. Although the volume leaves unsettled large theoretical questions about the nature of radio fields and the relative autonomy of technology vis-à-vis society, its potential for creating renewed interest and research on radio’s relationship with culture and social change has been carefully cultivated, and that may ultimately be a much more significant accomplishment.


Rita Stephen
Georgetown University

What does it mean to be an Arab in America—more specifically how is identity constructed differently among Arab groups that immigrated to, were born in, or grew up in the United States? How is the concept of Arabness articulated in the immigrant experience as compared to native born Arab-Americans? By investigating these questions, Nadine Naber’s Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism, concentrates on two cornerstones: the bifurcated concepts of culture and the way it is understood by individuals and groups, and the impact of the intersection of class and nativity status on the articulation and rearticulation of Arabness among leftist Arabs and Muslim student activists.

Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism depicts the dichotomy and internal struggle that is experienced by Arab Americans and their efforts to work around, past, or simply through their articulated and rearticulated Arabness. The stage is set in two worlds—Arabs versus Americans—more specifically Arab versus American culture as a dichotomy between an outer American domain and an inner Arab domain, or, as Naber eloquently coins it, “forces of empire and Diaspora.” While Arabness is initially articulated through a “reversed Orientalist lens” of good Arab versus bad American, eventually, second-generation Arab-Americans rearticulate their Arabness in a more complex and politicized manner.

Naber’s methodological framework, rooted in ethnographic research, incorporates historical and political trajectories, which she uses to explore the emergence of the concept of Arabness. Dreading internal and external cultural spaces, Naber deconstructs the internal space of Arab American culture (based on concepts and practices of religion, family, gender, and sexuality) with the external space of the culture (manifested in the domain of history and politics). Hence, she ensures the inclusion of diverse narratives through which “individuals who in one way or another affiliate with the Arab region and its diasporas make claims to, negotiate, live, reject, or transform these concepts” (p. 17). This ethnographic research reflects the lived experiences of Arab Americans in the San Francisco Bay area between the age 18 and 28, whose families had immigrated to the US, primarily from Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Despite respondents’ diverse family origins, religious values, and socioeconomic status, most of Naber’s respondents share the psychological pressure “to maintain perceived ideals of Arab and American culture [which] felt overwhelming and irresolvable” (p. 5).

Arab America aims to refuse, deconstruct, and deessentialize Orientalist forms of knowledge while drawing a dynamic picture of the plurality and relationality of Arab diasporas. Naber highlights the prevalence of Orientalism in the American discourse on Arabs, the Arab-American community’s hold on “authentic Arab culture,” and the rearticulation of Arabness through reverse Orientalism. She interrogates the dichotomies between Orientalism and Anti-Orientalism, and “in the process imagines new means of articulating Arabness in America” (p. 13). She posits that the uninterrogated naturalization of a dichotomy between the “idealized ‘Arab’ and ‘American’” culture among Arab Americans, which she argues is a reversal of Orientalist discourses—has deeply affected second-generation Arab-Americans, noting that these effects are highly gendered and sexualized. Second-generation Arab-Americans conceptualize the Arab culture in association with the preservation of religion, family, traditional gender roles, and suppressed sexuality. This cultural framing, Naber argues, “allows Orientalist thought to be left intact and activated” (p. 6-7).

The book is comprised of five chapters. Chapter one “From Model Minority to Problem Minority” provides a historical and political map of the circumstances that gave rise to the dichotomous and bifurcated identity crisis, which Arab immigrants and Arab-Americans are facing.
today. Chapter two, “The Politics of Cultural Authenticity,” interrogates the politics of cultural authenticity, a process by which middle-class Arab diasporas come to herald particular ideals as markers of an authentic, essential, true, or real Arab culture. This chapter focuses on the Arab culture that the second-generation young adults learn from their parents’ generation. Chapter three “Muslim First, Arab Second” highlights the use of Islam to rearticulate Arabness and to counter the first-generation articulations of Arabness. These movements try to redraw the image of Arabs in western discourses and combat Islamophobia. Chapter four “Dirty Laundry” discusses the involvement of six women in the Leftist Arab Movement. The political tensions and possibilities that these six women narrate are conceptualized in terms of the collision of feminism, queer politics, and national liberation and “a set of power dynamics that were distinct to the diasporic context of the Arab Bay Area” (p. 159).

Chapter five, “Diasporic Feminist Anti-Imperialism,” expands the analysis of the leftist anti-imperialist activism and the emergence of an Arab diasporic feminist critique. It focuses on feminist organizations’ mechanisms to gain support and rearticulate their cultural identity.

_Arab America_ examines how Arabness is articulated and rearticulated through several general themes that emerge from Naber’s interviews with her interlocutors; mainly family, religion, sex, gender, and race. The concept of strong family ties emerges as a cornerstone of being Arab. Americans in the eyes of Naber’s subjects were associated with broken families, in direct contrast to Arabs. Religion emerges in tandem with family and tradition. Religious organizations serve to articulate Arabness from a “Muslim first, Arab second” perspective. Sex and gender are well addressed throughout the book especially in regards feminists’ dealing with cultural norms such as family honor, monogamy, heterosexuality, etc., relegating issues of sexuality and women’s rights as secondary in community activism.

_Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism_ stands to make a unique contribution to the fields of cultural studies, American studies, Arab American studies, Arab studies and gender studies. It is a pioneer scholarly endeavor that highlights the interplay between politics, gender and society. By focusing on the politics of empire and diaspora through the study of two communities of middle class Arab families and Arab and Muslim activists, Naber offers a dynamic conceptualization to the notion of Arabness in the United States.
Mobilization

eging any particular geographic area” (p. xxii). The essays in the second half of the volume “are dedicated to specific cases of alternative forms of the economy in concrete historical practice” drawn equally from both the global north and south (p. xxiii). Aside from this brief mention of the organizational logic of the volume, there are no introductions or demarcations for the sub-sections, and it is easy to miss the themes that are supposed to unite these broad ranging essays.

The body of the book opens with an insightful analysis by Jose Brendan MacDonald looking at the ideological and organizational challenges facing coops operating within a capitalist context. This is followed by two chapters that lay out broad visions of socially just economic systems, then one on anarchist organizing strategies, followed by a free ranging exploration of social currencies. These essays vary in quality and the leaps from subject to subject are disorienting. Several of the essays, translated from other languages, also need significant editing. Many of the subjects addressed are complex enough that grammatical errors and poor sentence structure render them almost incomprehensible.

The case studies that follow the more general analyses presented in the first half cover topics ranging from the history of the Mondragon Cooperative to the way in which neoliberal agricultural policy has perpetuated racial inequality in South Africa. There are some particularly good analyses of worker occupations and coops in Britain and Argentina by Gregor Gall and Peter Ranic respectively. Yet, again, the central problem is that the book simply tries to do too much. Some of these chapters fit together nicely and would make for a worthwhile collection with other essays on the same subject. But together, the volume is too unfocused.

What’s more, some subjects are simply ill suited for presentation in a short essay format. For example, Michael Albert can only hint at how his Parecon Proposal for a democratic economy would actually work in practice. He and other authors addressing the potential structure of a more democratic economic order are forced to direct readers to web sites and other sources for a fuller description of the elaborate social and economic structures that they can only touch upon in a single chapter. Complex proposals such Albert’s or Maheshvarananda’s presentation of Prout (Progressive Utilization Theory) are best addressed in a full-length format or compiled together with essays exclusively dedicated to grand economic visions. Maheshvarananda notes that Prout’s founding theorist, Indian philosopher Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, has written 1,500 pages on the subject, while the essay’s author condensed it to twelve.

In this summary format, many elements of these proposals seem unconvincing or impractical, such as Albert’s suggestion that surgeons should also clean bedpans or the vaguely presented Prout notion that a federally appointed economic board (composed only of “honest” people) would do things such as set wealth limits and categorize every type of commodity as essential, seminessential or nonessential. This is not to suggest that these proposals are unworkable, only that they cannot be adequately presented in this format.

Readers who are interested in particular topics addressed in the book may find some of the essays valuable. Perhaps others will be inspired by the diversity of visionary proposals and concrete practical examples that may represent the seeds of a new society just taking root. This is, after all, the admirable intent of the editors. But most scholars would likely prefer a collection that is more focused on specific topics included within this volume, such as worker cooperatives, alternative political economic systems, or radical organizing strategy. Greater focus would provide the opportunity to more thoroughly explore any of these important subjects, as opposed to this ambitious effort to bring together a wide range of material under the very broad banner of alternatives to capitalism.