

interest of most readers. Chapter 4 describes the transition from O'Hair's politicized atheist identity to the current century's emphasis on atheists' minority status—drawing from similar discourses of the rights revolution and the legacy of the 1960s.

The book's last section, chapters 5 and 6, concentrates on internal divisions within the network of online atheists, the impact of social media on political mobilizing, and the creation of large umbrella organizations. In chapter 5, Meagher tugs at what he refers to as the "intersectional seams" of atheist blogging (p. 100), focusing primarily on the emergence of the "Atheism Plus" initiative, a social-justice faction that came to represent "deep rifts" within the atheist movement (p. 103). Finally, in chapter 6, Meagher examines the Secular Coalition of America (SCA) as a sign of political maturation given its similarity to professional lobbying organizations. Meagher argues that the SCA sought recognition as a standard political player and that its formation should be viewed as a sign of progress even as it endured growing pains related to public relations controversies and financial mismanagement.

Each chapter of *Atheists in American Politics* provides a clear introduction to critical moments throughout the history of atheist organizing. Meagher is successful in tying together different threads of political struggle, a thematic strength due to his attention to familiar social movement territories such as resources and effectiveness. Although Meagher might have done a better job of integrating his conceptual framework into the analysis, his attention to detail and the subsequent analysis of contemporary atheist activism advances our understanding of crucial moments in the maturation of the American atheist movement. Overall, this is a fascinating book which should find an audience among scholars engaged with social movement approaches to both religion and nonreligion.

Nicole Doerr. *Political Translation: How Social Movement Democracies Survive*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2018. \$99.99 (hardcover) \$24.99 (paper).

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This book arrives at a moment of great anxiety about the fragility of contemporary democracy. The bloom has even worn off the deliberative innovations and participatory experiments celebrated by scholars as potential remedies for democratic deficits. As Baiocchi and Ganuza argue in

their 2016 book *Popular Democracy: The Paradox of Participation*, promising public engagement schemes like participatory budgeting have become expected elements of good governance around the globe, but their liberatory potential has seldom materialized. On the one hand, many would-be participants simply do not have the capacity, time, or energy to engage in environments of extreme inequality; on the other, many participatory programs have weak links to decision- and policymaking. Such factors lead to vicious cycles in which opportunities for voice become frustrating and demobilizing dead ends.

As such, Nicole Doerr's *Political Translation: How Social Movement Democracies Survive* provides real hope for a democratic future based on empirical study of a variety of non-ideal settings. As opposed to research focused on the intentional cooptation or hijacking of deliberative forums, Doerr's study begins by exploring decision-making within heterogeneous groups in the global justice movement in Europe—a case in which conveners have well-meaning commitments to radical democracy, but also face the formidable challenge of finding consensus among stakeholders with different languages and cultures. In order to solve the puzzle of why groups with more language diversity actually ended up with more inclusive and effective decision-making, Doerr attends to the work of linguistic translators and volunteer interpreters.

Rather than impartially facilitating dialogue, these "disruptive third parties" (p. 5) engaged in the work of *political* translation, actively intervening when discursive inequalities and "positional misunderstandings" (p. 17) arose in putatively equal deliberative spaces. As advocates for the marginalized who may also challenge the value commitments of elite conveners, political translators can leverage their unique positions to make dialogue more democratic by surfacing those moments when people talk past each other or make dangerous assumptions. Developing the idea of political translation further, Doerr extends the concept beyond multilingual settings to cases of political translators working across cultural differences in local decision-making settings in California and in the U.S. global justice movement. Here, too, she finds that political translators have the power to intervene to address cultural conflicts and re-center less powerful voices.

It is hard to overstate the extent to which Doerr's approach covers new ground in well-trod territory. Scholars of deliberative democracy have tended to focus on the ways in which social movements typically reject deliberative exercises intended to gather the views of the unaffiliated public, for good reason. Rather, scholars of de-

liberative facilitation (like myself) have highlighted the deep resistance that dialogue professionals have to advocacy, even when they are clearly sympathetic to the plight of nonelite participants. One could be forgiven for considering the compromises and vacillations so common in model deliberations as fundamentally antithetical to the position-taking and hard knocks of activism. Instead, Doerr focuses on cases where activists themselves deliberated with each other. She finds surprising potential in the discomfort brought into deliberations when supposedly neutral translators are emboldened to intervene as third parties, neither facilitators nor participants.

In addition to providing new perspectives, Doerr's study is based on rich ethnographic accounts of meetings held over eight years in five countries that included thousands of participants. Despite her comparative historical approach, the book is relatively brief and concise, with clear takeaways for both activists and scholars. Readers of this journal will undoubtedly be interested in the larger argument, but they may also be particularly intrigued by chapters relating to movement challenges and conflicts which surface in their own work. Chapter 1 explores how a powerful political translation collective developed in the European Social Forum, in contrast to less inclusive preparatory meetings at the national level.

Chapter 2 turns to the development of a different collective in the U.S. Social Forum, which was effective in broadening discussion on difficult issues of resources, race, and gender, as compared to the German Social Forum. In chapters 3 and 4, Doerr studies both a failed case and a successful case of political translation in a California city among bilingual, English, and Spanish speakers of different classes. With these cases, the book will be a good fit for advanced graduate courses addressing social movements, urban democracy, or global justice.

Like the political translators themselves, Doerr has a sharp ear for moments of unacknowledged difference, hesitation, and suppressed frustration in avowedly participatory and inclusive settings—critical for internal movement politics, but also relevant for any routine setting of decision-making and discussion, from the classroom to a team meeting at work. The surprising difference in group efficacy that Doerr finds when some third party is empowered to disrupt the status quo and say the unspeakable—even, and especially, when misunderstandings are painful—should encourage all of us to get comfortable with a bit more discomfort in our discourse. Fears of fragility may be counterproductive for democracy; the stakes are too high to preserve superficial consensus or elide unpleasantness.
