

plantation system back into the history of capitalism (Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 1983).

Given this historical lineage, it is unsurprising that many of the contributions to this edited volume emphasize the importance of self-sufficiency, informality, and the evasion of hostile state authority as core principles of cooperatives in the African diaspora. The focus on self-sufficiency and fugitivity, however, also raises some tricky questions about the relationship between economic cooperatives and political projects that aim at broader social and political transformations. Are the cooperative organizations under consideration primarily places of refuge in a hostile world? Or can they serve as a model for broader transformative projects that seek to establish a more equitable and inclusive economy? What is the relationship between local cooperative initiatives, such as ROSCAs or land cooperatives, and broader national and international political and economic structures? And what are the vectors of change that would allow us to move from local initiatives to a broader transformation of existing economic and political structures? Several of the essays clearly highlight the vulnerabilities and dependencies of Black cooperatives on global capital flows and national and international institutions. For example, in “Fighting to Preserve Black Life and Land Rights,” Silvine Silva argues that vulnerabilities to hostile state action and the pressure of mining capital have led Black land cooperatives in Brazil to engage more directly with the state to gain basic social rights and “radicalize democracy” (pp. 163, 167). Similarly, in “Routes out of Racial Capitalism: Black Cooperatives in the United States,” Adorey Bing-Pappoe and Amina Mama note that the “absence of any legal framework to support or protect cooperative organizations” makes life exceedingly difficult for the organizers of Co-operation Jackson, forcing them to “contort existing business forms” to gain legal recognition (Bing-Pappoe & Mama, p. 111). *Beyond Racial Capitalism* therefore reveals a persistent tension between aspirations to self-sufficiency, autonomy, and the evasion of state authority, on the one hand, and the pressures to engage with and transform state structures, on the other. I would have been interested in a more explicit discussion of this tension to better understand how the editors and the contributing authors think about the possibilities and the means of change that will allow cooperatives to move from the margins to the center.

I would also have liked to see a more explicit discussion of the ideological and political divergences between the cooperative ventures under consideration, especially in terms of the differences in their visions for a more equitable, solidaristic economic order. In their introduction “Taking Note of Informality in an Era of Racial Capitalism,” Hossein, Edmonds, and Wright Austin focus on the commonalities between cooperative efforts in the

African diaspora, including their communal and anti-racist orientation. While these commonalities come across clearly, this theoretical framing gives insufficient attention to some of the key differences in the visions of a more just and inclusive economic system that cooperatives in the African diaspora—implicitly or explicitly—articulate. One obvious difference between cooperative organizations in the different case studies, for example, is their orientation to the basic principles of capitalist economies. Some of the cooperatives under consideration are explicitly anti-capitalist: Co-operation Jackson, for example, understands itself as an *anti-capitalist* black nationalist project (Bing-Pappoe & Mama, pp. 114–116). But as Bing-Pappoe and Mama note, “not all of the cooperatives under consideration” are “necessarily anti-capitalist” (p. 110). The mutualist forms of finance that are examined in Chapters 2, 8, and 9, for example, seem primarily focused on achieving equality and inclusion *within* a capitalist social order by pooling resources, bypassing racist discrimination, and establishing networks that secure access to jobs and economic resources. While the forms they advance diverge from those in commercial banking, they are not explicitly tied to an anti-capitalist project. I would posit that if cooperatives are to provide a model for understanding “what going beyond racial capitalism actually means” (Hossein, Edmonds, Wright Austin, p. 1), one must take seriously the evident differences in their political visions of a more just economic future. Relatedly, I am not convinced by framing economic cooperation in the African diaspora as “second nature” “instinctive,” or “ancestral, cultural, and hereditary” (pp. 6–7). While I do not want to dismiss the importance of cultural traditions of cooperation, this framing seems to underplay the political creativity and agency of those who create cooperative institutions as well as the differences between the forms of economic and social cooperation they create.

Overall, *Beyond Racial Capitalism* provides rich case studies that detail the diverse cooperative traditions of the African diaspora and inspire fascinating questions about the possibilities for drawing on this tradition in order to envisage a solidaristic, anti-racist, and democratic economy.

Making Bureaucracy Work: Norms, Education, and Public Service Delivery in Rural India. By Ashkay Mangla.

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When do bureaucrats deliver effectively? This question is key to a state’s ability to fulfill essential tasks, such as the

provision of public goods. It is also the centerpiece of a longstanding but vibrant scholarship on state capacity. Yet as the commonly used terminology of “compliance capacity,” betrays, most studies approach this as a question of deploying “sticks” (surveillance and sanctioning) and “carrots” (usually fiscal incentives or promotions) to induce bureaucratic compliance. Rooted in principal-agent theorizing, such rational choice models of bureaucratic motivation rose to prominence with US President Ronald Reagan and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s “New Right” political agendas. They were subsequently embraced by international organizations like the World Bank and the OECD in the 1990s as part of “New Public Management” initiatives that sought to infuse private sector practices, and accompanying competitiveness, into public sector bureaucracies.

A large body of work now casts serious shadows on these strategies. (Dis)incentives tend to taper off over time; they require financial outlays and administrative capacity, both of which can be in short supply in the global South; and most dangerously, they can backfire by “crowding out” the intrinsic motivations of bureaucrats. In parallel, a growing scholarship is also exploring how shared identities, values, worldviews, and other sociocultural variables can shape bureaucrat performance.

Ashkay Mangla’s book *Making Bureaucracy Work: Norms, Education and Public Service Delivery in Rural India* is a stellar contribution to this research on the “beyond rational” motivators for the performance of bureaucrats. Focusing on the largest primary education system in the world, catering to over 200 million children, Mangla makes a painstakingly researched, compellingly argued, and elegantly written case for how norms shape bureaucratic motivation in India.

As my own work explores, Indian states are characterized by stark variations in social development, including education outcomes (see Purna Singh, *How Solidarity Works for Welfare: Subnationalism and Social Development in India*, 2016). Where I emphasized how shared solidarities rooted in common, distinctive linguistic identities shaped the behavior of political elites (encouraging them to adopt progressive social policies) and citizens (motivating them to engage with the public services provided), Mangla focuses on how “the informal rules of the game” shape the behavior of street-level bureaucrats who are at the forefront of policy implementation. The author deftly draws attention to the variation across the North-Central Indian heartland focusing on Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Bihar.

Mangla’s comparative field research is as wide-reaching as it is impressive. His study combines interviews with state officials; participant observation with local education bureaucracies; and interviews and focus group discussions

with schoolteachers and citizens. Armed with a qualitative methods masterclass of an appendix, he convincingly demonstrates how variations in the normative framework in which bureaucrats are embedded influence the types of tasks they prioritize and the ways in which they engage with citizens, with significant consequences for education outcomes.

Exemplifying the nuanced and thoughtful theorizing that characterizes the book, Mangla distinguishes between types of norms (legalistic vs deliberative), on the one hand, and the complexity of administrative tasks in primary education, on the other. Legalistic norms encourage a rigid rule-based orientation. This approach of adhering closely to established procedures and hierarchies tends to be reserved for less complex educational tasks, notably enrollment and infrastructure provision. This “administrative-legal” strategy limits citizen engagement, undermining their ability to monitor and ensure the quality of schools. Deliberative norms, on the other hand, encourage a problem-solving approach, encouraging bureaucrats to be creative in their interpretation of policies and implementation of protocols, with an eye to centering local needs. They are emboldened to take on the “wicked” tasks of monitoring classroom teaching quality, providing academic support to teachers, and trouble-shooting citizen complaints.

Mangla’s book brims with contributions. It unpacks the “black box” of the state, while moving away from the dominant focus on “formal” to highlight the value of informal norms. The argument pushes back against the pejorative association of bureaucratic discretion with clientelism and corruption, showing instead how flexibility, creativity, and openness rather than bowing to rules and regulations can generate gains in education. Within the welcome move beyond “rational actor” understandings of bureaucratic behavior, Mangla departs from the more familiar emphasis on their pro-social motivations, offering instead a fresh perspective that centers institutional normative cultures.

The title of Mangla’s book is a nod to Robert Putnam’s *Making Democracy Work* (1993). Like Putnam’s, Mangla’s book is a piercing salvo against rationalist arguments. Putnam showcased how social capital, not socio-economic modernity, underlies differences in the democratic performance of Northern and Southern Italy. Mangla demonstrates that bureaucrats’ behavior is driven by norms rather than (dis)incentives that shift their strategic calculations. It has garnered critical acclaim and will serve as a beacon for future research. However, as was true for its namesake, the origin of its central explanatory variable raises some questions. Like Putnam, Mangla looks to history, delineating how norms are politically constructed during processes of state-building. Yet, in part because this discussion is spread across the empirical discussion of each case study state, the

emergence and sustenance of the different types of norms feels theoretically underspecified.

A consolidated, theoretically focused analysis laying out the conditions that foster the development of legalistic or deliberative norms would have been useful. This could, for example, include a discussion of the differences in patterns of lower-caste mobilization or competition between the state and non-state actors, or between politicians and bureaucrats, factors that Mangla himself alludes to. Such a discussion is especially necessary because one of Mangla's key arguments deals with fostering and safeguarding deliberative norms among frontline bureaucracies. Which leads into another question, also thoughtfully raised by another reviewer (Purohit). Insofar as Mangla's account of norm-emergence is not specific to, should we expect it to extend beyond, frontline bureaucracies in education? Are places with legalistic or deliberative norms in the education bureaucracy also characterized by such norms in other departments? How would this then sit with the (often dramatic) variation in inter-sectoral performances within the same political-administrative structure? These however, are less critiques and more avenues for future research opened up by this outstanding book.

The Performative State: Public Scrutiny and Environmental Governance in China. By Iza Yue Ding. Cornell, NY:

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In her compact but dazzling book *The Performative State: Public Scrutiny and Environmental Governance in China*, Iza Ding seeks to not only advance debate about China's environmental management but also contribute to the comparative study of bureaucracy. At the heart of her analysis is an "admittedly simple yet aspirationally encompassing" (p. 35) claim that two variables—state capacity and public scrutiny—are most salient in determining bureaucracies' behavior. Ding fleshes out the four combinations of these variables. When the public cares about a particular issue (high public scrutiny) and when the state is well-equipped to deliver on its goals (high capacity), the result is "substantive" governance, which meets public demands. A low-capacity state paired with a public that is not attuned to the issue is "inert." A high-capacity state facing low scrutiny is "paternalistic," which in Ding's telling can take either predatory or developmental forms. But her phenomenon of interest is the combination of *low state capacity* and *high public scrutiny*. Under these circumstances, where the state faces high expectations that it simply cannot meet, the result is "performative" governance: Bureaucrats apply

themselves not to fixing the source of grievance itself but instead to managing public perceptions of the state's performance. In other words, the game is "to give citizens the perception they are being heard, and to give them a sense of empowerment vis-à-vis the state" (p. 79) while the actual problem goes unsolved.

Ding's primary case study is environmental management in response to grassroots pressure in China. Even if the reader is not entirely clear on the essence of the "performative governance" concept by the introductory chapters, the point is brought home in a brilliant third chapter about the realities of day-to-day environmental governance in a big city ("Lakeville") in China's prosperous Yangtze River Delta region. Based on her participant observation of day-to-day work in an environmental protection bureau over several months, Ding paints a rich and fascinating picture of Lakeville officials who consistently fail to meet local demands to crack down on polluting factories. The reason they cannot deliver the goods is not corruption or indifference—indeed the bureaucrats she observes are well-motivated, bright, and extremely hard working. Rather, they simply lack the requisite resources and authority to really make polluters pay. Facing an onslaught of public complaints about dirty air and other environmental problems caused by a local industrial park, the officials seek first and foremost to be *seen* as doing something about problems they cannot fix. They roar up to factories in their SUVs in order to undertake surprise environmental inspections which they hope will be covered by local media. But the visits never actually result in significant punishments for polluters. The officials respond to online complaints instantly and around the clock, and they even submit to lengthy tirades from citizens letting off steam about their personal tragedies. Ding explains the latter behavior: "By lowering itself in front of citizens—sometimes acting as their virtual punching bag—the state gives citizens a sense of power and efficacy, even when it cannot resolve their problems" (p. 131).

Ding's work is an extremely valuable contribution to the decadelong debate about the pros and cons of China's brand of environmental authoritarianism. The image Ding paints of basically "good" Lakewood officials working in impossible conditions resonates with what I observed during my own research with local environmental officials in other parts of China at around the same time as her data collection in 2013. One core implication of her argument about "beleaguered bureaucrats" is that China's status as a one-party state may explain less about the shortcomings of its environmental state than has often been claimed. The central fact in Ding's account is not that bureaucrats are deaf to citizen demands—quite to the contrary, the authoritarian state in Ding's account is hyper-attuned to public views—but that they lack both