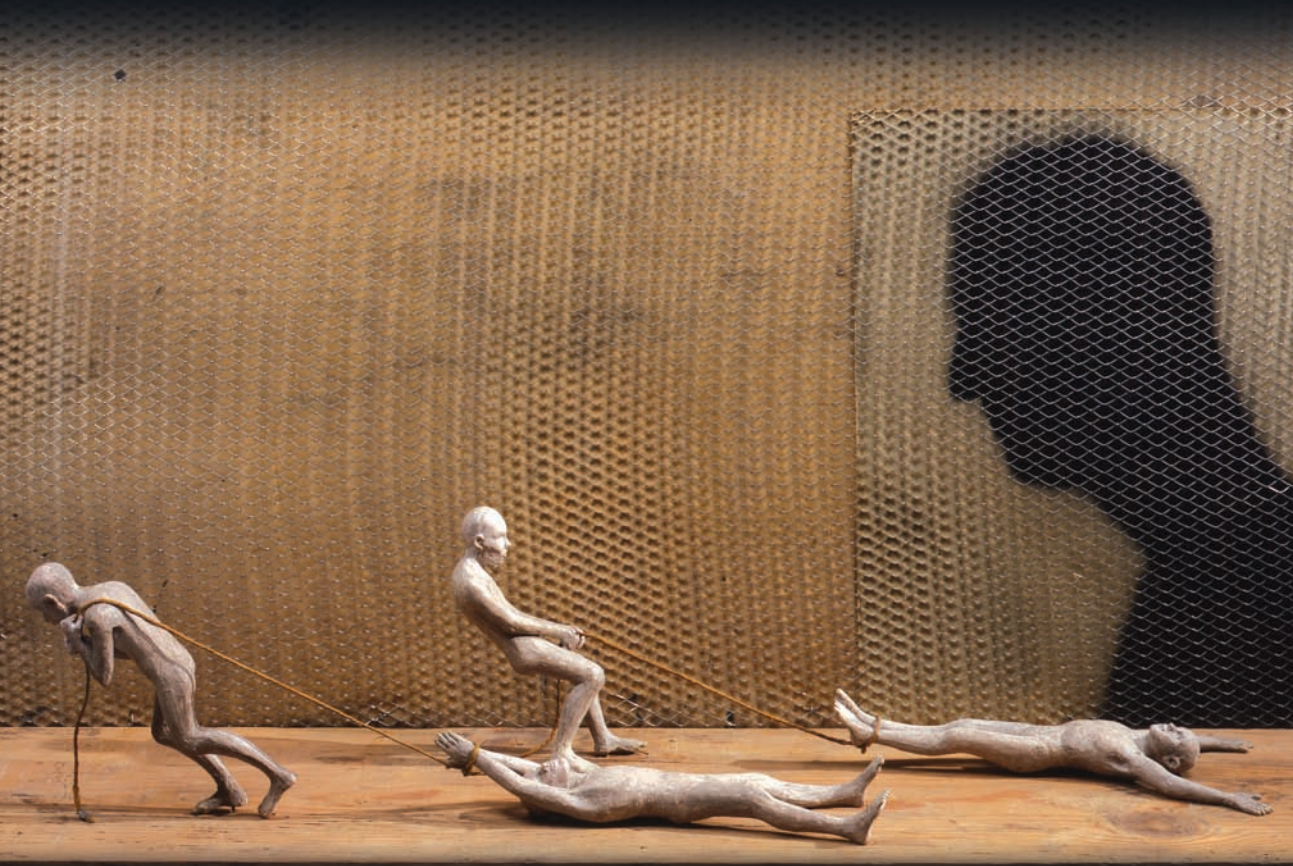


THE WILEY-BLACKWELL COMPANION TO

Political Sociology

EDITED BY

EDWIN AMENTA, KATE NASH AND ALAN SCOTT



THE WILEY-BLACKWELL COMPANION TO
POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

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Introduction

EDWIN AMENTA, KATE NASH AND ALAN SCOTT

The *Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology* was published in 2000 and established itself as a standard reference within this sub-field. In this follow-up volume the two original editors – Kate Nash and Alan Scott – have been joined by a US-based political sociologist, Edwin Amenta. Rather than simply update the previous volume, we have gone for a substantially new book that both reflects developments over the past decade and will hopefully appeal to an even broader international audience. Thus, of the present volume's 42 chapters only 14 are updated versions of chapters by the same authors; many of these have been very substantially reworked to broaden the topic or include more recent developments while in a couple of cases we have authors from the earlier volume writing on substantially different topics. These changes inevitably mean that there are areas covered by the earlier book that are absent here, even though they remain important to the development of political sociology, and we would still advise anyone who, for example, is interested in rational choice approaches, policy networks or the impact of postmodernism on political sociology to consult the relevant chapters in the earlier volume. New topics covered here, which are in part responses to external events, represent the development of debates within the discipline and/or reflect the interests and expertise of the new editor.

In other respects we have remained faithful to the principles of the earlier volume. Firstly, we have not attempted to impose conceptual order on the area by selecting one of a number of possible paradigms and asserting, or simply tacitly assuming, that the one they have selected is, is becoming, or should be *the* dominant or only legitimate paradigm. Political sociology remains a highly diverse intellectual endeavour. This volume remains a companion rather than a lexicon or dictionary. It does not aspire to be definitive. It does, however, seek to be comprehensive; to cover both the central themes of political sociology and the various perspectives within that sub- or trans-discipline.

Secondly, we shall not attempt in this introduction to offer a gloss on the contributions, but will let these speak for themselves. We shall confine ourselves

here to only a few observations about political sociology as a field both distinct from and overlapping with sociology and political science. Given that we have both of these disciplines, why do we need a *political* sociology or a *sociology* of politics? The division of labour between the social sciences is in part a historical accident and, like any system of categorization, both generates and neglects matter at the margins. With respect to the first point, in the French and German traditions political sciences and sociology largely emerged out of legal studies, while in the Anglo-Saxon tradition they tended to emerge out of history and political theory. The contrast is most clearly marked in the German case where what we now consider the social sciences (including economics) were once part of a ‘science of the state’ (*Staatswissenschaft* or *Staatslehre*), only emerging as separate disciplines in the twentieth century. In this respect, political sociology – like political economy – may be seen as harking back to a ‘pre-disciplinary’ past and perhaps, more controversially, as presaging a post-disciplinary future. For now, it provides a space for approaches that exist at the margins or cross the boundaries of sociology or political science, or have not yet established themselves as mainstream within either.

Political sociology seeks to redress the limitations and blind spots of the two disciplines whose borders it crosses. For some working in the area it is superior to both. Raymond Aron, a once-influential figure who is now largely neglected, can be taken as representing political sociology in this campaigning mode. For Aron, political science was focused too narrowly and inclined to disembed political phenomena from their broader social ‘environment’. Sociology, on the other hand, tended to deal in abstractions – society, social structure, social systems etc. – at the expense of examining concrete institutions such as parliaments, parties, regimes and constitutions. Furthermore, sociology downplayed, or was simply blind to the importance of, the *event*. It took the current state of affairs to be social facts rather than the outcomes of particular moments, decision and actions. Conversely, political sociology too can be seen as an echo of events precisely because it does not set its own agenda entirely but responds – perhaps in more obvious ways than sociology generally – to external events. Of course, those events are ‘worked on’ in political sociology in quite specific theoretical terms, which tend to owe more to sociological traditions of thought than to political science. The events of 1989 cast a long shadow over much of the previous volume, as did debates over globalization as ‘something new’. In the intervening years we have been living with 9/11 and its aftermath, while perspectives on globalization have become much more thoroughly integrated into all topics and themes. Our coverage of war has changed (though it was also covered in the previous volume), and issues of international terrorism, security, incarceration and human rights have been added as a result, as have chapters on transnational social movements and environmental politics.

Part I of the volume – Approaches to Power and Politics – covers both the central perspectives that have influenced and remain influential within political sociology – Marxist, Weberian, Durkheimian, Foucaultian and institutionalist – and methodologies for studying power and doing comparison. Part II – States and Governance – shifts the focus onto key themes: state formation, governance and violence. Here we have tried to cover issues that have long occupied political sociologists (e.g. state formation, political legitimation, elections and political intermediation) and issues that reflect more recent concerns and events, for example, state failure and corruption,

international terrorism and global security. The focus shifts in Part III – The Political and the Social – towards the state–civil society relation, collective action and identity, and citizenship. These debates, which have expanded far beyond a focus on class and nation to include gender, ethnicity and religion, perhaps constitute the most distinctive contribution of political sociology and are located at the point at which the political and the social interact most dynamically. Finally, in Part IV we cover social movements and participation under the heading Democracy and Participation. Here the distinct contribution of political sociology vis-à-vis political science can be seen most clearly: the emphasis is on informal modes of democratic participation and on the social and cultural embeddedness of formal institutions and law (e.g. in the area of human rights).

This edition is an update of the previous one, then, in that the selection of topics represents the best attempt of political sociologists to get to grips with the events of the first decade of the twenty-first century. In this respect, it inevitably looks back. At the same time, however, it is forward looking, in that the frameworks, concepts and themes developed here will surely inform our analysis of events yet to come.

Part I

Approaches to Power and Politics

1

Marxist Approaches to Power

BOB JESSOP

Marxist approaches to power focus on its relation to class domination in capitalist societies. Power is linked to class relations in economics, politics and ideology. In capitalist social formations, the state is considered to be particularly important in securing the conditions for economic class domination. Marxists are also interested in why dominated classes seem to accept (or fail to recognize) their oppression; so they address issues of resistance and strategies to bring about radical change. Much recent Marxist analysis also aims to show how class power is dispersed throughout society, in order to avoid economic reductionism. This chapter summarizes the main trends in contemporary Marxism and identifies some significant spatio-temporal aspects of class domination. It also assesses briefly the disadvantages of Marxism as a sociological analysis of power. These include its neglect of forms of social domination that are not directly related to class; a tendency to overemphasize the coherence of class domination; the continuing problem of economic reductionism; and the opposite danger of a voluntaristic account of resistance to capitalism.

Marxists have analyzed power relations in many different ways. But four inter-related themes typify their overall approach. The first of these is a concern with power relations as manifestations of a specific mode or configuration of class domination rather than as a purely interpersonal phenomenon lacking deeper foundations in the social structure. This focus on class domination does not imply that power and resistance are the preserve of social actors with clear class identities and class interests. It means only that Marxists are mainly interested in the causal interconnections between the exercise of social power and the reproduction and/or transformation of class domination. Indeed, Marxists are usually well aware of other types of subject, identity, antagonism and domination. But they consider these phenomena largely in

terms of their relevance for, and their overdetermination by, class domination. Second, Marxists are concerned with the links – including discontinuities as well as continuities – among economic, political and ideological class domination. Despite or, perhaps, because of the obvious centrality of this issue to Marxist analysis, it continues to prompt widespread theoretical and empirical disagreements. Different Marxist approaches locate the bases of class power primarily in the social relations of production, in control over the state, or in intellectual hegemony over hearts and minds. I will deal with these options below. Third, Marxists note the limitations inherent in any exercise of power that is rooted in one or another form of class domination and try to explain this in terms of structural contradictions and antagonisms inscribed therein. Thus Marxists tend to assume that all forms of social power linked to class domination are inherently fragile, unstable, provisional and temporary and that continuing struggles are needed to secure class domination, to overcome resistance and to naturalize or mystify class power. It follows, fourth, that Marxists also address questions of strategy and tactics. They provide empirical analyses of actual strategies intended to reproduce, resist or overthrow class domination in specific periods and conjunctures; and they often engage in political debates about the most appropriate identities, interests, strategies and tactics for dominated classes and other oppressed groups to adopt in particular periods and conjunctures to challenge their subordination. An important aspect of strategic analysis and calculation is sensitivity to the spatio-temporal dimensions of strategy and this is reflected in growing theoretical interest in questions of temporality and socio-spatiality.

Power as a Social Relation

Marxists are interested in the first instance in power as capacities rather than power as the actualization of such capacities. They see these capacities as *socially structured* rather than as *socially amorphous* (or random). Thus Marxists focus on capacities grounded in structured social relations rather than in the properties of individual agents considered in isolation. Moreover, as these structured social relations entail enduring relations, there are reciprocal, if often asymmetrical, capacities and vulnerabilities. A common paradigm here is Hegel's master-slave dialectic – in which the master depends on the slave and the slave on the master. Marx's equivalent paradigm case is the material interdependence of capital and labour. At stake in both cases are enduring relations of reproduced, reciprocal practices rather than one-off, unilateral impositions of will. This has the interesting implication that power is also involved in securing the continuity of social relations rather than producing radical change. Thus, as Isaac notes, '[r]ather than A getting B to do something B would not otherwise do, social relations of power typically involve both A and B doing what they *ordinarily* do' (1987: 96). The capitalist wage relation illustrates this well. For, in voluntarily selling their labour-power for a wage, workers transfer its control to the capitalist along with the right to any surplus. A formally free exchange thereby becomes the basis of workplace despotism and economic exploitation. Conversely, working-class resistance in labour markets and the labour process indicate that the successful exercise of power is a conjunctural phenomenon rather than being guaranteed by unequal social relations of production. Thus Marxists regard the actualization of capacities to