

Book Reviews

Carol Upadhy and A.R. Vasavi (eds). 2008. *In an Outpost of the Global Economy: Work and Workers in India's Information Technology Industry*. New Delhi, India: Routledge. 283 pp. ₹ 650. ISBN 0-415-45680-7 (HB).

Since the 1990s, the rise of outsourced software and IT-enabled services industries in India has become emblematic of India's entry and integration into the global knowledge economy and of the latest phase in the development of capitalism, in which high-tech offshore production and services (as well as low-end services such as call centres) have been vaunted as the vanguard of India's new economic success. This wide-ranging collection makes a brilliant contribution to the sociology and anthropology of work in this increasingly important sector of the Indian economy, engaging critically with the political economy and culture of 'flexible' labour. The book intervenes in five areas of debate concerning the new high-tech economy: the organisation of production; the significance of dematerialisation, virtuality and mobility; its distinctive organisational cultures; modes of sociality and impacts on the lives and subjectivities of workers; but finally, the authors underline the continuing use of technologies of control from earlier regimes of mass production.

Perhaps surprisingly, the book considers the software and IT-enabled services industries together. Upadhy and Vasavi argue that there is in India a synergy between the two, as most of the larger Indian IT companies have tried to enter the IT-enabled services market by starting or buying business process outsourcing and call centres. Moreover, there is an equation between the two in the popular imagination. However, they differ in important ways with respect to the jobs they offer and types of workers they employ, and the book masterfully leads us through the distinct characteristics of each sector. Ilvasaran's chapter demonstrates the importance of understanding the technicalities of the software labour process, the division into conception and execution tasks in order to intervene in debates about whether the new industry is deskilled or not. Vasavi and Remesh's chapters on call centres are also of note, detailing the inexperience, unorganised and disposable nature of this young English-speaking workforce. The authors' conclusion that the work that gets outsourced is of a low grade and lacks creativity relative to the qualifications of the workers is important, as it puts into perspective the triumphant rhetoric about India's 'shining' new position in a reordered and multi-polar global economy.

Against the dogma of space–time compression in the globalised economy, the contributions in this book demonstrate clearly that outsourced IT and call centre work is very much embodied. D’Mello and Sahay show that as offshore industries in India have increasingly replaced the practice of ‘bodyshopping’ (i.e., workers moving onsite to the client), the industry now comprises immobile workers, welded cyborg-like to their computers and headsets whilst their labour flows alongside transnational capital through networks and satellites to their customers and colleagues across the other side of the world. Technology is as central to control over the labour process as it is to the performance of work; digitalised management systems are designed to record workers’ productivity and encourage individual ‘initiative’. The work culture is distinctive, making use of indirect normative methods of control such as ‘team work’ (i.e., peer pressure) to induce workers to manage themselves, and each other. Building on Arlie Hotherschild and Carla Freeman, the contributors make the point that the ‘soft skills’ valorised in the industry (e.g., knowledge of foreign languages, communication, awareness and comfort with cultural difference) lead to a commodification of personality, blurring the boundaries between work and non-work and shaping marketable and market-embedded subjectivities and lifestyles. However, for all the insights the contributors give us concerning the distinctive work and culture of this new industry the final chapter by Remesh—detailing the panoptical regulation of production through technology-aided monitoring, surveillance practices like recording and random monitoring, individual targets and performance appraisals—leaves us wondering how far we have moved from the Ford factory after all.

Particularly fascinating are the ethnographies of ‘cultural training programmes’ given by Upadhyaya and Sathaye, which show how reified notions of ‘culture’ are co-opted to coordinate and manage multi-cultural virtual teams, yet how in practice this means that Indian employees are taught to feel at home with Euro-American-style office practices and interact sensitively with ‘Western’ customers and colleagues, whilst stereotypes about plodding, methodical ‘Indian’ work cultures are re-inscribed and re-circulated. With IT and call centre jobs thought of popularly as ideal for women, chapters by Mukherjee and Narasimhan and Fuller examine the important trend towards increasing female involvement in these sectors. The picture that emerges is that women workers feel ‘empowered’ by their professional status and earning power, yet ironically, female entry into the sector is predicated on their ‘flexibility’ as workers, namely their willingness to work odd hours or part-time, thus normalising their continuing responsibility for domestic and reproductive work.

If there is one weak point in this collection, it is that it provides no clear answer to the question of whether the IT and call centre industries are successfully broadening professional employment beyond the existing educated middle class—or not. Whilst Narasimhan and Fuller argue that career structures in these industries are meritocratic once you are working in them, it would be helpful to hear more about the education and training routes that feed into these sectors. Remesh shows that

the majority of employees surveyed attended English-medium public or convent schools, that most of their parents were graduates and, furthermore, in urban government jobs, business or professional services. Vasavi mentions applicants being weeded out due to 'Mother Tongue Influence'. However, Nicholas Nisbett and Martyn Rogers' work more richly excavates the gendered frustrations of young men who are educated in state language-medium institutions, in mofussils rather than metros, or particularly, scheduled caste, who are 'living the IT dream' and desperately trying to break into the new economy but fail to get a lucky break because they lack the linguistic and cultural credentials to do so.

Reviewed by **Kaveri Harriss**, University of Sussex.

Henrike Donner. 2008. *Domestic Goddesses: Maternity, Globalization and Middle-class Identity in Contemporary India*. Hampshire, UK: Ashgate. 215 pp. £55. ISBN 978-0-7546-4942-7.

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Domestic Goddesses is an in-depth study by Henrike Donner, which examines the relationship between globalisation and the impact it has had on the women who comprise India's middle class. Donner opens with an introduction which serves to outline her research methodology and interest in the subject matter. She correctly asserts that maternity within the context of the middle class is a field which remains underexplored within the literature. Using formal and informal interviews conducted from 1995–2005, including three year-long visits, she has a wealth of information upon which to base her findings. Donner is also careful to mention the problems faced as an outsider to the community in conducting field interviews, many of which involve the power dynamic which is created between her and the subjects of her interviews. Despite the ethical dilemmas faced in trying to find a middle ground between social research and the more permanent position of a locally based field worker, she is able to build the trust necessary in conducting a long-term study within the same neighbourhoods over time. In focussing her research upon the well-established middle class neighbourhoods in Calcutta, Taltala and Ganguly Bagan, she builds upon the histories that exist in those areas and which deal with perceptions of modernity, class, religion and social change.

In the first chapter, Donner examines the historical background of maternity in India, primarily during the colonial period and also addresses the effects of globalisation on gender and identity. As globalisation and the economic liberalisation of the early 1990s led to an expanding middle class in India, scholars became increasingly interested in the resulting changing cultural landscape. However, women who are primarily active within the private sphere have been excluded from previous studies which placed focus on the public sphere and nationalism. These studies were

usually from an economic perspective, and considered issues related to marketing to the new consumer class and media. There have been other studies conducted on maternity in India, but the focus tends to be issues relating to poverty which again ignores the experiences of the middle class woman. ‘Middle class’ as a categorisation can be broad and without focus, but Donner is careful to draw parameters on what is considered middle class, and is able to focus the text to those who embody these characteristics.

Chapter Two examines the necessary prerequisite for acceptable maternity in India—marriage. Predictably, a shift has occurred in which young women are more inclined towards the idea of a life partner they choose themselves rather than one arranged by their parents. Each side of this debate has strong shared notions on what the other stands for, with women who want a ‘love marriage’ being afraid of joint families, where they live with their new husbands’ parents, which may include a domineering mother-in-law, while the older generation interested in arranged marriages for their children perceives the love marriage as a selfish Western concept. The parallel drawn between popular culture and the statements made by the interviewees demonstrates that the traditional conception of marriage is one of family and community, not individualistic desires. The author also makes an interesting distinction between a dowry and the ‘demands’ made by the groom’s family in the time leading up to the marriage. While perhaps not a request for money, these demands can include vehicles, a television or other high-ticket items. It is this modern incarnation of an old ritual, as well as the types of items that are requested which demonstrate the cultural shift which has occurred.

Potentially the strongest chapter in the book, Chapter Three, examines pregnancy within the context of tradition in a society affected by globalisation. In many of Donner’s interviews the women lived in joint families, which resulted in their having a subordinate position within the household. This continues into pregnancy, where the mother-in-law can control important decisions, going so far as to decide the manner in which her daughter-in-law will give birth. While the historical context of childbirth is interesting, especially the shame aspects associated with birth, the arguments regarding medicalisation are particularly strong. The industry surrounding birth has expanded, with women giving birth in hospitals rather than at home and having a caesarean section—both being status indicators. The ability to have a caesarean section can also indicate family structure, as the women who can afford it often come from joint families, which allows for the income necessary to fund such a procedure. A poignant story recounted by Donner is about a woman who is being visited by her family after the birth of her first child and is still in the hospital, in which it is clear that even though she gave birth, the focus is on the child, and she remains as secondary.

Chapters Four and Five examine education of children as well as food habits. The education of one’s child is a major preoccupation for Indian parents, even before the child is of age to attend school. Competition is intense, and the pressure

to enrol one's child in the best school begins with preschool. Historically, middle class women had great pressure to take care of the children and their nutritional needs, but there has been a shift which has now led to women becoming far more involved in their children's schooling. Women with degrees are being sought after as prospective brides not for their earning potential, but for the fact that they can teach their future children. This drive is partly due to economic liberalisation, which opened the way for the IT industry in India. Within Chapter Five, this shift towards changing roles and opening to the West continues with food habits dramatically changing. Food, especially the consumption of meat, is tied to religion, caste and, in the case of women, sexuality. So while middle class parents are becoming comfortable with feeding their offspring meat, for women there are still religious constructs which may restrict their consumption. These chapters support Donner's argument of social change as a product of economic change, creating new identities for mothers within the household.

The author makes a clear argument for the impact of globalisation and modernity on Calcutta's middle class through the social mores of marriage, pregnancy and parenthood. However, the discourse presented in Chapter Two on courtship and marriage would have benefited from further examples. Donner explores the intergenerational struggle which often occurs when love marriages are sought by young women and arranged marriage by their parents. This is an area in the literature which has been written about at length; however, the section on new technologies and ways in which relationships have evolved to become much more public in nature is not as well established. It is likely in the interviews there are more first-person accounts of how dating actually takes place, and how it is facilitated by technology, and the inclusion of these would have only added to the argument presented. Additionally, while the case studies are all conducted in a specific region, some of the claims in the book deal with middle class Indians in general. Donner mentions briefly that Calcutta and other metropolises are not alike when it comes to certain issues; however, there could be greater expansion and differentiation between the cultural climate in Calcutta versus that of Delhi or Mumbai.

Domestic Goddesses is a fascinating study, one which has managed to present socially complex issues of marriage, caste, class, religion and modernity in a manner which is accessible for those who may not be well versed in Indian culture. Each chapter presents a distinct argument for how globalisation has affected middle class women in Calcutta, and the rich examples drawn from years of interviews allows for a fluid understanding, one which has grown with the economic changes which have occurred since the 1990s. Donner has produced a work of value, which contributes to the literature within the field, and will be of interest to those who wish to understand the widespread effects of globalisation on the individual women who make up India's growing middle class.

Reviewed by **Shivani Singh**, University College London.

Vandana Asthana. 2009. *Water Policy Processes in India: Discourses of Power and Resistance*. New York: Routledge. 182 + xiv pp. \$130. ISBN 13: 978-0-415-77831-2.

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This much-needed volume, the author makes clear, is a seminal interrogation of the process of policy production in urban water supply in India since neo-liberal economic reforms were introduced in the early 1990s. The main argument espoused by this book is that neo-liberal globalisation and attendant processes of rescaling of the state have contributed to a 'contextual messiness in the debate about policy production' (p. 1). This messiness has brought with it an entirely new constellation of actors and their networks with their distinctive discourses on how water supply needs to be produced and distributed. The presence of diverse actors in the policy process needs to be accounted for and this volume does a good job of mapping the terrain of this shift. Asthana documents with clarity the intricate, multi-layered and multi-valent scheme of policy production that complicates the widely accepted, linear, top-down model of policy formulation and implementation where the state produces policy, and is passively received by society.

The gist of this book could be divided into three broad segments that encompass the theoretical and empirical scope of this work. The first section presents an extensive review of several bodies of literature and identifies gaps and opportunities in them that this work is in a position to contribute to. At the core of this review is the conceptualisation of policy as a process that 'explicitly acknowledges the importance of the social and historical context in which policy is shaped' (p. 9). In order to realise a processual understanding of policy, the book reviews the shifts in the wider literature on policy processes from a linear model, to an actor network model and finally to a discursive model. This is followed by a review of the literature on policy processes in India with a specific focus on water policy processes. Two points can be made about the review of literature in this work. First, while the author has certainly taken the pains to be comprehensive in her engagement with the policy process literature, she could have more creatively structured the review to reduce the blandness of this otherwise academic exercise. As it presently stands, different bodies of literature are ordered in a ranked fashion with little conversation across categories. An example is the heading on policy spaces (p. 20) that occupies a paragraph that is quite detached from the body of the review. Although the author mentions that policy spaces are a critical concept for this work (and one encounters policy spaces repeatedly in later chapters for example in pp. 116 and 141), the review could have done a better job of integrating it. The second more interesting aspect is the review of water policy processes in India. The author makes the important point (and I agree with it wholeheartedly) that 'there is limited work on policy process in India in general and in water in particular' (p. 25). However, the author fails to identify adequately reasons for this absence in the predominantly technocratic or oppositional orientation to much of water research in India.

The second segment of this work provides a rich account of the historical and empirical context of water policy production in India. Asthana locates this research very much within a historical moment in post-independence India marked by a remarkably stable transition in the country's political economy from a Nehruvian socialist model to a liberal economic regime. The stability of the transition, according to Asthana, is the product of strategic policy entrepreneurs (p. 34) who drawing upon the support of political leaders, succeeded in sequencing and aligning reforms to minimise resistance. Such a stage-managed model of reform insertion in India is a radical departure from reforms in other developing country contexts. Tracing the transformation of water policies the book argues that the national government facilitated a gradual and coordinated change that 'balanced domestic interests with the conditionalities of external agencies' (p. 66). The empirical ingredient of this work is situated in the context of a tussle spawned by reform efforts undertaken in the city of Delhi by the local utility and the government of Delhi. These reform efforts were animated by a constellation of mainstream actors—the Delhi water utility, the Delhi government, World Bank, and international consultants such as PricewaterhouseCoopers. A second constellation of actors drawn from a disparate group of civil society actors, who understood this move as 'backdoor privatisation' (p. 95), sought to resist reform efforts in water supply. The final segment of the book sets out the contours of the competing storylines presented by these two opposing actor constellations in the context of the resultant tussle. This leads the author to conclude that contemporary policymaking in water supply in India is a complex, dynamic process where linear, top-down processes are inextricably intertwined with horizontal relations of power and agency. The ongoing interaction between linear and horizontal dimensions (p. 151) influences how water policies are deployed in different contexts.

Beyond its academic focus on the shifting dynamics of policy production, an attraction of this book is that it offers a topical focus in two different domains that may be of interest to a more general but well-informed reader. The first domain this book engages with is the debate surrounding water privatisation in developing countries. Given the polarised nature of the debate in this domain, the literature on water privatisation is notable for its partisanship and its glaring deficiency in analytical scholarship. Using the case of Delhi, this book rectifies some of that deficiency by documenting the pressures and pushbacks that are inseparable from the process of transforming the mode of production of drinking water. A second domain that this book is concerned with understands the process of transforming a large emerging country like India. Since the 2000s, there is a growing body of literature that has heralded the rising influence of large emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil on the world stage. Within this body of literature too there is a surprising lack of appreciation for the labyrinthine processes of change that have their roots in historical social and political choices. This book presents

a very accessible explanation of the peculiarities of the 'rise' of India on the world stage. This book is written in a style that is appropriate for advanced undergraduate or graduate students from a wide range of disciplines such as development studies, water and natural resource management, South Asia studies as well as students of Indian politics and society.

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Mahendra Lawoti and Anup Kumar Pahari (eds). 2009. *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge. 354 pp. \$150. ISBN 978-0-415-77717-9 (HB).

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The book aims to explain the dynamics and growth of the violent decade-long insurgency, led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which started in 1996 from rural districts in Nepal. Various aspects of the rebellion are explored in an attempt to provide a diverse picture of the nature of the insurgency, its modus operandi, and success in recruiting and keeping intact a sizeable support base.

There are 15 chapters, with contributions ranging from the Maoists' tactics in recruiting cadres by mobilising a plethora of means such as cultural programs, indoctrination, and political education, the governance of a growing parallel bureaucracy, the role of ethnicity in inciting conflict to the comparison between the PLA and the security forces in flaring up the violent movement. The role and consequences of external actor's engagement and the quest for identification of causes behind the growth of insurgency are also explored. The two editors of the book, Lawoti and Pahari, delve into what is at stake for the nation and the CPN-M in the post-insurgency era, that is, after the successful revolution in 2006 that culminated in the end of the two-century long monarchy and signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with democratic parties. Given the breadth of issues explored by the authors, from various perspectives, the book is not only useful to researchers interested in the nature, causes and consequences of a home-grown insurgency but also to a general audience having interest in conflict studies and conflict resolution professionals interested in understanding and solving ideology-based insurgencies.

Despite presenting rich information, the contributors of Part II, which deals with the extensive use of indoctrination and political education, cultural programmes, the use of student unions and the mobilisation of landless rural poor against elites to generate popular support for the insurgency, fall short of making their point convincingly. There is little analytical rigour in their analysis as all of them are informational and interpretive in nature. Readers would have benefited

tremendously had there been analytical examination of the Maoists' tactics and the level of success in methods used to recruit insurgents and enhance the support base.

While attempting to explain why the Maoists were successful in recruiting rebels through indoctrination of Maoists ideology, Eck just explains the modes of indoctrination while failing to convincingly explain why indoctrination was successful and to what extent it contributed to the growth of Maoist support bases in rural areas. Eck's claim that the focus on 'local knowledge and the understanding of local grievances' (p. 45) was the main reason for enticing recruits is partially refuted by Acharya, who shows that grievances, caste and ethnic divisions and ideology are insignificant variables (pp. 264–84). In fact, using econometric analysis, Acharya shows that the main cause of longevity of the insurgency and its mass appeal are incentives, that is, the opportunity cost of joining the rebellion is low due to limited employment opportunities, difficult physical geography and personal security amidst the absence of state. Meanwhile, Tiwari asserts that initially development inequalities and poverty increases the likelihood of conflict, but once conflict kicks in, the intensity is guided more by social variables, that is grievances are not primary causes (pp. 243–57).

Mottin's contribution on the use of cultural programmes such as dance, theatre and songs that circulate through tapes, CDs and videos to keep cadres intact and tempt more people to join the rebellion is largely based on observations and anecdotes from fieldtrips in the Maoists' strongholds. Mottin, however, falls short in explaining how the Maoists' songs and dance were any different, if they really were, from that of the United Marxist-Leninist (UML), which were once very popular among the rural impoverished masses. In Chapter Four, despite providing valuable insights into the evolution and contribution of the Maoist student's union in raising awareness about its parent party's rebellion, Snellinger struggles to justify how the All Nepal National Independent Student Union-Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) is a 'scientific organization'. By blindly following the CPN-N's ideology, restricting the upward mobility of competent members in the management body of ANNISU-R and using violence to put forward their demands contradicts the author's claim that the student body is a scientific organisation.

In the next chapter, Joshi looks at the tussle between poor landless people and rural elites, and the effect of liberalisation on rural households. Joshi's claims that the insurgency is mostly related to the grievances of rural landless poor and the apathy of the political establishment in reforming the feudal economic system that only benefited the 'landed elites' are not fully backed by convincing evidence. Nepal has been feudal since its inception as a sovereign state. Why the revolution after two centuries of the existence of feudalism? Plus, it is quite wrong to attribute the continuation of feudal land holdings as a trigger. Unequal distribution of land cannot be solely attributed for the disgruntlement among the poor during and after the insurgency in Nepal. Nepali people are fiercely individualistic in nature,

which is evident from their dissatisfaction with collective production units and communes in the Maoist's model village, which were considered as breeding grounds of the Maoist insurgency. Not even in the Maoist's model village—Deurali—were residents satisfied with collective production units and communes, as is shown by Lecomte-Tilouine (pp. 116–32). They were forced to follow the Maoist's utopian model of governance that consisted of Marxist education in schools, communes and kangaroo courts.

Examining the trajectory of insurgency with the participation of indigenous groups and the role of the Madhesi community during and after the insurgency, Lawoti and Kantha do an excellent job to fill the void on the ethnic dimension of the insurgency. The Maoists raised issues such as language equality, secular state and self-determination rights, and incorporated proportionally high indigenous representation in their organisational structure, leading to an increase in support from the indigenous people. In fact, the insurgency began from the land of one of the indigenous groups, the Kham Magars. By comparing Maoist movement in Nepal with that of Peru and India, Lawoti shows that the latter countries' inclusive policies helped blunt the growth of insurgencies. One important implication of this finding is that alienating and excluding ethnic groups is a recipe for disaster. This is further confirmed by Kantha, who argues that due to the Maoist's hostile attitude towards the Madhesi interests, especially on instituting a single Madhes state with a right to declare autonomy and their pro-India stance, they could not garner popular support in the Terai region. Kantha, however, fails to explain whether the leaders of Madhes, most of whom once belonged to mainstream political parties that ignored ethnic minorities' rights, are genuinely interested in securing the rights for Madhesi people or are they simply seizing the political opportunity and creating a niche for ethnic politics? The higher echelons of the newly formed Madhesi parties are virtually void of lower caste people, which indicate more of a repackaging rather than a genuine push for empowerment of marginalised Madhesis by the upper caste Madhesi elites.

On the military dimension, comprehending the inability of a large, well-trained and equipped state army to contain effectively an insurgency is always intriguing and surprising. Mehta and Lawoti fault the fickle political situation; the coup in 2005 leading to withdrawal of support to the security forces by India, the United Kingdom and the United States; and the inability of the army to win the support of the public for the weakness of the state army. The Maoists emerged triumphant due to their 'political foresight and strategies and not through military victory' (p. 191). They, however, do not talk about the moral and material support provided by India to the Maoist insurgents. They also do not talk about the political will, which was at best halfhearted, to fight the Maoist insurgency. Pahari compares the Maoist movement in India and Nepal and argues that the Maoists gained an upper hand because of the extreme centralisation of political, administrative and

governance powers in Kathmandu. Upreti looks at another important dimension of the conflict—the role of external actors, who showed ‘inconsistency and duplicity’ while dealing with the government and security forces. The international actors severely criticised the state for violating human rights during the insurgency. Meanwhile, they also supported the security forces by supplying arms, logistics and training before the royal takeover and imposition of state of emergency.

Most analysts were surprised when the Maoists gained the largest number of seats in the 2006 CA election. In a forward-looking chapter, Lawoti unravels the causes of this surprising election victory—projecting themselves as the only agent for change; creating an environment where other parties could not freely and fairly seek votes; and the undemocratic intra-party culture among the democratic parties (pp. 287–303). This strategy worked once, however, if the Maoists employ the same strategy again in future elections, then ‘democracy, freedom, and the Nepali people will be victims’ (p. 301).

Despite populist talks, the Maoists have not formulated policies for economic transformation. The economic policies they formulated when they were in government backfired because the economy saw a negative growth in manufacturing sector. Meanwhile, domestic and foreign investment nosedived. Several factories closed down due to threats from the Maoist-affiliated militant youth wing and trade unions. Looking at the Maoists’ method of operation even after their emergence as the largest party in the parliament, there is very little evidence that the Maoists will reform and do things differently. From the Maoists’ perspective, it however makes little sense to do things differently, when their current modus operandi is paying hefty political dividends. The book does not include studies on crucial issues such as the economic cost, the stagnation of income growth and the effect of Maoists ideology on private sector investment and growth during the insurgency.

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Saman Kelegama (ed). 2009. *Trade in Services in South Asia: Opportunities and Risks of Liberalization*. New Delhi, India: Sage Publications. 328 pp. ₹ 750. ISBN: 978-81-7829-937-2.

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Services has become the single largest sector in many countries across the world accounting for two-third of world output, one-third of global employment and about one-fifth of world trade. While there is little doubt that services trade is an essential ingredient to economic growth and sustainable development, it is widely accepted that it can only make such positive contribution if appropriately

liberalised and implemented across countries. Globalisation, which means increasing interdependence among economies, really spreads through services.

South Asia's diversity is its strength. It provides vast opportunities for trade, investment and economic growth. Its economies have flourished as they have become more closely intertwined with each other and the rest of the world. Services span the region, taking advantage of each country's comparative advantages. As a result, South Asia in general and India in particular play an increasingly central role in the global economy: it is the world's information technology services factory, and an emerging giant in outsourced services too.

The collection of essays in this book in 10 chapters covers trade in services in the seven South Asian countries and provides an overview of the entire region on market access and regulatory issues as defined by the GATS framework of the WTO. The book begins with a discussion on opportunities and risks of liberalising trade in services in South Asia by the editor himself. Thereafter, we find a rich collection of country reports for each South Asian country. Barring Afghanistan, all SAARC countries were presented in this volume. The concluding chapter deals with the domestic liberalisation agenda with GATS disciplines.

While the region's services trade in software is world class in parts, it is below the global average in many more services trade sectors, as this volume details. Much of South Asia's huge services trade potential remains untapped. This study finds that the benefits of liberalising and extending South Asia's services trade are huge—and that they would benefit all countries in the region.

Essays of this volume also highlight the offensive and defensive interests in trade in services, particularly in the context of GATS, institutions and regulations governing services, and opportunities and risks in further liberalisation of trade in services in each South Asian country and the region as a whole. This volume sheds light on the opportunities of liberalisation at multi-lateral and regional levels. Barriers and risks of liberalisation of services trade are also categorically highlighted. Although the policy framework and approach have varied across different services sub-sectors, the general direction is towards greater opening up of all kinds of services. What emerges from this volume is that services sector will continue to play a very important role in growth processes of the region and in its integration with the world markets.

Without integration, however, diversity breeds disparity rather than prosperity. The challenge now is to improve services trade across South Asia—and thus to the rest of the world. The competitiveness of South Asia's services trade depends on quality human resources, infrastructure facilities, enabling regulations, among others. To gain deeper access to world services trade, as this volume notes, South Asian countries have to strengthen their domestic services trade sectors by overcoming capacity constraints such as inadequate legal provisions, lack of regulatory structures, shortages of skilled work force, infrastructure bottlenecks, unfriendly administrative structures, etc. In the short term, as other barriers to trade

in South Asia have fallen—not least tariffs and other trade-policy restrictions—deficiencies in standards, domestic regulations, and mutual recognitions have become increasingly significant issues in services trade. Righting them would do more to lower the cost—and hence increase the volume—of services trade in South Asia and beyond. Longer term, the full benefits of South Asia's size and diversity can only be realised by creating a single market where goods and services can move freely and seamlessly.

Exports are diversifying across new markets, but intraregional trade is limited to selected services. Services trade diversification in the region is thus an important issue, which was not delved in this volume. Investments in information and communications technology (ICT), human capacity development, cooperation on trade facilitation, and improvements in soft infrastructure more generally are equally important which could help facilitate services trade liberalisation in the region. But services trade would not necessarily promote pro-poor growth in the region. Cases studies in the volume have ignored these aspects.

Developing effective policies and institutions are as important as cleaning up unfriendly domestic regulations. South Asia has made some progress in developing regional cooperation in trade and investment over the past decade and a half. However, further progress requires creating effective new institutions, as well as strengthening and improving the coordination among existing ones—which, in turn, depends on the willingness and capacity of South Asian countries. Stronger institutions and policies are essential not only to have higher trade but also to help build capacity of the LDCs in the region. This volume is surprisingly silent on it. In general, the major gap of this volume is data quality and analytical depth. I wonder why the book does not have a full-fledged chapter on conclusions and way forward. Policymakers in today's world would have benefited from a crisp concluding section.

Building trade infrastructure and removing regulation bottlenecks across the region may not seem glamorous, but it should be a priority for the region's policymakers. In these uncertain times of global financial crisis, South Asia must not pause or turn back, but rather press ahead with the huge—and hugely rewarding—task of integrating this vast and diverse region for the benefit of all its citizens. This will help to boost growth and spread its benefits more widely. It will enhance the region's competitiveness and extend its global reach. It will help reduce poverty and promote greater environmental sustainability. But it is only possible with a common vision, strong political leadership and partnership at the highest level. This is the bottom-line of the book. This book is a good reading for those who are trade policymakers, researcher scholars and students. It is also a valuable resource for the services trade literature.

Reviewed by **Prabir De**, Fellow, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi.

Daryl Collins, Jonathan Morduch, Stuart Rutherford and Orlanda Ruthven. 2009. *Portfolios of the Poor: How the World's Poor Live on \$2 a Day*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 320 pp. \$29.95. ISBN 06-91141-48-7 (HB).

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Balance sheets are one of the first resources to use to determine an individual's wealth, but they tell us little about the financial health of the poor. For example, let's look into the balance sheet of a poor couple living in a Bangladeshi coastal village: Hamid and Khadeja have seven financial assets on their balance sheet, ranging from a microfinance savings account to remittances to life insurance. They also have six liabilities, from wage advances to shopkeeper credit. On paper, they have a negative net worth. However, balance sheets like this do not tell the story of how the poor manage their money. A deeper analysis into their cash flows and turnovers is necessary to better understand how they manage their income and debts.

Take another example from Bangladesh: to pay for his son's marriage, Aatur sold assets (a cow, goat and bamboo), borrowed on the local market, and took out a microloan. A few months later, the marriage expenses were offset by the wife's dowry of cash and jewellery. In South Africa, when Thembi's brother died from tuberculosis, she pooled from 12 different sources, varying from burial societies to disability grant funds, to pay for his funeral. Nomsa, a 77-year old, cares for her grandchildren after their mother died of AIDS, and manages to put a monthly payment of US\$ 40 into her informal savings club to help pay for their education and soften possible financial shocks in the family.

These are surprisingly intricate financial portfolios with multiple lines of non-traditional credit sources, especially considering that the holders live at or below the poverty line.

In *Portfolios of the Poor: How the World's Poor Live on \$2 a Day*, Daryl Collins, Jonathan Morduch, Stuart Rutherford and Orlanda Ruthven gather financial data from more than 250 households in Bangladesh, India and South Africa. They use a technique called 'financial diaries', which track the money management decisions of the households biweekly or monthly. The diaries provide fascinating (and previously underreported) glimpses into the lives of the world's poor.

Collins et al. use this revolutionary approach to research systematically the precise methods the poor use to manage their money. In the past, low-income portfolio data was collected through surveys. However, there are two significant problems with the one-time survey approach. First, the authors find that many people are unlikely to trust a stranger asking about their financial position. In turn, they often give false answers, especially if they have reason to believe that the researcher is trying to find other assets in their possession to collect on an overdue loan. Accurate financial data collection involves a trusting relationship that has been built over many visits.

Second, surveys measure the household's asset position *at a specific moment in time*. This balance sheet approach is far weaker than a cash flow analysis, which measures the changes in assets over a period of time. Cash flows provide more information about the household's financial health than a balance sheet. The financial diaries, unlike surveys, capture these cash flows.

The World Bank defines the world's poor as those who live on less than two dollars per day¹—a benchmark that includes 2.5 billion people, two-fifths of the world's population. However, this statistic is misleading because few consistently earn two dollars each day. More often, people receive their irregular incomes in lump sums and need to find ways to smooth out their consumption between payments. The financial analysis from Collins et al. reveals something surprising: *even the poorest of the poor do not live hand to mouth*. The portfolios of the poor contain sophisticated financial instruments, many of which differ from the financial instruments employed by their wealthier counterparts.

For instance, the poor need resources for coping with risk and dealing with emergencies. In Thembi's case, she needed to use many financial instruments to piece together the funds for her brother's funeral. As the authors note, funerals in South Africa are extremely important and expensive events, costing approximately US\$ 1,500—the equivalent of about seven months of income for a single household. About 80 percent of the South African diary samples have at least one type of funeral insurance.

Collins et al. find that insurance schemes vary in their formality. Some consist of contributing to monthly premiums and receiving a payout upon the death of the insured. Others, such as burial societies, do not have regular meetings or premiums. Instead, they depend on the reciprocity of the members during a funeral, when the members promise to give a set amount of cash or food. Households, even among the poorest, will often hold more than one of these insurance schemes in their financial portfolios. This surprising finding can help policymakers and insurance companies find new ways to help the poor's financial position.

Many of the families in the financial diaries are members of multiple microfinance institutions (MFIs). In many of the early years, these MFIs focused only on supplying loans. Collins et al., however, uncover that the poor not only need access to credit, but often even more desperately want reliable places to save. For instance, the original Grameen model forced all members in a borrowing group to save small sums in a collective group fund in case of an emergency. These funds contained compulsory and non-withdrawal savings. However, due to the irregular cash flows of the poor, many demand more flexible savings accounts.

In wealthier countries, depositors expect to be paid to put their money in a bank. However, the financial diaries reveal that the poor are often willing to *pay* to save. In some of the diaries, depositors paid small interest rates or fees to store their money

with someone in their village, largely due to the scarcity of these types of savings institutions in poor areas. Many of these depositors have had their money stolen and believe that investing with a well-respected member of their society provides a higher level of security, as this person is less likely to run away with their money. In addition, giving money to neighbours or family members as ‘loans’ that are not repaid creates a negative savings rate—which can be more costly than outright theft. Keeping money tied up with a respected member of the society can minimise these financial burdens.

Even though the households are poor, they do not lack choice. They are willing to pay for convenience and flexibility. While *Portfolios of the Poor* defines these terms broadly, concrete examples of what choices the poor are willing and able to make would improve upon the authors’ analysis. It would also be beneficial to policymakers and non-profit leaders to have more specific information. For example, how much would someone pay to have a safe place to save? What type of insurance choices do the poor make when offered multiple types? When deciding which loan to pay back first, how much influence does a social relationship have over a formal one? Providing a range of values for these questions would provide a basis for future policy discussions.

Additionally, the authors briefly discuss new technologies, such as banking on cell phones. The effect of this technology on money management will likely be significant as an increasing number of people have access to cell phones. Many of these answers can be found in the individual diaries, but they are not addressed across the dataset. An additional chapter that includes a more forward-looking analysis of the data, instead of a predominantly descriptive one, could help direct policy recommendations or inspire new financial instruments. This could also help to identify developmental areas for financial technology, find geographical locations in need of different financial institutions, and determine a quantitative approach to how the poor make their financial tradeoffs.

Nevertheless, the broad results are powerful for both for-profit and non-profit entities. For instance, one consumer goods company realised that many of the poor do not have enough assets at one time to buy a full bottle of shampoo. In response, they created small shampoo packets that cost only pennies, which have been popular with consumers. These cash-flow diaries illustrate that although the poor are ‘bankable’, they come with their own unique set of financial and social constraints. Almost all of the diaries, like Thambi’s, have multiple liabilities, including loans from multiple sources (some with interest, others without), MFI memberships, store credit and some even use credit cards.

These portfolios are thoughtfully selected and highly sophisticated, especially considering that many of the owners impressively live on less than US\$ 2 per day. In *Portfolios of the Poor*, Collins et al. present a compelling economic analysis that has the potential to improve both non-profit, for-profit and individuals looking to tap into the power of the poor.

NOTE

1. In *Portfolios of the Poor*, the conversion of money from the local currency to dollars is through purchasing power parity (PPP) and not the exchange rate.

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Satyendra S. Nayak. 2008. *Globalization and the Indian Economy: Roadmap to Convertible Rupee*. New York and London: Routledge. 272 pp. US \$160. ISBN 978-0-415-44739-3 (HB).

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Of the economic changes that have swept India since 1991, those related to international finance are probably the most dramatic. Foreign exchange shortages, once the bane of the economy, have given way to vociferous debates about what to do with the country's burgeoning 'excess' reserves (now US\$ 200 billion plus). Just 20 years ago, one could get arrested for holding foreign currency without authorisation. But in 2007, the Reserve Bank of India was practically begging people to take dollars off its hands, having just allowed each citizen to invest in foreign securities up to a previously unthinkable US\$ 25,000. *Globalization and the Indian Economy* is an attempt to narrate the course of these changes and chart out a map for the final few steps towards complete rupee convertibility (total free flow of foreign exchange). Such a course is usually fraught with danger, for a misstep here or there and a country could be hit with capital flight or serious inflation, but the author, an experienced finance professional and a professor at ICAI Business School in Mumbai, has great pride and confidence in India's success so far and prospects ahead.

The first half of the book is a historical account of the global monetary system, particularly the periods of the Gold Standard, Brettonwoods and Floating exchange rate that have successively defined it. It is only in the last period that developing countries have sought global financial integration at a rapid rate, a change the author attributes to the new 'philosophy of globalization' or the 3W (Washington-World Bank-Wall Street) model (p. 27). According to this thinking, liberalisation of trade is expected to bring efficiency gains, spurring higher economic growth. The broad acceptability of this thinking is attributed to the failure of external aid to stimulate growth in developing countries in the aftermath of the war. Globalisation of finance is expected to allow investors in rich countries to diversify their investments and entrepreneurs in poor countries to have access to scarce capital. Though the author has some concerns about those whose livelihood is affected adversely by globalisation, by and large, he endorses the project.

Greater globalisation has manifested itself in America's large BoP (balance of payments) deficits, but he does not find them worrisome. The trade deficits reflect

specialisation according to comparative advantage, and capital account deficit reflects technology transfer in form of Foreign Direct Investment to developing countries. America's 'benign neglect' of its deficits allows countries such as China to pursue export-led growth, and keeps the world flushed with liquidity. The cheap money policy of Greenspan in the 1990s and the early 2000s is credited with being a trigger for worldwide growth. Concerns about deficit and debt sustainability are countered with arguments about the innovativeness of the US economy and its attractiveness as a place to invest. He does not worry about inflation, and at one point describes the IMF as 'suffering from Inflation paranoia' (p. 88). In neglecting to consider asset bubbles, particularly the housing bubble which has brought the global economy to its knees, his reasoning is typical of the pre-2007 era.

Those worthy of blame, he believes, are the 'gung-ho liberalizers' of Asian Economies in the run-up to the crisis of 1997 (p. 6). With the benefit of hindsight, he explains the folly of pegging currencies in an age of superliquid currency markets, and advocates capital controls to avert a crisis. He holds up India's cautious liberalisation, which insulated it from instability, as a model for other countries to follow. But regulators must walk a fine line between financial repression and financial instability, after all one could have complete stability by banning all borrowing. It would have greatly bolstered his analysis if he had considered whether Indian regulators, in their conservatism, have avoided instability but at the cost of greater financial deepening. He calls for an expanded role of IMF, including one of providing worldwide liquidity in the form of a new global currency, to relieve the dollar of its role. The first half of the book does not convey anything novel; it merely reiterates arguments and descriptions made elsewhere in the literature on financial globalisation.

The second half, where the book shines, describes India's gradual financial globalisation. One is heartened to read about the country's successes in this area which include greater access to finance, a healthy banking sector, burgeoning Forex Reserves and world-class capital markets. The chapters here make for an excellent resource for those seeking details on the topic. The sequencing and gradual nature of the reforms are emphasised, and he helps readers see that India's capital account is already largely convertible.

The principal contribution of the book—a proposed roadmap or timetable for full convertibility, is laid out in the third to last chapter. The author advocates a plan stretching over three years, in which the current ceilings on short-term inflows and corporate investments abroad are progressively relaxed, and subject to prudential limits. He estimates the effect of the proposed convertibility on interest rates, inflation and debt service under various scenarios, but he neglects to reveal the underlying model or parameters used for the simulation, and does not discuss if the effects could be manageable. An 'alarm system for full convertibility operation' is also proposed, which is table of numerical intervals beyond which sudden changes in values of exchange rates and other macro-economic indicators should become

cause for alarm (p. 199). But for all we know, the numbers could have been pulled out of a hat. A fuller exposition of the author's reasoning for choosing the particular intervals would have been useful.

The book ends with a proposal, frequently made in policy circles, to use a tranche of the country's US\$ 200 billion Forex reserves to build infrastructure. He makes a persuasive case by pointing to the benefits of this mode of financing over FDI and external borrowing, particularly of its benign effects on inflation and BoP. While at it, he also advocates higher deficit spending to build infrastructure, remaining rather sanguine about the inflationary threat posed by such spending. But supply bottlenecks in India are pervasive, particularly in case of skilled work force—a crucial component of infrastructure building. Parcelling his deficit spending proposal with measures such as rationalising tax and tariff structure, relaxing entry regulations and deregulation aimed at reducing other supply-side constraints would have made his proposal more attractive. After all, with the consolidated government deficit running at 10 per cent of the GDP (as opposed to 2 per cent in China), it is hard to believe that government miserliness is a constraint on India's growth.

The book would have benefited from more extensive editing. There are some spelling errors, and, at one point, a paragraph is duplicated (p. 61). The author also does not seem to have a clear readership in mind; while at several times he assumes that the readers understand the intricacies of BoP, he then spends time defining the most elementary concepts ('Globalization is the process of increasing integration of different economies of the world', p. 24.) Certain points are unnecessarily repeated, and many important statistics are cited without giving a source. Such editorial lapses tend to distract often the reader from an otherwise well-researched book.

Does the book's prescription of greater financial integration, written before 2007, hold up well in the light of the current financial crisis? India's record vindicates his enthusiasm, having logged growth of 5.5 per cent by latest estimates, higher than the average rate in the days of isolation. Tight prudential regulation, suddenly fashionable after the crisis, has been emphasised repeatedly by the author as necessary accompaniment to full convertibility. The book is as relevant today for policymakers and students as before.

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Devi Sridhar (ed). 2008. *Anthropologists Inside Organizations: South Asian Case Studies*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 170 pp. ₹ 495. ISBN 978-81-7829-886-3 (HB).

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This edited volume by Devi Sridhar highlights the practical and ethical dimensions of organisational research within anthropology. It presents seven case studies on

development projects involving South Asia (India and Bangladesh) and South Asians (in the United Kingdom) where the authors discuss how they negotiated the procedural issues of access and sampling as well as the substantive issue of loyalty and ethics in undertaking and communicating ethnographies of organisations. The case studies range from documenting organisational trajectories of faith based organisations in India, qualitative research on NGOs working on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS in Mumbai and Chittagong as well as female infanticide in Tamil Nadu, studying World Bank nutrition projects in Tamil Nadu, and undertaking ethnographies of educational institutes in Uttar Pradesh. A diaspora perspective is added in the final case study, which focuses on a Muslim school in England. This book will be useful for not only social scientists interested in development but also practitioners of human development as well as scholars and students interested in the politics of development. The regional appeal of the book is obvious.

The aim of the book is to substantiate the change in the nature and scope of social anthropology as it takes on the study of the ‘culture’ of formal organisations as a new frontier in problematising societies. As the title alludes, the book anchors itself on a previous volume edited by David Gellner and Eric Hirsch (2001), *Inside Organisations: Anthropologists at Work*. As the book by Gellner and Hirsch, this too begins by invoking the 11 tenets of good ethnographic content as synthesised by Bates (1997). But Sridhar then goes on to clarify that the contemplation of her own volume is not the findings (the ‘what’) but the process (the ‘how’) of organisational research. That the accounts presented here are meant to convey the way researchers engage with their own presence within the organisations and the practical emotional dilemmas such engagements inevitably produce is highlighted. Still, the justifications for such a deliberate disjuncture between methodology and results are not clearly stated in the contributions to this volume.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. To comprehend the usefulness of researchers’ embeddedness in their research world, some digests of its research premises must be delineated with greater clarity. First, in addition to procedural and ethical issues, the definition of the core and the context of an organisational ethnography must be made clearer. Second, the issues of access and boundary-setting are all important, but they are not static issues, and they entail continuous renegotiation with multiple parties throughout the course of the fieldwork—as opposed to a one-off bilateral decision at the outset. Third, what separates (good) ethnography from other social science studies is its appetite to take on the issue of complexity (of perspectives and moralities) beyond symmetry; and organisational ethnography cannot afford to be an exception to this.

The first of these three basic premises may be discussed in reference to four of the seven case studies presented. In the remaining three case studies—the research on sex work in Chittagong and Mumbai as well as the investigation on female infanticide in Tamil Nadu, organisations offer the context but they are not at the core of the ethnography. In any case, whether the case studies are ethnographies of

the organisations or ethnographies *in* the organisations is a question that can be answered only by looking at the resulting narratives. Unlike that of its predecessor Hirsh and Gellner (2001), this volume is considerably reluctant to share results. For example, Grills discusses how he finally decided to assume his religious self-identity in the NGO premises, but leaves the question open as to whether and how such proclaimed embeddedness has informed his resulting narrative on public health activism. Sridhar initiates her research amidst the ‘fear that nutrition will close up at the Bank [and that] Bank macroeconomists have qualms about funding nutrition ... [because] the Bank should be a bank and not a health development agency.’ Such a claim necessitates supporting evidence of the stated, perceived and evident accounts of the Bank’s nutrition programme guidelines, which is missing. Even if this validates her original claim about the inaccessibility of the Bank as an ethnographic premise despite its influential clout on international development, it cannot be assumed *ex ante*.

The two educational ethnographies—Uttar Pradesh and England—seemingly offer greater access for researchers and hence exemplify my second point on the process of renewed negotiations for access. While ‘spatial’ access is hard to deny especially among the grassroots-level NGOs and schools, ‘temporal’ access is not easy to come by, at least in the first instance. In some ways, this is not a new problem for ethnographers; in fact, the contrary: Malcolm Chapman has rightly made the point that no one can stop a researcher from residing in a village, but that does not mean that people will let him or her into their homes or their lives. Some of the contributors have attempted reciprocity of loyalties, favours and even benefits, and all have come under pressure to ‘clearly outline their research objectives’ so the respondents could take as informed a decision about their co-operation as possible. Not surprisingly, methodological narratives muster precisely stated if somewhat limited research questions and hypotheses in highlighted text boxes or well-signposted bullets. The outcome are somewhat formalist narratives which talk about ‘structured, in-depth and follow-up interviews’ and the negotiation dilemma involving the ‘gate-keepers’ on ‘sample selection.’ Other than the two educational ethnographies, the case studies appeared to have the researcher present in the field for less than a year. One of the case studies was done through the help of an interpreter while the other spent considerable fieldwork time returning telephonic and email correspondences. Do these reflect what the editor calls ‘the tension between the goals of modern organisations and the ethnographic objectives,’ which inevitably informs both the substance and interpretation in the resulting narratives?

The frontiers are often where debates about the interior are deliberated. Organisational ethnography is an anthropological frontier of current times, and as Lewis (p. 152) states in his Reflections, may usefully contribute to solving anthropology’s difficult relationship with the ‘practice agenda,’ potentially leading towards a broader anthropological work on policy. Anthropology’s hesitant inclination towards policy work is no longer a peripheral question but central. Gellner acknowledges

that, unlike the comfortable monopoly and space enjoyed by the past generation, contemporary anthropologist's natural habitat is as likely to be a space often shared by researchers of other disciplines, and structured by formal institutions of policies and organisations. He argues that anthropology can indeed uniquely reach the parts that may suitably complement the work of other social science disciplines. It is true that today's anthropology will need to be sufficiently detailed and authoritative for the resulting narrative to overcome the problems of crude instrumentalism on the one hand and exaggerated participatory claims on the other. Equally important, anthropology—as other social sciences—will have to reference its work more substantially to the dominant policy and practitioner discourses while avoiding charged and perfunctory condemning or condoning.

Even if there were an added demand for rigour, there is no justification for a compromise on the core of anthropology, that it is about 'an empathetic understanding similar to the therapeutic situation' (Hirsh and Gellner, 2001: 7). As much now as before, anthropologists should transcend not only the spatial barriers but also overcome the personal and systemic biases to gain an understanding into the native's point of view. Regardless of the novelty of the subject matter, ethnography should depict how the field is perceived from the perspective of those who practice it. It should be a living experience where the researcher's embeddedness enables him to explain the way ideas and structures evolve in his organisation through particular social relations of power, reciprocity, legacy and adaptations to material needs. In contrast to the puritanical anthropology that studied radical differences of life, contemporary anthropology is able to study 'alternative modernities' or the different perspectives on shared aspirations.

Another issue that pleads for comment is the dilemma that echoes through the book and may contribute to part expiation and part subversion of the researchers' 'host' organisations. The editor ends her introductory remarks with an evocative question, '[what] if we choose to be critical about the organisation, will this be perceived by the organisation as a breach of trust?' The concluding Reflection invokes the practice agenda and claims that the collection may lead to a new direction for modern anthropology. But there is a gap between the introduction and the conclusion of the book. On the one hand, there is a sense of guilt at being hosted by organisations that are likely to be criticised eventually for crude instrumentalism or for an undue imposition on the lives of their 'true' respondents or the people whose perspectives are what really make the ethnography. On the other hand, there is a somewhat explicit subversion against organisations that exercise power that may disrupt the course of general public welfare. The question of ethics is laden with subtleties and nuances. This can be likened to the guilt many old anthropologists feel at not paying sufficient attention to the discrimination rooted in both colonisation and caste. An active engagement with issues of power and hegemony underline anthropology's caution against what Clifford (1988) called 'descriptive holism' and enabled it to be more open to what Marcus (1995) called 'multi-sited' ethnography.

The caveat shared by Hirsch and Gellner (2001: 7) may be a good note on which to conclude this review: 'he or she needs to adopt a curious kind of cross-eyed vision, one eye roving ceaselessly around the general context, any part of which may suddenly reveal itself to be relevant, the other eye focusing tightly, even obsessively, on the research topic.'

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