

entations and political activity – are more strongly influenced by other factors than culture. Among cultural factors, post-materialism and individualism are the ones with the most impact on micro-level outcomes.

I have several comments to make on the book that should be taken as recommendations for further analysis of the role of culture in society. First of all, the authors are perhaps too quick in their attempt to clarify, one more time, the conceptual mess surrounding the much used and abused term of culture. The somewhat eclectic way in which different contributions to the investigation of culture are dealt with makes the precise sense of culture unclear. Sometimes, it seems to be limited to attitudes or psychological orientations, as in the *Civic Culture* tradition, while at other times, however, as with the grid-group theory, culture is employed as a name for ways of life, including both psychological orientations and behaviour.

Second, the study does address itself exclusively to the task of finding a statistical dependence between the elements of culture and the 'outcomes'. It does not attempt to explain what mediating mechanisms exist between the various aspects of culture and the outcomes on various levels, nor does it shed much light on the way in which the effects of culture combine with the effects of contextual variables. It is perhaps for this reason that the conclusions of the study are formulated so carefully as to create no space for undue generalisations.

Third, the book employs a rather disparate set of indicators, especially with respect to the macro-level outcomes, which are taken at their face value, with the result that one cannot rely more on the study's overall findings than one does on these indicators. It seems as if they were selected because they are easily available. But the subsequent effort to find statistical relationships between cultural factors and variations in these indicators creates the impression of a trial-and-error, experimental game, with few theoretical grounds for expecting any robust results.

The use that the authors make of disparate data and indicators bears a certain resemblance to the collage of different Prague tourist sights on the book's cover. The individual pieces of this collage, each of which could represent the object of an exhaustive treatment in its own right, are put together to form an artificial world in which all have an impact on the viewer's imagination, but they cannot be given the kind of focused attention they deserve.

Fourth, the question can be raised of what it means to trace the relationships between culture, defined as universal values, and individual value orientations, described by the authors as micro-level outcomes. For in my view, one would be fully justified in taking all values, including such values as left-right orientations or life satisfaction, as forming part of a culture, in which case the link under investigation would be between two elements of a culture, not between culture and extra-cultural outcomes.

In spite of these critical remarks, Lane and Ersson's book provides very valuable and interesting insight into the difficult subject matter of the cultural conditioning of social phenomena. Their book can be read as one of the steps that must be taken in contemporary sociology and political science in order to establish a solid and reliable understanding of the effects of culture on society.

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Ian Shapiro: *The State of Democratic Theory*

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The central concept in Ian Shapiro's treatise on democracy is 'domination'. As he sees it, in all societies there are some who are in a position to dominate and others who are in danger of being dominated. Those in danger of being dominated are always in need of

protection, and that is the business of democracy. Democracy is best '...thought of as a means of managing power relations so as to minimise domination'. What we should look for in a democracy is institutions which effectively control power. That should not mean reining in the use of collective power to the narrowest possible field (as is the libertarian response), but rather preventing the perversion of collective power to illegitimate forms of domination.

This puts Shapiro in the power school of democratic theory and from there he directs his fire at the deliberation school. He is with Schumpeter (*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 1942) and against Rousseau (*The Social Contract*, 1762). The former argued the case of competitive politics to hold government power to answer, the latter rationality as a way of identifying the common good. Shapiro has little time for 'the common good'. If there is such a thing, it is, he says (borrowing from Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 1517), no more than '...that which those with an interest in avoiding domination share'.

Deliberation has recently become a cult idea in democratic theory. That school recommends we look to democracies for the mechanisms for citizens to work their way through to consensus in spite of disagreement. In Chapter 1, Shapiro does an assassination job on that idea. He sees it as helplessly idealistic in face of the reality of power. But deliberation is of course a good thing, and in Chapter 2 he asks whether it may nevertheless have something to contribute to democratic efficiency. His conclusion is to think of it as a mechanism for giving a voice to those who are in danger of domination, for example, vulnerable workers against overpowering employers. This makes deliberation more an instrument of power politics than a route to consensus.

Chapter 3 deals with the two main mechanisms for keeping government power under control: competitive elections and judicial review. In Schumpeterian theory, competitive elections are simply what it's about. Elected

governments are forced to respect the interests of citizens because they always live under the threat of being thrown out at the next election. Yet Shapiro has much to say about the limited power of this threat which comes from the ability of politicians and other elites to subvert elections. This is a simple observation, but a powerful one. It directs us to a simple and practical agenda for reform: to improve the democratic quality of electoral systems. On judicial review, Shapiro is reserved, ostensibly because he sees no reason to assume that appointed courts should be more capable of rational decision making than elected bodies, but possibly also because the experience he refers to is mainly from the United States, a case, as is well known, of judicial review gone mad. (Strangely, Shapiro seems to confuse judicial review as such with the presence or not of a designated constitutional court, but the latter is only one of several methods for the former.)

If you don't have democracy, how can you get it? Here the experience is that there is no single route, there are as many ways to democracy as there are democracies. Shapiro (Chapter 4) faults democratic theory for not being able to answer the question more affirmatively, but that may be a methodological fallacy. If democracy always grows out of national circumstances, the way to understand the emergence of democracy is in national case studies rather than grand comparative designs.

More is known about how to keep democracy if you have it. It does not matter if your democracy is of this or that kind, e.g. parliamentarian or presidential, but it helps very much if your country is affluent. A commitment to democratic values among both the elites and the masses is invaluable. It is a plausible hypothesis that social capital (in Putnam's meaning, i.e. vibrant local networks) is supportive of democratic stability. That is an important observation because it reminds us that democracy depends not only on national institutions but also very much on local institutions and structures.

In Chapter 5, Shapiro returns directly to his central concept of domination in a discussion of democracy and economic inequality. Not surprisingly, he confronts the American dilemma: why is there, in spite of the combination of great wealth and great poverty, not more downward redistribution? His conclusions here are disturbing for both democratic politics and democratic theory. He finds the failure of American democracy to deal with poverty and inequality not surprising, since a range of factors conspire against both the supply of and the demand for redistributive policies. The supply is impeded in particular by capital's power of veto, while demand is held back by ideology and mistaken beliefs.

If the point of democracy is to diminish or eradicate domination, what are we to make of a democracy that cannot prevent capital from preventing vote-seeking politicians from redistributing a bit of excessive wealth to a poor minority? The verdict here on American democracy is devastating. That verdict could be modified by changing the terms of reference – perhaps there is more to democracy than controlling dominance, for example, the protection of liberty – but in his own terms, Shapiro says of democracy in America that it does not work.

If a part of the reason democracy does not work is found in ideology and beliefs, does that not rescue deliberation from being a side-show and put it back at the heart of democracy? Capital may have the economic power to resist redistribution, but the political power of the vote nevertheless rests with the many. What good is it to give the many more power if they dare not use the power they already have? Their problem is not that of being denied the right to speak out against employers and others, but their inability to mobilise and use the power they have in the

channel available to them in order to protect their interests. What seems to be needed is information, awareness, determination, co-operation, in short, the sorts of things deliberation might produce.

Like any good theorist, Shapiro is constantly reminding us of the limitations of theory. For example, on the question of the conditions for democratic transition and consolidation, he says that '...the state of democratic theory is a bit like the state of Wyoming: large, windy, and mainly empty'. Some of what he says in this vein can be seen as challenges to sociology, and two points in particular.

Democratic theory is mainly about institutional arrangements to advance some vision of the good, be it protection of the weak or consensus to override conflict. But where do good institutional arrangements come from? Shapiro notes, '...we are mainly in the dark about the cultural factors that influence democracy's viability.' That's the kind of problem the sociologist ought to have something to say about.

The reason he does not have much faith in the idea of deliberative democracy is that the theory, naively in his view, assumes that people can and will sit down and talk things over until they find common ground in spite of conflicting interests. Well, that is perhaps naive, but it is also a beautiful idea. Take the case of reconciliation in South Africa, or the need for dialogue across religions and cultures in a world threatened by the clash of civilisations. What are the conditions that can help people to be better able to sit down and deliberate on their disagreements? Sociologists should have something to say about that. They might benefit from reading more political theory in order to discover new lands waiting to be cleared with the help of their particular skills.

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