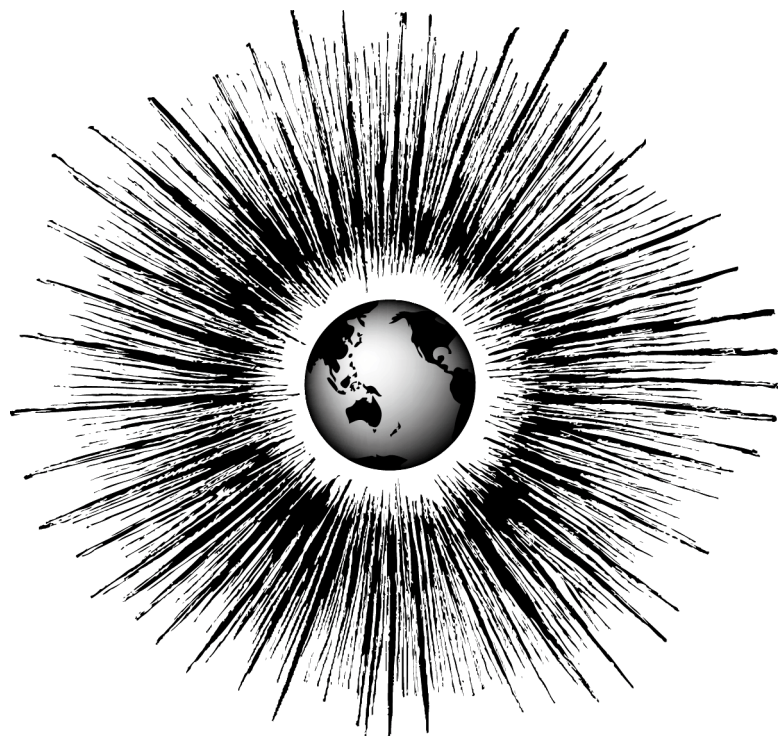


# JWSR Call for Book Reviewers



The *JWSR* Book Review department publishes reviews of books on the same topics for which *JWSR* solicits articles, as described in the *JWSR* editorial policy. We also disseminate reviews of reference works and other books containing quantitative or qualitative data useful for world systems research.

We solicit volunteers to review books. If you would like to write book

reviews for *JWSR*, please notify the Book Review Editor of your areas of interest and any other information which may be helpful for determining which books are best suited for you.

We also encourage suggestions of books for review from readers of *JWSR*, book authors, and publishers.

**For more information, please contact:**  
Edward Kick, [books@jwsr.org](mailto:books@jwsr.org)

Advertising space is also available. For more information, please contact:  
Eric Titolo, [ads@jwsr.org](mailto:ads@jwsr.org)

## BOOK REVIEWS

Joe Bandy and Jackie Smith, eds.

*Coalitions Across Borders: Transnational Protest and the Neoliberal Order*  
Reviewed by Angela G. Mertig

John H. Bodley

*Power of Scale: A Global History Approach*  
Reviewed by Thomas D. Hall & Kimberly Peyser

Wilson P. Dizard Jr.

*Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency*  
Reviewed by Andrew Austin

Victor M. Ortíz-González

*El Paso: Local Frontiers at a Global Crossroads*  
Reviewed by Dag MacLeod

John M. Talbot

*Grounds for Agreement: The Political Economy of the Coffee Commodity Chain*  
Reviewed by Paul K. Gellert

Joe Bandy and Jackie Smith, eds. 2005. *Coalitions Across Borders: Transnational Protest and the Neoliberal Order*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. 262 pages, ISBN 0-7425-2397-7 paper. <http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com>

In this volume, Bandy and Smith have collected several essays that address the successes, issues and barriers in the development of transnational social movement coalitions. The coalitions discussed in the volume deal with social protest against “the neoliberal order” or what has been more commonly referred to, at least in the United States, as economic globalization. The essays take a sympathetic approach to the development of these coalitions (albeit with some critique), each highlighting specific case studies of transnational coalitions and protest campaigns. Some of the essays ramble more than others, but each provides important insight into the processes of coalition development across social movement sector, organizational, and national boundaries.

After a brief introduction to the volume, the book is divided into four overlapping sections. Part 1 addresses some key challenges faced by transnational coalitions; Part 2 presents two examples of successful coalitions; Part 3 focuses specifically on labor coalitions and issues; and Part 4 presents two cases of specific transnational campaigns along with a concluding chapter by the editors.

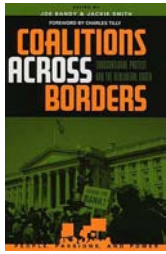
Smith and Bandy’s introduction notes that “globalization” is commonly portrayed as purely an economic phenomenon which displaces local and national control over economic transactions, giving political and economic power to transnational economic bodies such as the World Trade Organization and multinational corporations. A common assumption of globalization’s supporters is that giving primacy to the economic sphere will “trickle down” to have a positive impact upon other elements of social life throughout the world. This version of globalization is referred to as “globalization from above.” However, this version of globalization is contested by numerous contemporary protest movements. In contrast to “globalization,” these protest movements are involved in what Smith and Bandy call “internationalization,” or the increasing integration of the world through civil society. The development of “transnational relations among non-governmental networks, social movements and intergovernmental organizations such as the UN, which lay the foundation for a democratic global governance and a world polity” (p. 1) form a “globalization from below” that directly challenges “globalization from above.”

From a social movements perspective, “globalization from below” requires completely new tactics, strategies and frames. Lobbying a national government makes less sense when a target company or agency (e.g., the WTO) is not bound

to a single government and whose offices and impacts cross national boundaries. The need to challenge entities beyond one’s own national boundaries requires that activists and organizations learn more about the workings of foreign governments, to work with their counterparts in other countries, and to adopt different frames about social issues that enhance their international impact. Smith and Bandy provide some evidence of the extent to which transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) have developed around the theme of globalization (or multiple themes subsumed under the impacts of globalization); however, they also note that a substantial portion of transnational protest/social movement activity takes place outside formalized channels, represented by less formalized networks and coalitions (which are less easily quantified). Unfortunately, they also note that TSMOs (and by implication many of their less formalized counterparts) tend to duplicate aspects of global inequality, namely that TSMOs rarely have memberships that span North *and* South (i.e., the “global” North and South defined by economic position as opposed solely to geographical location) and that TSMO participants typically come from countries with already established democracies and some recognition of human rights.

In Part 1 (“Movements and Challenges”), MacDonald presents a discussion of how, despite using the language of inclusion and diversity, transnational coalitions against free trade in the Americas, as well as the academic literature on these coalitions, have tended to exclude gender issues and analysis. She argues that we cannot assume that actors aligned with these protest coalitions are “inherently progressive, inclusive, and democratic” and that, like anything else, we must “subject their claims to careful analysis” (p. 22). Also in Part 1, Faber addresses the development of environmental justice movements and frames in the United States. He asserts that the framing of environmental justice in the United States has focused almost solely on issues of race and minority status, which have made it difficult to draw ties with the developing world where environmental justice is “largely a politics of the majority” (p. 47) struggling for their basic human rights and survival. Yet, he argues that the increasing recognition “that the abuse of human rights and the environment go hand in hand,” has the potential to create a “radically new international environmental movement” (pp. 59, 62).

Part 2 (“Models of Coalition”) begins with a chapter by Cullen on a successful coalition among diverse (and often ideologically dissimilar) NGOs within the European Union (referred to as the Platform) to address numerous impacts of European economic integration. Among the factors that motivated cooperation among these NGOs were shared general social agendas, political constraints and financial resources. Chief among the factors that allowed them to manage internal conflicts were: (1) experienced leaders who could bridge between groups



and perspectives; (2) a focus on “transversal issues” that highlight similarities that “are perceived as more important than existing differences” (p. 77); and (3) providing “added value” to each coalition member (i.e., coalition membership enabled access to resources that each member organization might not have been able to get on their own). Wood’s chapter in part 2 analyzes the development of Peoples’ Global Action (PGA), which began as a transnational coalition to coordinate global, massive street protests against “globalization from above.” This coalition managed to maintain its cohesion even while it resisted formalization, which many argue would have aided its ability to coordinate efforts among such a diverse group of entities. Because organizations and activists from the global North often have more resources, they ironically tend to dominate coalitions attempting to alleviate global inequities; yet, the PGA explicitly developed rules and structures to avoid Northern domination.

In Part 3 (“Perspectives on Labor Solidarity”), Brooks provides a disturbing account of how activism intended to help residents of the global South can actually end up hurting them. She provides a close up look at the fight against child labor in the garment industry in Bangladesh, juxtaposing U.S. activists’ concerns for the treatment of children with the economic consequences to Bangladeshi families and Bangladeshi protest of U.S. protectionism and imperialism. The focus on child labor alone allowed activists—and businesses—to ignore other important social issues and promoted the paternalistic notion that residents of the global South, particularly women and children, are passive, voiceless victims of global development. Waterman’s chapter focuses on the international labor movement and the degree to which it has developed ties with other movements that oppose “globalization from above.” There is a tension between the old, institutionalized labor movement(s) and “the possibility of a new social movement labor internationalism” where labor can be an equal partner with other social movement actors defying the neoliberal order (p. 152). The final chapter in part 3 by Seidman analyzes the development of corporate codes of conduct (the Sullivan Principles) used to address activist concerns about American companies doing business in apartheid South Africa. These codes were monitored by private agencies and enabled concerned consumers to adjust their purchases based on information provided about the companies. Positive lessons to be learned from this case with regard to contemporary transnational coalitions are that international pressure is usually necessary to get corporations to change their behavior (or at least to change their reporting of it); that the use of organizational pressure (e.g., divestment of accounts by universities) as opposed to that of individuals is key to getting corporations to respond; and that moral clarity is also important in creating change (i.e., no one could really argue that apartheid was a good thing). However, the dubious way in which these codes were developed, monitored

and evaluated left many questions about their actual impact on communities in South Africa and whether such a code system currently could be utilized to hold multinational corporations accountable.

Part 4 (“Transnational Campaigns”) begins with a chapter by Juska and Edwards that analyzes a U.S.-Poland coalition between the Animal Welfare Institute and Samoobrona, a radical Polish farmer’s organization, to oppose a large pork producer’s intentions to create large scale, vertically integrated pork production facilities in Poland. The presence of strong national movements in both the U.S. and Poland, the ideological compatibility of the two organizations involved, a favorable political opportunity structure which made industrial livestock production less palatable to Polish leaders, and the clever strategizing and effective leadership of the two organizations all worked together to make the campaign a transnational coalition success story. Foster’s chapter provides an insider’s point of view with regard to the relatively informal Trilateral Alliance against NAFTA. While the coalition failed to derail NAFTA, it spawned several other accomplishments, namely that it helped activists and organizations within North America build up expertise on trade and policy issues, it fostered personal linkages and collaboration across different movement sectors and across borders, and it enhanced public knowledge of trade impacts.

As Bandy and Smith note in their concluding chapter, each of the essays presented in the volume document the ways transnational networks and coalitions have formed and continue to form “to coalesce into a transnational civil society” (p. 231). Such networks face both “internal conflicts and external limitations,” exemplified by the essays herein. Sympathetically, the authors note: “understanding how activists have managed to forge unity amid diversity will uncover the possibilities for developing the democratic potentials of civil society and potentially the world system” (p. 232). Based on their own observations and review of the literature, as well as the essays included in the volume, Bandy and Smith list several social conditions that they feel enable the development of transnational networks: (1) the presence of international organizations—governmental or non-governmental—that facilitate networks; (2) the presence of well-organized national level movements; (3) the presence of well-organized foreign movement allies; (4) pre-existing similarities among movements of different societies; (5) the capacity for regular communication between national level movements; (6) institutions—government and/or corporate—that are open to change; (7) economic conditions that enable movement resource building; (8) the absence of international political conflict; and (9) mass public dissent. Similarly, they note that there are four sources of internal conflict that need to be addressed within transnational social movement networks: (1) resource disparities; (2) conflicts over organizational and leadership forms; (3) conflicts over identity; and (4)

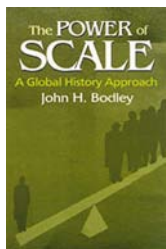
conflicts about goals and strategies. The authors further identify four internal activities that promote the successful development of coalitions: (1) the committed and effective leadership of movement brokers—leaders who can readily “go between” groups, perspectives and/or identities; (2) the development of “transnational public spheres” or forums for coalition action (e.g., conferences); (3) flexible and democratic organizational forms and cultures which strive to protect members’ autonomy even while uniting vastly diverse entities; and (4) promoting the perceived success of coalition, as success tends to bolster support for and membership in a coalition.

In conclusion, this book serves as an excellent early attempt to understand transnational social movements and coalitions. As a social movements text, it engages several theoretical areas, including resource mobilization, political process, new social movements, and framing. Despite having to wade through an occasional sea of acronyms, readers will find that the book provides a wealth of information about specific movements across several countries. Methodologically the essays revolve around mostly qualitative and case study analysis. In addition to being a worthwhile read to activists involved in the issues of “globalization from below,” this book would serve as a nice addition to courses in social movements, social change, world systems, macro-sociology, contemporary politics, and globalization.

Angela G. Mertig  
 Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
 Middle Tennessee State University  
[amertig@mtsu.edu](mailto:amertig@mtsu.edu)  
 © 2005 Angela G. Mertig

John H. Bodley. 2003. *Power of Scale: A Global History Approach*. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe. 297 + xviii pages, ISBN 0-7656-0985-1 paper. <http://www.mesharpe.com>

John Bodley is best known for his textbooks and writings on indigenous peoples, but in this book he makes an interesting and provocative foray into long-term social change. His experience in textbook writing shows through in a clear exposition. There is little mention of world-systems analysis, but this does not mean that it is not germane to world-systems issues, especially world-systems evolution. Indeed, *Power of Scale* is a helpful introduction to the many debates and issues involved in world-systems evolution. His basic thesis, is individual drive for power has generated growth and created social problems. These, in turn, inhere to a large degree in the problems of scale and size: the larger a group the greater the potential for hier-



archy which some individuals will promote and turn to their own advantage. It is an avowedly anti-class argument. While many readers will debate and argue against the anti-class argument, many will find the scale discussion insightful.

He begins with a proposition that power networks construct what he calls “imperium.” An imperium can refer to a household, a chiefdom, a state, or a world-system. By scale he means absolute size. Size, he argues, has several threshold levels, typically at orders of magnitude. Elites direct social growth, concentrating power, but succumb to “human weakness” and turn that power increasingly to their own benefit, even while noting that larger imperia can benefit society at large. While emphasizing individual action and responsibility, he also rejects claims that unfettered capitalism is good for society. In fact, its major problem is continued, uncontrolled growth.

He sees three broad categories of imperia: tribal, imperial, and commercial (approximately what others call kin-ordered, tributary, and capitalist modes of accumulation). Bodley argues that tribal imperia have little incentive to produce more than they need. “Imperial imperia” drive toward constant expansion to feed the egos of elites, often leading to overextension and collapse, and subordinate the economy to political ends, an argument that draws on Karl Polanyi. With the appearance of commercial imperia, or capitalism, groups of individuals, in the form of corporations, push for constant growth and extension of commodification. This brief summary does not do justice to the subtlety and finesse in his argument. The nuances are better illustrated in the second chapter which provides detailed examples: drawing heavily on the Ashaninka in the Amazon Rainforest, early Thai kingdoms, late Thai and Balinese “imperium,” and early United States.

From these examples he returns to the issue of scale. This is where he provides the most insights. He notes the pervasiveness of “power laws,” where changes in organization typically co-occur with orders of magnitude or size. He argues that size, for societies, may be maladaptive in that it allows larger, less adaptable societies to wipe out smaller, more adaptable ones. Because of limited human cognitive capacity, say, the ability to be closely familiar with order of magnitude 500 people, larger societies must invent some sort of hierarchy to persist. There are two points here. First, this is not a teleological argument. Rather, only those societies or groups that develop some sort of hierarchy can grow and remain stable above certain thresholds, typically powers of ten over 500. Second, change and growth are not “natural” or “inevitable.” Rather they are the result of actions of individuals or small groups of elites who benefit directly from them. Once hierarchies exist, it is possible, and in the interest of elites, to grow even larger by building even steeper hierarchies. The second point is the one most likely to raise dispute.

Chapter four describes how elites take over. Bodley is careful to note that this is not a conspiracy theory. Elites do compete. However, they have the resources to maximize their own interests over the interests of others. He illustrates by detailed examination of the works of Carneiro and of Leach showing how leaders use position to gain more, and in the process produce further growth. The following chapter explores the growth of European elites, again illustrating the power of scale. Chapter six unpacks Bodley's version of the growth of the commercial elites in the United States. A key point from these chapters is that it is the formation of the first imperia that is crucial. Once they are created, the processes are regular, if specific to the particular elites who shape that growth. That is, while individual actions are crucial, they are part of a larger, logical process.

The last three chapters examine possible counter-imperia. Key among these are the resistance of "tribal" peoples against states. He then re-examines Levelers, Luddites, Owenites, Anarchists and so on as possible counter-imperia. He presents evidence that the English poor did not benefit from early industrial growth. Even what he calls the Utopian Capitalists, such as the Rockefeller Foundation, fail to solve any of the inequities. Again, growth inevitably leads to concentration of power and wealth, making matters worse, not better. This, of course, is not news. What is new here is harnessing this analysis to issues of scale and arguing that the triumph of neoliberalism is actually due to actions of a rather narrow elite. Throughout these discussions Bodley claims to refute Marxian class analysis. But his argument can be readily reinterpreted to support it, especially in those forms that examine class segments and class fractions. Still, he does hold specific actors accountable for the current state of affairs.

He concludes that an optimal scale for human and humane existence would be for societies in the range of one to two hundred thousand. He does note, however, that some technologies, like telecommunication may need a minimum population base of ten million to be workable. The key points, as Bodley sees them, are to abandon the ideology of growth and to develop smaller scale societies. He notes that tribal imperia have minimal inequality, but more importantly have exhibited an ability to remain more or less stable, in the same ecological environments for centuries, and in some cases millennia. This is something that no state, ancient or contemporary, has been able to achieve. What is missing in this proscription is any suggestion of how to democratically and collectively choose no growth as a goal.

In such a brief sketch, Bodley's argument may seem overly facile. His detailed discussions, however, are full of insights. Not surprisingly given his anthropological work on and with indigenous peoples, he is at his best when he is discussing "tribal" imperia and the transition to states. Still, his ideas on scale and his attempt to show that there are specific movers and shakers behind the

growth of scale are insightful and thought provoking. His main contribution to the discussion of many old problems is this new angle of approach and an analysis of scale as a factor in, and of, itself. In this sense his analysis complements and supplements other work.

Last, but far from least, the pedagogical value of *Power of Scale* should be noted. The book can be very useful in courses to open a variety of discussions and debates, even if it is used as a foil to develop other arguments. Bodley's arguments that "bigger is not always better" and that elite power means decreased human rights for commoners are clear and provocative to students. He makes a compelling argument that one cannot examine the East India Company, the colonization of the global South, or certainly any of the world wars without considering their global repercussions, including politics and human rights. Thus, *Power of Scale* can be an excellent introduction to other texts on world-systems analysis, especially for students who are only beginning to encounter serious approaches to global social science.

Thomas D. Hall

Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Colgate University & DePauw University  
[thall@depauw.edu](mailto:thall@depauw.edu)

and

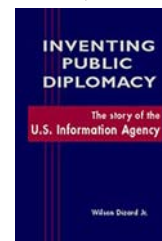
Kimberly Peyser

Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Colgate University  
[kpeyser@mail.colgate.edu](mailto:kpeyser@mail.colgate.edu)

© 2005 Thomas D. Hall & Kimberly Peyser

Wilson P. Dizard Jr. 2004. *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. 255 pages, ISBN 2-0040-0182-9 hardcover. <http://www.rienner.com/viewbook.cfm?BOOKID=1420>

In the manufacture of consent for its policies and practices abroad, the power elite of the American Empire—the dominant corporate, military, and political sectors—depends heavily on the arts of propaganda and public diplomacy. To be sure, the fist of force always lies in reserve for the recalcitrant, a fact to which recent history in Afghanistan and Iraq attests. Nonetheless, shaping public attitudes towards the means and ends of US foreign policy has proven an efficient standard practice for the expansion of global domination. Over the past fifty years probably as many boots have stepped onto foreign soil via diplomatic designs as through armed means. *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, by Wilson P. Dizard Jr., is a friendly examination of a key com-



ponent of the American project to shape world opinion: the US Information Agency (USIA).

Of the multitude of published works concerning US public diplomacy (too many to recount here), observers from points beyond the charmed circle of government operatives have penned the majority. However, the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) and the Diplomatic and Consular Officers, Retired (DACOR), have joined forces to produce a book series organizing the history of diplomacy and intelligence services from the standpoint of the diplomat and the information agent. The ADST is functionally and structurally close to formal state power. An NGO whose mission is to strengthen the efficacy of US diplomacy, it is located on the campus of the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, home to the State Department's Foreign Service Institute (FSI), and works alongside the FSI to complement the latter's work, managing the archives of US diplomatic history and providing these materials to historians and diplomats. Thus the ADST plays a role in the way global history is shaped, both in the manner in which the past is recorded and interpreted by historians, and by supplying a ready and ideologically-consistent history for diplomats to base their present and future work upon. *Inventing Public Diplomacy* is a product of this project.

Dizard's account of US propaganda operations is that of a dedicated insider. From 1951 to 1980, he served in the State Department and the US Information Service (USIS). His expertise is international communications. The aim of *Inventing Public Diplomacy* is to measure the ideological impact of the US Information Agency and its precursors. Dizard's account is sympathetic, although his appraisal is at times candid, such as his acknowledgement that Reagan's Central American adventures, which entailed extensive use of the agency, involved illegal conduct. He is also frank in depicting the agency as a propaganda operation—one that matched the operations of other countries and regions with whom the US competed for global advantage. However, he fails to discuss as problematic the deeper aims of the agency and its sister organizations, namely, their function as instruments of global capitalist domination. Moreover, he fails in an explicit objective of his study: to substantiate his claim that, because the agency reflected the national strategic interests of the day, its structure and practices are explicable within analyses of that larger context. In the final analysis, because of Dizard's loyalty to the agency, the book fails to develop a critical history of either the USIA or the geopolitical context.

The book begins with an overview of the USIA. Created in 1953, state elites designed the USIA as an element of public diplomacy in the Cold War milieu. The mission of the agency was to present to contested parts of the world an idealized image of America that would promote foreign support for the economic

and political aims of the United States. Dizard contends that until the USIA, America had no global propaganda system. He attributes this to "American exceptionalism," theorizing that isolationism and disengagement with European cultural models were the major causes of America's delayed entry into ideological warfare. This insular view of the world dominated elite consciousness until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on June 6, 1941. Much as the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 shattered America's sense of invulnerability, Pearl Harbor made a big world seem much smaller. In response, US elites built a global communications apparatus.

The path to the USIA was a blend of international restructuring, historical conjuncture, the evolving configuration of intelligence and propaganda networks, and the personalities of leaders and sponsors. The Office of War Information (OWI) established the Voice of America (VOA) shortwave news service in February 1942 to take advantage of new communications technologies that had emerged from WWI. The overseas component of the OWI was the USIS. Nelson A. Rockefeller pushed the Roosevelt administration to embrace a larger role in the struggle against the Nazis, especially in checking their growing influence in the southern hemisphere of the Americas. Through the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIA), which Rockefeller ran out of the State Department, the United States distributed pro-American press throughout South America and the Caribbean. Dizard credits Rockefeller with having devised the template for the USIA, the purpose of which was to penetrate Europe with pro-American propaganda in a fashion similar to US American operations. A related effort was the Coordinator of Information (COI), also created by Roosevelt in 1941. This agency morphed into the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in 1942. The COI and OSS represented the first institutional steps towards the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The principal activity of the US propaganda efforts during the late 1940s and 1950s was to counter what President Harry Truman called "imperialistic communism" and its "propaganda of slavery." In 1948, Truman signed into law the Smith-Mundt Act, which established ideological operations as a permanent part of US foreign policy. Legislative backing played a vital role in legitimating Truman's "Campaign of Truth," a propaganda offensive coordinating the information services of the United States and other capitalist countries. This direction figured into the design of psychological operations that accompanied the creation of the National Security Council and the CIA in 1947. The academic community, including research units at MIT, Harvard, and Columbia, joined with the government intelligence community in designing psychological operations, in turn contributing to the development of the public opinion and public relations industry.<sup>1</sup> Corporations with an interest in overseas operations and

markets financed the operations. Largely based upon a particular reading of George Kennan's thinking about the motives and nature of the Soviet Union, a view of the world emerged in which communications sciences were seen as a vital weapon in political warfare.

When Eisenhower formally consolidated the various propaganda agencies in 1953 under the name USIA, the US commercial media, which was likewise extending its influence over world markets, moved to coordinate its activities even more closely with the government. The goal of the public and private mix of information was to shape cultural attitudes and present the United States, its products and services, as an attractive alternative to communism, as well as foster the development of business climates favorable to overseas investment. USIA and corporate propaganda targeted Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, countries with which, according to Dizard, the United States had limited previous cultural engagement. The USIA used several methods to preach the gospel of Americanism abroad, including shortwave radio, leaflets, magazines, news bulletins, pamphlets, a worldwide library network, exhibits on American life, and exchange programs. The activities of the USIA overlapped with the DOD and CIA, and USIA subsidies were vital in helping US media corporations establish firms in foreign countries.

During the Kennedy years, elites restructured the USIA to keep pace with rapidly changing world realities and to reflect a unified ideological response to Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's declaration of "wars of national liberation." According to the US intelligence establishment, the USSR was sponsoring communists and left-wing guerrilla groups throughout the periphery of the capitalist world economy. Propagandists depicted global communism as a red army on the march. The US responded to the Soviet threat with modernization theory, a set of assumptions that posited that the infusion of Western ideals and values would, if adopted, catapult the backward peoples of the undeveloped world into modernity. The USIA scaled back operations in Europe and Japan and stepped up activities in the periphery to advance the offensive. As a point of comparison, Dizard documents that in 1959 the USIA had twenty-four posts in thirteen African countries. Four years later, there were fifty-five posts in thirty-three countries on the African continent. To give its propaganda operations more polish, the Kennedy administration brought CBS documen-

---

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed historical account of this, see Christopher Simpson, *The Science of Coercion: Communications Research and Psychological Warfare 1945–1960* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

tarian Edward R. Murrow on board. Murrow believed the agency should not just inform but persuade. He oversaw propaganda operations during such tense moments as Operation Mongoose, the covert program to sabotage the Castro regime in Cuba, the disastrous Bay of Pigs incident, where CIA-trained exiles attempted to overthrow the Cuban government, and the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, in which the Soviet Union endeavored to build missile sites in Cuba.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the USIA took advantage of several opportunities and struggled with many challenges. The agency successfully exploited the triumphs of the Apollo space program to project the image of a strong America abroad. Advancements in civil rights, however ineffective these were in dealing with the racist heart of America, allowed USIA propagandists to claim victory in the struggle for racial justice, which the Declaration of Human Rights had made an explicit priority in 1948. The always-present specter of nuclear holocaust continued to present problems for the USIA; the agency confronted a world that understood the problem of nuclear weapons through the prisms of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The scandalous Nixon administration and the appointment of the ideologically-driven Frank Shakespeare to the USIA, which caused the agency's objectivity to come into question, presented still more challenges. In response to the ideological bent of the agency under Nixon, Jimmy Carter moved to curtail the USIA's propaganda efforts by suppressing activities he deemed "covert, manipulative, or propagandistic," and renaming the agency as the US International Communications Agency. Carter's attempt to steer the agency back towards its original mission—as objective information disseminating agency—would be short lived.

Politicization of the USIA reemerged during the 1980s under Ronald Reagan. Although changing international communications patterns, such as commercial information firms and advanced communications technologies, complicated the agency's mission, Reagan's desire to wage intensive ideological warfare against the "Evil Empire" guaranteed that the USIA would see growth in its budget and a more aggressive outlook. Reagan doubled the USIA budget (its annual budget reached nearly one billion dollars by the end of the decade). The administration threw out the policies on balanced news treatment, and the USIA became a propaganda organ for the Reagan regime. The USIA became closely associated with the Special Planning Group (SPG), created in 1983, an association that made the agency a policy participant and not just a mouthpiece for US policy goals. The SPG was behind the creations of Project Democracy, which Reagan later restructured as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The SPG, along with the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy, became part of Reagan's shadow government during the Iran-Contra Affair.

The last chapters in Dizard's book end the study of the USIA in an abrupt manner, despite the number of pages dedicated to the matter. We learn that in 1999, Clinton returned public diplomacy operations to the Department of States and effectively closed down the USIA as an independent agency. In putting the agency to bed, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright eulogized that it was "the most effective anti-propaganda institution on the face of the earth." The State Department takeover put operations formerly conducted by the USIA quite low on the priority list, evidenced by the fact that President George W. Bush waited nine months before appointing an undersecretary of state for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

In his conclusion, Dizard suggests that the weakness of USIA-style operations during this period was in large part due to an inability to adapt to changing threats. Terrorist organizations, such as al Qaeda, present a problem for state propaganda operations. As Richard Holbrooke mused, "How can a man in a cave outmaneuver the world's leading communications society?" The US government had no method for effectively spinning a threat unattached to a state apparatus. In an effort to be more effective in the "war on terrorism," the White House took over propaganda production, creating the Coalition Information Center, which ran a 24-hour war room staffed with officials from the NSC, DOD, CIA, and State Department. This was followed in July of 2002 with the creation of the Office of Global Communications.

Dizard leaves out much of the story. Because of these omissions, he fails to locate US propaganda operations within the structure of geopolitics and global capitalism. Dizard tells his readers what many of them already know: The official mission of the USIA from its inception through the 1980s was, as Brigadier General Robert McClure put it during the Korean War, to win the "struggle for men's minds." This was, for US elites, the qualitative essence of "modern war" and it was embodied in the ideological components of Containment policy. The USIA's purpose was to counter Soviet propaganda, what Ayn Rand characterized before the US House of Representatives' Committee on Un-American Activities in 1947 "as anything which gives a good impression of communism as a way of life." And this the agency did well into the 1980s; under Reagan, in conjunction with the National Security Council, the agency launched the "Project Truth" campaign, parroting Truman's "Campaign of Truth," thus book-ending the USIA's role in the anti-communist crusade.

However, Dizard leaves unexplored the consequences of the fall of the Soviet Union. How were the bureaucrats and professionals going to justify the USIA's existence with the specter of communism no longer haunting the West? There was, it turns out, a pressing need. Guided by Clinton's foreign policy team, and led by director Joe Duffy, the agency adopted a new role, best articu-

lated by the NSA's Anthony Lake: "the successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement—enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies."<sup>2</sup> With this charge, the primary mission of the agency shifted from anti-communist activities to pushing liberalization of trade policy. In short, with the Soviets out of the way, the USIA openly pushed the transnational project of capitalist globalization.

Of course, in the final analysis, the "Clinton Doctrine" was not inconsistent with or even a departure from the founding mission of the USIA, since its goal had really always been to push the virtues of capitalism abroad and involve the private sector in this effort. Indeed, the aggressive push for liberalization began under Reagan with the creation of the NED and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). Changes in the agency reflected greater shifts in the process of globalization and state strategy to shape that process. In the 1990s, the development of the global system demanded reorganization of the US propaganda network. In 1994, Clinton, with Congressional backing, brought all nonmilitary state international propaganda operations—including Radio and TV Marti, Radio Free Europe, Radio Free Asia, Radio Liberty, Voice of America, and Worldnet television—under USIA control. The USIA was put to the task of selling international trade agreements, such as NAFTA, and stressing the importance of membership in such transnational organizations as the WTO. It was a prominent preacher of the gospels of deregulation and trade liberalization. The agency also pushed for the expansion of NATO, helping to transform that Cold War military structure into a transnational security apparatus, as well as collaborated with the Drug Enforcement Administration to regulate global narcotics trafficking. All of this history is left out of *Inventing Public Diplomacy*.

Finally, Dizard fails to sufficiently criticize the agency for its failures to articulate its purpose to the US citizenry and to involve non-business interests in shaping a collective vision of the nation's aims in the world. The Smith-Mundt act sought to exclude non-corporate voices by prohibiting the targeting of US audiences with programming aimed at foreign audiences. The image of America projected abroad was—and continues to be—neither generated nor consumed by Americans. Nancy Snow contrasts the alternatives: "Millions of private citizens, both here and abroad, are using their collective vision to promote a one-

---

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Lake, "From Containment to Enlargement," Address delivered at the School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC, September 21, 1993.

world community—not a one-world market—where diverse cultures are united in efforts to combat poverty, oppression, pollution, and collective violence. In contrast to the USIA's boardroom-style globalization, many of these citizen activists favor more freedom of movement for people and greater regulation on the movement of capital."<sup>3</sup> Clearly, then, the initial design and guiding vision of the USIA was to serve as a propaganda instrument for the imperial project to spread capitalism across the planet, illustrating Marx and Engels' famous axiom that the executive of the capitalist state is but an organ for pursuing the common interests of the capitalist class.

Andrew Austin  
 Department of Social Change and Development  
 University of Wisconsin-Green Bay  
 Green Bay, Wisconsin  
[austina@uwgb.edu](mailto:austina@uwgb.edu)  
 © 2005 Andrew Austin

Victor M. Ortíz-González. 2004. *El Paso: Local Frontiers at a Global Crossroads*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 172 pages, ISBN 0-8166-4077-7 paper. [http://www.upress.umn.edu/Books/O/ortiz-gonzalez\\_el.html](http://www.upress.umn.edu/Books/O/ortiz-gonzalez_el.html)

Victor M. Ortíz-González's *El Paso: Local Frontiers at a Global Crossroads* tackles the complex phenomenon of economic and social integration at one of its most intense points of contact: the U.S.-Mexico border. At first glance the book would appear to offer a feast for the reader. Ortíz-González weaves threads of post-modern theory, Marxist geography, and contemporary political economy into a series of ethnographic studies of concrete responses to globalization in El Paso, Texas.



The micro- and macro-approaches combined with empirically grounded theory is intuitively appealing. So too is the general point that Ortíz-González seeks to make: the dual function of the border as a bridge and a barrier between Mexico and the United States creates unique challenges for the residents of the region. Local interests are consistently subordinated to non-local interests—"alienated instrumentalities"—while the dominant images of the region as a site of transgression and hybridity fail to capture the reality.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy E. Snow, "Foreign Policy in Focus: United States Information Agency," *Interhemispheric Resource Center and Institute for Policy Studies* 2 (40), August 1997.

Unfortunately the effort falls short. The book is theoretically weak and unwieldy in its organization. There are also serious problems of data that stem from the author's apparent disdain of "evidence"—a word he felt needed to be placed in quotes at one point (p. 155). And so, instead of theory helping to organize data and the data helping to inform the theory, both theory and data are lost in labyrinths of post-modern jargon without either supporting the central assertions that Ortíz-González makes.

On the theoretical front, Ortíz-González uses theory almost ornamentally. Snippets of Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, and David Harvey are introduced and invoked from time to time even when they fail to shed light on the point the author is making. After a series of case studies the reader is informed that these stories "illustrated different spatial practices influencing the local labor market and underscored gender and class divisions" (p. 106). Apart from the fact that, as with everything in the known universe, the stories all took place "in space," nowhere is it made clear how these vignettes exemplify "spatial practices."

Nor is there any further clarification of how the distinction between spaces of place and spaces of flow or how the notion of "hyperspace" enhance our understanding of life in El Paso or anywhere else on the border. Instead, selected pieces of different theorists are displayed without really engaging any single theory or even an attempt to synthesize or explain contradictory frames of reference.

In the absence of an organizing framework, the book meanders. Personal history, anecdotes, observation, speculation, and ethnographic data are all thrown together in border tales of varying length that have an uncertain and uneven relationship to the themes of the book. Some of the most bold and interesting assertions are simply left hanging without any apparent effort to grapple with providing "evidence" to support them.

For example, Ortíz-González argues that border cities are effectively "administrative fictions" lacking in the "basic administrative capacities to fulfill most residents' needs" (p. 22). It's an interesting point which, if pursued, might make for interesting reading. How do the overlapping jurisdictions of the various branches of federal, regional and state government (not to mention the private jurisdiction of capital and international obligations under the North American Free Trade Agreement) affect the abilities of cities to fulfill their basic administrative functions? The answers are nowhere to be found in the book.

Indeed, it is often unclear how exactly the author's descriptions of El Paso are unique to the border region at all. Ortíz-González argues at one point that the "persistent frontier condition" of El Paso is related to the discrepancy "clearly manifested in the limited control that local workers, entrepreneurs, and

public officials have regarding relocation decisions of major global employers” (p. 75). Isn’t this what much of the literature on globalization has been arguing for decades now?

Lacking both a solid theoretical foundation and systematic organization, the book relies heavily on anecdote and speculation. For example, the author argues at one point that the distrust generated by El Paso’s subordination to non-local interests is demonstrated by “a disproportionate amount of road rage for a city the size of El Paso” (p. 35). At another point he asserts that “Millions of people cross the border in both directions” (p. xvii). Whether it’s millions a year, a month, a week, millions more or fewer than last year, is never addressed and ultimately appears not to matter much because, as the author argues later on, “Regardless of actual numbers, the flow of immigrants, visitors, and commuters has major impacts” (p. 48).

A more empirically-minded reader might think that the actual numbers would be closely related to the impact that the flows of immigrants, visitors and commuters have on the city. Indeed, this is a central part of Ortíz-González thesis, that the growing numbers of border crossings and the intensified links between Mexico and the United States have significantly eroded the quality of life on the border.

But never mind. Ortíz-González has a wonderful facility with language. He moves adroitly from one tale to another, seeming to enjoy the word play. But ultimately the various points that he makes begin to collide.

Ortíz-González argues against the representation of the border as a site of social disorganization and chaos in his critique of García Canclini’s *Hybrid Cultures* (p. 16). And yet, by the conclusion of the book, Ortíz-González has come full circle and argues that the “multiple and irregular developments, the frontier/*frontera* overlap implodes the border region. This implosion creates a persistent chaos and dislocation, perpetuating the dislocating subordination of the region” (pp. 158–59).

One of the central assertions of the book—that local interests are subordinated to the non-local interests—is undermined not only by the fact that Ortíz-González never actually identifies a set of interests that can be defined as “local” but by the fact that his ethnographic studies illustrate that so-called “local interests” are sharply divided along lines of class and ethnicity. Examples of non-local interests dominating the local look suspiciously like local elites taking advantage of opportunities that are not available to lower-class residents of El Paso (p. 98).

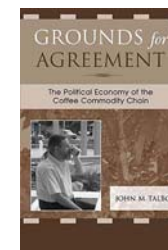
Given that Ortíz-González’s methodology of choice is ethnography, it seems more than little strange to read about the “incongruous and callous bureaucratic attitudes” of local public-sector workers administering a program

for retraining displaced workers and their “myopic emphasis on the workers’ lack of education” (p. 88). Ethnography, after all, is supposed to help us learn how others view their reality. Instead, throughout the book we get a picture of how Ortíz-González views the reality of his subjects but not much of a sense of how the inhabitants of El Paso view theirs.

Michael Agar argues in his classic on the ethnographic method, *The Professional Stranger*, that the “truth” of stories is less important than the information that the stories convey about the group that believes them. The stories that Ortíz-González shares generally fail to provide that insight. And when he asserts that “the transformations in the region are beyond the scope of paradigmatic pronouncements and of the selective gaze that recognizes only what it already has in mind” (p. 25) it is difficult not to think that this is actually an apt description of Ortíz-González’s book.

Dag MacLeod  
Office of Court Research  
Judicial Council / Administrative Office of the Courts  
[dag.macleod@jud.ca.gov](mailto:dag.macleod@jud.ca.gov)  
© 2005 Dag MacLeod

John M. Talbot. 2004. *Grounds for Agreement: The Political Economy of the Coffee Commodity Chain*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 237 Pages, ISBN 0-7425-2629-1 paper. <http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com>



If you judged the health of the coffee sector by the price of a latte at your local Starbucks, you might be surprised to learn that at least since 1989 there has been a global crisis in coffee that exacerbates the poverty of coffee producers, including many smallholders around the world. John Talbot’s tightly argued and carefully constructed historical sociology of the coffee commodity chain from 1945 to the present illuminates these processes in stark detail. *Grounds for Agreement* takes coffee as a case within which to examine and explain world-historical processes of unequal relations of production and trade. The result is an excellent book that argues forcefully for a return to regulated markets on social justice and ecological grounds.

The analysis builds methodically from discussion of the structure of the global coffee commodity chain under U.S. hegemony, 1945–1972 (chap. 3); to struggles over its governance during the developmentalist period of regulation, 1973–1989 (chap. 4) and the neoliberal globalization period of coffee crises,

1990–present (chap. 5); through struggles over “forward integration” into the more highly capitalized instant coffee segment of the global chain (chap. 6); and reaching its climax in discussion of the distribution of surplus along the chain (chap. 7) and the (limited) potential for alternative trade such as organics and fair trade to alter the deep structure of the coffee chain (chap. 8).

Theoretically, Talbot’s project merges a world-systems approach—including but not limited to the analysis of global commodity chains—and Arrighi’s systemic cycles of accumulation with a food regimes approach. In laying the theoretical, methodological and historical-material grounds for his analysis in the first two chapters, he begins with the world-systems premise that one must analyze the whole world-economy if one is to understand the commodity chain. The analysis of the coffee commodity chain that follows, as he concludes, is much more complex than Gereffi’s now well-known distinction between producer-driven and buyer-driven chains. Talbot finds that different segments of the commodity chain may have different governance structures. One may wonder why he sees the need to create a “more complete typology” (p. 219), but that’s a small quibble.

Bringing in the material characteristics of coffee as the “archetypal tropical commodity,” *Grounds for Agreement* builds on Friedmann and McMichael’s food regimes work to focus on the fourth agri-food complex of the tropical commodities. In doing so, Talbot introduces the key concept of the “tree crop price cycle,” which he returns to later in the narrative. To summarize succinctly, due to the three to five year lag between planting new coffee trees and their producing fruit, growers will tend to overplant when the price is high and to take too many trees out of production (or not maintain them) when the price is low. As a result, there are exacerbated cycles in world prices. Because of the tree crop price cycle, Talbot observes a “central role of ecology” in determining the structure of the (tropical) commodity chains. Thus, as Stephen Bunker has argued more generally, the characteristics of the commodity matter tremendously for the political economy of the commodity, regional development in extractive and in this case agricultural regions, and global relations of unequal development. Surprisingly, Talbot does not cite Bunker’s work or his work with Ciccantell that moves further than Arrighi’s in the direction of giving analytical weight to raw materials (and, by extension, agricultural commodities like coffee) in studies of global hegemony.

The last theoretical tool Talbot deploys is Polanyi’s concept (via Arrighi) of the “double movement.” There have been a series of double movements in the coffee commodity chain where extensions of the self-regulating market have inevitably created movements for social protection against the ravages of the market. Further combining the material arguments with the Polanyian ones, Talbot argues that when the extension of the free market in coffee has resulted

in coffee crises due to the tree crop price cycle, there have been countermovements of coffee growers pressuring states to protect them against the uncertainties of the market. Declining commodity prices led to the collective actions of coffee producing states to construct the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) in the 1970s; the triumph of the U.S.-led neoliberal vision created the ultimate breakdown in 1989 and the ensuing coffee crisis; and now, he argues, we are in a period of another double movement wherein renewed market regulation is possible—and desirable.

Power is at issue in much of the book. Chapter 4 on “Struggles over Regulation of the Chain” details the ways in which producing states leveraged their control over domestic segments of the global coffee commodity chain into the ICA and even aimed to control world market prices through influencing coffee markets in consuming countries. It is here that the main thesis of the book emerges: that “grounds for agreement” has existed at key historical moments, in 1962 and also, notably, in 1980 several years after the killer frost of 1975 in Brazil. That frost led to a large price spike followed by a gradual decline that set the stage for renegotiations over the ICA. As Talbot observes, of the 1970s commodity agreements around oil (e.g. OPEC), bananas, rubber, cocoa, bauxite, copper and the like, “The coffee agreement was arguably the strongest and most successful... due to the collective strength of the coffee producers” (p. 95).

But the ICA had perpetual problems due to the structural tendency towards overproduction, as well as the interests of the U.S. hegemonic state in fostering a transition to unfettered neoliberal trade. Overproduction occurred because of the tree crop price cycle upswing following the frost; “technification” of coffee production with new, high-yield varieties (ironically at the initiative of peripheral producer states and local capitalist classes but to the ultimate benefit of core capital); the debt crisis and global export promotion; and the very export quota rules of the ICA which encouraged high levels of production to obtain quotas in the next year. In the end, however, Talbot explains how the U.S. government—not European importers who in part viewed the ICA as a form of restitution for colonial exploitation—in alliance with a “dissident” group of smaller, new producer countries brought down the ICA in 1989. Part of the story is an ideological reorientation that accompanied the organizational change in the making of U.S. agricultural trade policy, moving it from the State Department’s purview to the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in 1980 when Carter was still President.

The remainder of the book, in essence, is an analysis of the ascent of the powerful transnational corporations (TNCs) in the coffee commodity chain, which given the prior capacity for collective state action by peripheral producers was not a given. From a detailed history of mergers and acquisitions, Talbot

charts the consolidation of capital in coffee trading and manufacturing under four major manufacturing TNCs that now control over 60 percent of global coffee sales and eight TNCs controlling the majority of trade. These giant trading and financial companies, for whom coffee is but one commodity among their repertoire of tricks. Indeed, the increased financialization of the world economy led to a shift from hedging to speculation in coffee futures “independent of supply and demand conditions” (p. 111), weakening the link between futures prices and real conditions while increasing the need for market information—something in which the TNCs have an edge. Talbot’s discussion of the complexities of futures markets is clear and insightful.

The increasing power of the TNCs has meant that in the post-ICA world of the 1990s, there was a massive, real transfer of coffee stockpiles to consuming country locations at bargain prices with little change in the retail price of a pound or cup of coffee. And in the producing countries, coffee marketing boards and monopoly exporting were dismantled from Columbia to Rwanda, leading growers into feeble attempts to pressure their states to re-regulate the market. Taking an implicit cue from Dunaway and Clelland’s review of Gereffi and Wyman’s (1994) *Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism* in the first issue of this journal,<sup>1</sup> Talbot pays close attention to the extraction and distribution of surplus along the commodity chains. In Chapter 7, “Where does your coffee dollar go?,” Talbot convincingly demonstrates, despite all the difficulties in obtaining reliable data, that the main beneficiaries are the TNC roasters who gain the largest share and handle the largest volumes. As they gained control of the whole chain and not just the core segments of it, they maintained high retail prices despite crashing green coffee prices and increased their share of income by 20 percent. Examining cost of production figures he shows that coffee growing was broadly profitable from the mid-1960s to late 1980s but has since been in crisis. In 2000/01, the average coffee grower obtained only 41 cents from tending a tree producing one pound of roasted coffee beans that sold for four dollars, and that income is gross, before fertilizer, pesticide and other inputs. Leading TNCs like Nestle (for which some data emerges) garner surplus of perhaps 30 to 40 percent of retail price.

Today, Talbot sees little potential in the variety of specialty coffee, fair trade and organic trade alternatives being proposed and tested in small niche markets. Specialty coffees, he explains, emerged in response to quality declines

---

<sup>1</sup> See Wilma A. Dunaway and Donald Clelland, “Review of Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism.” *Journal of World Systems Research*, 1 (1995). Available at [http://jwsr.ucr.edu/archive/vol1/v1\\_r5.php](http://jwsr.ucr.edu/archive/vol1/v1_r5.php).

that accompanied the overproduction and coffee price crises of the past decade or more. Their purveyors have been taken over or grown into TNCs, notably Starbucks. The fair trade and organics trade, while useful to a small number of farmers, face a number of contradictions. Not least is that these are small and niche. Talbot doubts that they will alter the structure of world trade. The problem is that they rely on the “C” futures contract market as a benchmark for the band of price premium that is possible (e.g. C + x cents / pound where C is the Central American Arabica coffee price). In addition, the price premium to farmers has already created overcapacity leading fair traders to market some of their product at lower prices.

Instead, Talbot concludes, “A real resolution of the crisis requires structural change.” (p. 213). He argues for the importance of a Polyanian double movement toward re-regulating the market. Peripheral states, he argues, should once again serve as buffers between the small growers and the immense power of the TNCs. They need to engage in production controls and agree on a fair price range in a commodity with fairly stable world demand. One question that goes begging is why state regulation of the market should be more likely or effective in the current (post)neo-liberal moment. Unfortunately, as Talbot demonstrates, the grounds for agreement are weak in the current conjuncture. One possibility is that the “race to the bottom” competition among producers to produce the cheapest coffee possible, which has resulted in very poor quality coffee and pushed thousands of people off the land, will reach a crisis that results in social mobilization. But that is different from the multilateral state negotiations that Talbot supports in the creation of a new International Coffee Agreement.

Perhaps this is a weakness of the approach and one cannot expect him to cover everything in this one book. Still, while Talbot incisively details the contours and history of the global commodity chain in coffee and negotiations across and within the chain, he offers limited interpretation of the successes and failures of specific peripheral actors beyond the Polyanian double movement against the structural constraints of the world system based in a conjuncture of geographical distribution of coffee production and geopolitics of coffee importing nations. In my view, the lack of qualitative attention to key nation-state cases in the coffee trade means there is little analysis of the class character of peripheral states. In fact, he takes a surprisingly benevolent view towards the tropical states and their marketing boards and export control agencies. Although recognizing weaknesses and corruption in Africa, for example, Talbot sometimes seems to fall into a blurring of the boundaries between large producers and small holders in the Third World, implicitly at least conflating producer country success in gaining a greater share of the chain’s surplus

with benefits for the millions of coffee growers. He realizes it is more complicated than this but maintains that state agencies cushioned growers from price swings. Occasionally, in his shorthand, Talbot simplifies “producer” and “consumer” countries and reifies “Brazil” or “Colombia” in the process.

A further criticism I have is that more could be said about questions of method. The book relies on historical sociology and “theoretically driven incorporated comparisons” (p.30). Indeed, Talbot makes excellent and consistent comparisons. Some of the comparisons are among actors: between US and European importing states and firms, between different categories of producer states, e.g. those producing *Robusta* or *Arabica* and newer entrants (“other milds”) who became crucial to the demise of the ICA in 1989. Other comparisons are temporal (e.g., between different moments of negotiation over the ICA and between the effects on the price cycle of the 1975 Brazilian frost and the less severe 1986–87 cycle when ICA quotas were in effect).

The research relies predominantly on the tools of historical sociology: primary use of materials from the ICA archives and secondary reading of primary sources, including key coffee trade journals, as well as periodicals (mostly the *New York Times*). This has been supplemented in some way by interviews with ICA officials and NGOs and activists. In the passages based on secondary materials, I sometimes found a lack of sufficient citations. Lengthy passages, for example on the history of coffee, the technology of production, and the producer country cases, deserved more references in my view. And, in the qualitative passages, such as when Talbot writes that the “dissident group of producers” acted as a bloc in 1988–1989 because they “felt that they had common interests” (p.94), I am curious: How does he know? There are a small number of footnotes to interviews with key ICA and TNC officials; but I wish he had included more of the field work in the book, such as that pertaining to the older ‘coffee men’ who look down on the newer futures traders (p.131, n. 19).

Moreover, I wonder if Talbot in his more recent work will return to the questions of hegemonic cycles and transition raised in the opening theoretical chapter. In other words, how might the further decline of U.S. hegemony affect the future structure of the coffee commodity chain? Have Japanese trading companies taken a different relationship to global trade and production than U.S.-based transnationals? Has the Chinese state, or Chinese firms for that matter, become involved in coffee like so many other commodities?

Finally, a timeline of key events and tipping points and a chart or two condensing the information on corporate ownership and mergers would have helped the reader to keep track of the complexities.

All in all, *Grounds for Agreement* makes an outstanding contribution to historical world-systems analysis in general and the politics of commodity chains

in particular. It is superior to many of the books available on globalization since it actually shows the relationship between commodity characteristics, market financialization, and the increased power and wealth of TNCs in the past fifteen years. It would be eminently useful in classes on world-systems, globalization, and development at the graduate and advanced undergraduate level. And it should spur debates about how to organize, democratize, or otherwise alter the deep structures of inequality inherent in global production and trade.

Paul K. Gellert  
Visiting Fellow  
Institute of Asian Cultures  
Sophia University  
Tokyo, Japan  
[pkgellert@yahoo.com](mailto:pkgellert@yahoo.com)