coalesce around a common set of national programmatic demands than organized business can. Business organizations may be able to more easily overcome collective-action problems, but the state of competition between different businesses and different business organizations should make for a more heterogenous set of demands than we might expect from labor. Critically, though, to demonstrate the centrality of organized business, we could do with a more robust demonstration that organized labor either was of secondary importance or became relevant only after pressure from business had affected real change.

A second and related issue is the extent to which the explanation of the transition might travel beyond the U.S. and UK cases. Would a similar narrative emphasizing the centrality of pressure from organized business emerge from an examination of the Swedish and German cases, or another continental European pairing? We can expect differing cross-national configurations in the timing of national-level business (and labor) organization, of political party organization, of industrialization, and of the expansion of the state. It is not too difficult to imagine organized business lacking the significance or centrality accorded to it here were different countries studied. Indeed, a case might be made that this is really a story of the U.S. transition from clientelism to programmatic politics. It is not simply that the book’s coverage of the British case is less substantial than that of the United States, but it is also far less theoretically central to the core argument. The linkage between the emergence of managerial capitalism and the transformation of the state is an argument about U.S. development. In the British case, that the organization of business appears to postdate the expansion of both the state and political party organization poses a problem for the notion that business pressure was really foundational in the transition to programmatic politics in Britain.

These quibbles aside, Clientelism, Capitalism, and Democracy is well worth reading, has far more nuance and depth than this brief review has come close to conveying, and makes an important theoretical contribution to the study of clientelism. As an exercise in comparative historical analysis, it is both innovative in its construction of intertemporal measures of clientelism in the United States and UK and very well executed. Indeed, it is a testament to the quality of Ku’s work that its brevity, and the decidedly brief conclusion in particular, is probably the book’s most serious limitation.


— Zeynep Somer-Topcu, The University of Texas at Austin

The recent success of radical right parties in established democracies has spurred a great deal of attention from political commentators and pundits, and a large wave of academic research. Various scholars have been examining, without much consensus, how demand-side factors (such as economic interests, socioeconomic context, sociodemographic traits), and/or supply-side factors (i.e., national, subnational, and party-level institutional features) explain the rise in the radical right vote. Jennifer Fitzgerald brings a breath of fresh air to this important and growing literature by arguing that attachment to local communities, which she calls the localist theory of radical right voting, explains the rise of those parties in established democracies.

Fitzgerald’s main argument is that feeling strongly tied to one’s community is a salient factor in explaining radical right support. Cross-national data and country analyses in Switzerland and France show that positive feelings towards neighbors and strong ties to localities increase the likelihood of voting for the radical right.

This localist argument builds on two theories with conflicting expectations for how local connections should affect the radical right vote. On the one hand, the socio-psychological perspective argues that people who feel strong ties to their local communities should be more willing to defend them. As a result, an erosion of local authority or a shift in local boundaries should increase these locals’ dissatisfaction with those changes and, hence, their support for far right parties. The socio-structural theory, on the other hand, expects a decline in the radical right vote as local ties strengthen. Building on social capital theory, the socio-structural theory states that the erosion of social connections and social capital is the reason for the rise of the radical right. At first sight, these theories seem contradictory regarding their expectations concerning vote share. While the former theory expects a rise in radical right vote as local ties become important, the latter argues that localism should reduce far right support by increasing social interactions. However, Fitzgerald convincingly argues and offers evidence that these arguments can be complementary. The cross-national data analyses show that feeling connected to the locality, the emphasis in the socio-psychological perspective, increases the likelihood of voting for the radical right, while being socially connected to the local community decreases such support, consistent with the socio-structural perspective (Chapter 3). Local ties are important, but how those local ties materialize (feelings toward locality vs. being connected locally) work differently for radical right support.

This itself is an interesting and important finding. If the reader walks away with nothing else, that is a day well spent. But Fitzgerald goes deeper into understanding when, where, and for whom local ties best explain radical right voting. In Chapter 4, using cross-national data, she shows that the localist theory explains this support especially among those individuals for whom standard explanations of this phenomenon fall short. While the
standard view is that young, low-educated men with anti-immigrant and anti-EU attitudes are especially supportive of radical right ideology, the interaction models in Chapter 4 show that "women, association avoiders, those who do not routinely help their neighbors, those who feel positive about their neighbors, and individuals who are not so openly anti-immigrant, who are distrustful of the EU, and who place themselves in the center to center-left are the most likely to be motivated by their local attachments to support radical right parties" (p. 83).

The country-specific chapters on Switzerland (Chapter 5) and France (Chapter 6) add interesting highlights to the localist argument. Using Swiss Household panel survey data, Fitzgerald shows not only that the Swiss People’s Party’s (SVP) support increases among those with strong local attachments, but also that their support is especially high in electorally empowered localities and in those where the localities recently lost independent authority by a merger of municipalities.

Chapter 6 on Marine Le Pen’s support in France is to me the strongest in the book. By combining survey data with fieldwork interview notes, Fitzgerald bolsters her main argument that local ties are important for Le Pen’s support. In addition, she shows that this effect is particularly strong in deeply cohesive communities that also experienced a process of intercommunality, through which certain powers of individual communes are reallocated to intercommunal councils.

The final empirical chapter (Chapter 7) asks a broader question about why radical right parties are successful in some countries and not in others, and examines how localism can account for these differences. Using different local authority indices and election data, Fitzgerald shows, first, that the higher the local authority, the higher the radical right vote across countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and second, that this vote is higher when the local elections are held temporarily in close proximity to national elections.

Fitzgerald’s localist argument to explain radical right support is sound and interesting, and the results stay robust through cross-national tests and country-specific analyses. Yet there are also questions that are not satisfactorily answered and empirical choices that are at times dubious.

The main criticism concerns the directionality of the relationship between local attachments and radical right support. While there is evidence for positive correlation, it is not clear whether a directional relationship exists. Does localism increase such support, or is it possible that support for the radical right positively affects local attachments? Or is it possible that there is a third and unidentified factor that strengthens local attachments and also increases support?

One other question that is not answered is who gets hurt when localism helps radical right parties? One would assume that it is the center-right mainstream neighbors of the radical right that suffer electorally as the far right makes electoral gains. Yet the Swiss chapter shows that there is not a statistically significant difference between Christian Democrats and the Swiss People’s Party support in terms of how local attachments affect votes (Table 5.2). It would be interesting to explore this question further.

Finally, there are some empirical concerns. First, for most empirical analyses, the dependent variable is the survey question asking respondents to indicate their vote choice. But we know that the vote choice question has significant reporting problems, particularly when it comes to indicating support for extreme parties. It would be good to show how the results change when we replace the vote choice dependent variable with questions on the propensity to vote for or feelings toward radical right parties. Second, most of the interaction models are not statistically significant, which raises doubts about the conditional findings, especially about those presented in Chapter 4.

These issues aside, Fitzgerald presents an interesting argument about the rise of the radical right in established democracies, and Close to Home is an important contribution to the study of radical right politics. While the empirical results are at times complicated for a lay audience, Fitzgerald does a good job of explaining the results. Hence, the book not only contributes to a growing political science literature but is also accessible to journalists, political parties, and party strategists who want to learn more about the relationship between local ties and the rise of the radical right.


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Politics in an era of rising nationalisms is increasingly focusing on the definition and redefinition of “borders”: Borders are being boldly remarked and reaffirmed, as in the case of Donald Trump’s wall between the United States and Mexico, or reclaimed, as in the UK’s plan to withdraw from the European Union. Elections are now won or lost by proposing different imaginaries of how a nation’s borders will be managed and made more or less effective in screening those who want to cross them.

In Security at the Borders, Philippe M. Frowd offers a very original contribution to the debate on the changing nature of borders by focusing not on the obvious cases, those where the borders and the work they do are the most visible—such as in the case of the lines enclosing the European Union—but on those spaces where borders are silently externalized.