



Clandestine Circulation: Social Reproduction in the Shadow of the State

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Abstract

How should social science conceptualise the informal exchange of illicit favours in the context of the modern state? And what relation does such exchange have to the reproduction of the social structure? This thesis presents a new framework for the analysis of such phenomena based upon the theoretical methodology of Pierre Bourdieu. Using Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, field and capital, the kinds of informal exchange typically analysed through the paradigms of clientelism, corruption, or "informal institution" are reconstructed as a new research object - the clandestine circulation of capital - and related to the broader "economy of practices" necessary to reproduce the social structure.

In a considered development of Bourdieu's initial use of the term (which related to the clandestine circulation of cultural capital), the thesis demonstrates how the clandestine circulation of other forms and guises of capital can also subvert the normative intentions of merit and equality implicit in the formal institutions of the modern state. The thesis reconciles and expands upon various of Bourdieu's theoretical writings to develop a theory identifying both the objective resources of such circulation and the principles structuring it as a social practice.

This new theory is then applied in detail to the field site of urban Beirut (the capital of Lebanon), and specifically in relation to the phenomenon of *wasta* (an Arabic word used to refer to all kinds of social influence). Through a detailed empirical study of the field site, the thesis attempts to demonstrate how clandestine circulation operates as a mechanism for the transformation and accumulation of capitals, and hence comes to play a determinant role in the reproduction of the social order, in a manner intimately connected to the specific nature of the Lebanese state.



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Bio: Martyn Egan holds an MA in Middle Eastern Studies from SOAS, London, and a BA in English from the University of Cambridge. Prior to undertaking his PhD at the EUI he worked as an emerging markets analyst based in Istanbul and Beirut, focussing on the Middle East. His research interests include the sociology of inequality, and in particular the effects of informal exchange on social reproduction. He is also interested in the methodological application of Bourdieusian theory, including geometric data analysis.