

## BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

**Mathieu Deflem**, *Sociology of Law: Visions of a Scholarly Tradition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 358 pp. \$US 39.99 paper (978-0-521-67392-1), \$US 99.00 hardcover (978-0-521-85725-3)

**M**athieu Deflem has written extensively on topics within the sociology of law, including the globalization of policing, counter-terrorism, and the work of Jürgen Habermas. *Sociology of Law: Visions of a Scholarly Tradition* is another important contribution to the sociology of law, offering an approachable, well-structured introduction to the field for the student, and a scholarly, detailed survey for the specialist.

*Sociology of Law* powerfully asserts the legitimacy and autonomy of the sociology of law as a distinct “scholarly tradition” which shares substantive interests with related fields, such as traditional legal scholarship and the law and society movement, while preserving an organic connection to the discipline of sociology. The volume begins with a detailed exposition of the historical development of the tradition, followed by a survey of contemporary problems in the field.

The first half of the book reviews the development of the sociology of law, from its origins in continental Europe to its later development on this side of the Atlantic. Given the contemporary influence of postmodernism, critical legal studies, and other schools of legal scholarship that derive ultimately from Marxism, Deflem is especially to be commended for his extended analysis of the contributions of Weber and Durkheim to the development of a highly theoretical sociology of law. (More recent authors within the continental tradition, such as Foucault, Habermas, and Luhmann, are presented in the second half of the book, as participants in ongoing scholarly debates.) These are effectively juxtaposed with American legal scholarship, which began to emerge in the early 20th century based on the work of authors such as Pound and Holmes, both of whom retained strong ties to legal practice; as well as the later work of scholars such as Parsons and Posner, who have integrated American legal research more fully into social science.

The second half of *Sociology of Law* is an excellent review of the current state of the scholarly literature on selected topics within the field, including subjects as varied as law and economy (ch. 7), the legal profession (ch. 9), and law enforcement (ch. 11). While no volume can be

completely comprehensive, it is impressive that Deflem has integrated topics ranging from the regulation of abortion to “differential policing” into a single volume. There is some tendency in this portion of the book for the empirical data to be drawn primarily from North America, and in particular the United States. Yet the treatment of contemporary European scholarship on the relationship between law and democracy (as exemplified by the works of Habermas and Luhmann) is thorough and, particularly in the case of Luhmann, could help spread knowledge and application of these two important authors among a North American audience.

Chapter 12, on the globalization of law, is an especially valuable contribution to an area of research that has been the subject of much scholarly and public attention, but sometimes invites hyperbole. Deflem here treats issues such as “global norm-making,” the globalization of the legal profession, and global policing. His conclusion that globalization “cannot simply be captured as a one-dimensional process toward the development of a homogenized world ... [but instead] entails a re-configuration of the interrelationships between national and international developments” (p. 269) is well supported by a careful analysis of his own and other authors’ contribution to this area of research. This rather short chapter could usefully be expanded in future editions.

An important virtue of this book is that it helps to overcome the unfortunate distance between researchers working within the North American and European scholarly traditions. In this respect, it is potentially very useful to those who might wish to situate their own research more effectively within the existing scholarly literature. In addition, *Sociology of Law* would be especially useful as a textbook in advanced undergraduate (or, more likely, graduate) theory courses. While the chapters hang together as a coherent whole, they could also be used individually to introduce students to particular figures in the sociology of law. As a textbook it would be most useful accompanied by complete texts or longer extracts from the authors covered by Deflem. For specialists, Deflem’s synoptic but detailed treatment of authors and debates makes *Sociology of Law* especially valuable as an elegant synthesis and distillation of the field and a companion for independent reading.

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