Overall, *Dispute Resolution in China* is an exemplary study in both Chinese law and sociolegal studies. It speaks to not only legal academics but also social scientists interested in formal and informal mechanisms of civil and commercial dispute resolution, particularly disputes with a cross-border dimension, and more generally, how the Chinese legal system works in practice in this interactive ecology. As studies of Chinese law get increasingly niched and specialised in specific areas and topics, Gu’s ecological approach that connects different components of this complex system and examines their interactions sets this book apart as a milestone in the field.

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MARIANA VALVERDE, KAMARI CLARKE, EVE DARIAN-SMITH & PRABHA KOTISWARAN (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Law and Society*. Routledge, 1st edn 2021, pp. 274, ISBN 9780367234249, £190 (hbk).

Law and society scholarship now constitutes a vast, deep and diverse body of literature. Designing or teaching an introductory module to this subject can be a difficult task, particularly when students have previously engaged largely with doctrinal or black-letter approaches to legal study. This new collection brought together by Mariana Valverde and other well-known law and society professors based in the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom, sets out in its inside cover its aim to provide a “comprehensive, and truly global, overview of the main approaches and themes within law and society scholarship or socio-legal studies.” In their introductory remarks, the editors make clear their desire for this book to be used to expose law and social science students to law and society scholarship. However, in a departure from handbook orthodoxy, this collection of papers does not begin with a historical account of the field. Instead, it takes as its starting point the cutting-edge issues of our time and deconstructs or re-analyses many familiar global or historical phenomena using the varied tools, lenses and literatures prevalent within law and society scholarship.

In terms of structure, the book is split relatively neatly into two parts. Part I focuses on contemporary perspectives and approaches to socio-legal study. Here, the various authors consider modes of analysis and theoretical approaches that characterise current global law and society scholarship. Part II moves to what the editors label “sites of engagement”, where the focus turns to the variety of locations, social structures and events that law and society scholarship has the potential to analyse. The split between Part I and Part II is quite uneven, with most of the content in the volume contained in Part II. This, it is suggested, reflects the inherent difficulty involved in separating modes of analysis from sites of analysis. Indeed, Part II tells us as much about the methods and theoretical approaches adopted by the authors as Part I.
The overall impression that jumps off the page when looking over the content of this collection is the sheer volume and variety of stimulating topics that the editors have managed to pull together. The book runs to 52 chapters, but is only 252 pages in length. This is an important point as the short length of each chapter is an attractive feature of the volume, particularly given its nature as an introductory text for students. Each chapter is approximately four to six pages in length, and notably the chapters do not contain in-text references to sources. Instead, each chapter ends with a “Further readings” section, which points the reader to key texts associated with the area. The currency of the content coupled with the concise nature of the writing in each chapter prevents any sense of the volume becoming dry and dense to read. This, it is argued, is an incredibly important feature to keep students of all levels engaged with the subject matter. However, the lack of references throughout the volume did cause some concern, as it was difficult to trace the genesis of some of the ideas expressed. Though this is clearly a conscious and surely well thought out decision on the part of the editors or the publishers, it may have some implications for students wishing to use the volume as a springboard for research, particularly where the authors have engaged in self-referencing rather than pointing students in the direction of the seminal pieces of work in a particular field. Any further editions of this handbook ought to include either in-text references or a more comprehensive further reading section at the foot of each contribution.

After reading the whole volume, one is left with a distinct sense of having been enlightened. The material covered is truly impressive, and traverses subjects from issues of lack of transparency in urban development companies on a local level to international human rights and genocide. In doing so, it manages to take familiar concepts and theories provide an accessible introduction for students whilst utilising modern examples to help the reader engage with abstract ideas. For example, in Chapter 18, Mariana Valverde engages with theories of class – a well-known concept with origins in the 19th century. One section heading asks directly how this concept is relevant today. In answer, Valverde goes on to critique class by exploring how traditional notions of class division are complicated by features of modern neo-liberal society, where most individuals have often contradictory class interests. For example, some members of the working class may invest in capital markets and in doing so tie their interests those of financial institutions or multi-national corporations, often closely linked with the interest of the ruling classes. This analysis typifies the exercise conducted by many authors within the volume, as their pieces restate the relevance of big ideas from the 19th and 20th centuries, whilst also noting how such lenses may be limited or require adjustment to take account of the complexity of modern capitalist forms of engagement.

This collection encapsulates what appears to be a continuing commitment within the field to remain at the forefront of civil rights and activist movements. Furthermore, this book also signals a move towards a panoptical approach to socio-legal studies. It moves beyond traditional single-fronted structural critiques in exploring the more holistic palette of methods, tools, theories and approaches that socio-legal scholars are utilising to critique the excesses and injustices embedded within twenty-first century post-pandemic neoliberalism.

An example of the depth of such analysis can be found in Chapter 42 “Reproductive rights to reproductive justice”. This chapter considers contemporary issues in the area of reproductive justice. It begins by considering the importance of labels, specifically, the
use of the phrase “reproductive justice” as opposed to phrases such as reproductive rights and pro-choice. It captures issues such as the co-opting of such labels by groups that do not agree with its core aims, but also goes further in placing the concept within its socio-political context. The focus within this piece and throughout the entire collection on the work of activists and the power and importance of legal activism is both welcome and noteworthy. Chapter 42 specifically considers the work of the Sister Song Women of Colour Collective. It thereby highlights the limitations embedded in a “reproductive rights” or human rights approach to these issues by examining how reproductive justice means more than simply being legally able to abort a pregnancy. In doing so, its analysis raises the important connection with socio-economic rights such as access to affordable healthcare and the need for any analysis of reproductive rights to consider matters of local infrastructure and resources. This chapter is merely one example of the potential for this volume to stretch and challenge students’ understandings of issues, concepts and approaches within socio-legal studies.

Given the clear and abundant strengths of this collection, it is also important to consider any limitations. One concern that did emerge throughout the piece was whether the text potentially creates an “echo chamber” of views that cluster between liberal and left-leaning positions on the political spectrum. This is, of course, not to suggest that the volume should offer any kind of platform to extreme or offensive views that would undermine the progressive and thoughtful nature of its contributions. However, it is as important to showcase disagreement as it is consensus.

Returning to the principle against which this volume is to be measured – whether it exposes law and social science students to the study of law and society – it undoubtedly provides a thoroughly global journey through law and society scholarship. It was truly a pleasure to read and review the book as a whole. Readers are likely to dip in and out of the material within this collection, and select only those materials relevant to their studies or to their teaching. However, it is entirely possible and indeed enjoyable to consume the volume in its entirety. Readers are to be assured that doing so is likely to be an incredibly rewarding endeavour, as the volume is a thought provoking stock-take of the variety and quality of law and society scholarship originating from law schools across the globe, and is a credit to the impressive efforts of the volume editors and authors alike.

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DAVID CHURCHILL, HENRY YEOMANS AND IAIN CHANNING, Historical Criminology. London: Routledge, 2021, pp. 220, ISBN: 9780367185756, £26.39 (ppk).

Recently, long after it was hailed as one of the greatest TV shows of all time, I watched all five seasons of The Wire. Created by David Simon and set in contemporaneous