

Forging Industrial Policy: The United States, Britain, and France in the Railway Age.



Review Author[s]:
Richard Rubinson

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tronics, and securities, the contributors find little evidence of global convergence in the face of market pressure.

Most of the chapters of the book can be read for their own sake, as detailed studies of sectoral development in comparative perspective. Among the best of them are a finely-focused study of the circuit-board industry in Britain and Japan by M. Sako, an examination of the impact of the "industrial order" on machine tools in the United States and Germany by G. Herrigel, a study of the evolution of consumer electronics in Britain and France by A. Cawson, and a comparison of the dairy industry in Britain, Germany, and Austria by F. Traxler and B. Unger.

The volume also contains informative studies of the American and Japanese steel industries by P. O'Brien, the shipbuilding industry in Japan, Sweden, and Germany by B. Strath, the chemical industry in Germany and Britain by W. Grant and W. Paterson, the automobile industries of Germany, Britain, and France by B. Dankbaar, and the securities industry in Canada, the United States, and Britain by W. Coleman.

The reader may be somewhat disappointed to find that the book does not provide a clear typology categorizing sectoral governance across all of these cases or a systematic assessment of the impact of these governance systems on economic performance. However, it is not easy to do this kind of detailed sectoral research across nations. The book is a valuable exploratory exercise. As such, it takes us some distance forward by providing a wealth of hard-won data framed by an intelligent set of conceptual questions. There are real nuggets of wisdom in these chapters, which delineate well the institutional linkages between the social order and firm behavior. It is on studies such as these that the reorientation of the field will be based.

Forging Industrial Policy: The United States, Britain, and France in the Railway Age. By Frank Dobbin. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. xii + 262.

Richard Rubinson
Emory University

Why do modern nations have such different political policies for organizing industries? *Forging Industrial Policy* is an elegant study designed to develop a cultural theory of these national industrial policies through a comparative study of the railroad industry in the United States, Britain, and France.

The study begins with the observation that each country's railroad policy has been constructed around a core conception that identifies both the conditions of industrial growth and the threats to industrial efficiency. United States policy was built around protecting the free market to ensure price competition as the mechanism of efficiency and preventing concen-

tration through either state power or industrial monopolization as the threats to that efficiency. French policy was built around the concentration of state power over the industry as the mechanism to ensure that private interests would serve the national good, and capitalist entrepreneurs and market irrationalities were conceived as the primary threats to that economic efficiency. British policy was built around protecting the small entrepreneurial firm as the source of industrial efficiency and identifying unbridled price competition and the predatory grab of large firms as threats to that goal. Thus, the United States gave authority to markets, France to the state bureaucracy, and Britain to the individual firm.

Dobbin explains these differences by developing a model of isomorphism derived from neoinstitutional theory that argues: (1) The root cause of national industrial policy rests in the distribution of political power, which imposed political order in the historical process of state formation. (2) These structures of state power and authority then led to conceptions of political order, a political culture, that symbolized this distribution of power. (3) These conceptions of political order were then "teleologically reinterpreted" (p. 21) as principles of economic order and authority that gave meaning to different possible industrial policies. And (4) these meanings shaped industrial policy by defining which policy solutions were perceived as efficient and moral and what actions were perceived as problems and destructive of economic efficiency.

The process by which this institutional isomorphism occurs, linking patterns of state formation to industrial policy, is not one of simple diffusion. Rather, political culture leads to industrial policy as disputes are worked out among the many different parties that contend over the large number of issues that arise in the construction of the railway industries. The political culture comes to forge an isomorphic industrial policy by giving clear rhetorical and logical authority, and consequently political advantage, to groups whose industrial policy solutions are isomorphic with that political culture. The historical analysis traces these disputes through the areas of railroad planning, financing, technical and managerial coordination, and pricing and competition. Most of the book is a detailed account for each country of the development of this isomorphism in each of these areas through the historical debates and their resolutions.

Forging Industrial Policy is a bold approach to developing a full cultural theory rather than just applying a cultural analysis to railroad policy. Dobbin argues that recent cultural approaches in sociology are far too narrow since their authors identify cultural institutions as only those that are "symbolic" and then are content to show how the symbolic realm affects the instrumental realm. In Dobbin's conception, like the Durkheimian tradition from which his work derives, all social institutions are cultural, in the fundamental sense that they are constructed systems of symbolic meaning, and so he seeks to demonstrate this approach in instrumental, "rational" institutions like industrial policy. Correspond-

ingly, he also argues that the three major social science theories used to explain industrial policy—interest group or class theory, statist theory, and economic theory—should be understood as symbolic meaning systems, or ritual myths, that social science employs to make sense of institutional patterns, rather than as sociologically valid explanations. That is, rather than explaining why class or statist or economic theory has developed as part of our society's meaning systems and so affects its policies, social scientists uncritically accept one or the other of these theories as valid explanations for policy. Although Dobbin never self-reflexively applies this same constructivist critique to the recent social science renewal of cultural theories such as his own, his book will still enrich sociological analyses by showing how a revitalized Durkheimian tradition can be applied to the areas of political and economic analysis, much as revitalized Marxian and Weberian analyses have already transformed our understanding of these areas.

Manufacturing Militance: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970–1985. By Gay W. Seidman. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994. Pp. x + 361.

Kevin Neuhouser
University of Washington

When I first heard about *Manufacturing Militance*, I must admit that I had my doubts. How useful could a comparison of labor movements in two such dissimilar countries be? After all, South Africa and Brazil represent diametrically opposed ways of constructing the intersection of race and class. In South Africa the state created a crude tripartite racial definition of the working class, each with different legal rights and restrictions. In Brazil the working class covers a subtle, culturally defined racial continuum that ostensibly enjoys equal legal standing but in practice experiences racial discrimination.

Sometimes, though, taking risks is justified, and this is one of those times. Seidman presents a case for convergence between the workers' movements of Brazil and South Africa that is all the more compelling precisely *because* of the obvious differences. Seidman argues that both movements represent instances of "social-movement unionism," in other words, "an effort to raise the living standards of the working class as a whole rather than to protect individually defined interests of union members" (p. 2). This convergence was produced by similar state policies that simultaneously created a demand for more skilled labor in the dynamic sectors of the economy, focused worker dissatisfaction on the state (because of its role in labor control), and forced those relatively skilled workers to share the deteriorating living conditions of poor urban communities. When economic crises weakened the capitalist-state alliance,