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**Potts, Anthony. *Civic Leaders and the University: State and Municipal Politicians' Perspectives on Higher Education in Australia*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2003. Pp. 407; illus. US\$68.95 (paper). ISBN: 3906769542.**

**Reviewed by Tom O'Donoghue, University of Western Australia**

This book should be of interest not only to specialists on higher education in Australia and elsewhere but also to geographers, historians, and sociologists. The specific focus of the study reported in the core of the book is the perspectives of civic leaders on the university in their region. Fourteen local and state government politicians were canvassed in this regard. They were based in either Bendigo or Ballarat, two of the oldest, most historical and important regional cities of Australia. One of the stimuli for the study was a recognition that such politicians can influence the development of the university in various ways, including lobbying state and federal politicians and gaining election to the university governing bodies.

The book is exceptionally well conceptualised. It has an excellent Introduction which provides a helicopter view of what follows. This is important given that the book is over 400 pages in length. What then follows is a most interesting chapter on the social context of the university. The background to this chapter is the notion that universities exist in, and are influenced by, political, social, and economic contexts. This is exemplified by a comprehensive summary of some of the classic historical studies which highlight the role of civic leaders in the foundation of universities. It also examines some core university impact studies which explored the impact of universities on their geographical regions.

The theoretical background to the study, entitled "The Civic Leader Self" is also a model exposition. The foundational position is that of socialisation theory. The particular socialisation theory which is developed is based on an eclectic form of symbolic interactionism. It focuses on the place of significant "other" and of primary, secondary, and occupational socialisation in the formation of the civic leaders' perspectives. Argued convincingly, fundamental to understanding these perspectives is an appreciation of the self in the network society. What is very clear from this chapter is that symbolic interactionism is still an appropriate position for examining contemporary trends and issues in education, including higher education.

Chapter Four, "Researching the Civic Leader Self," outlines the methodology or research plan of the study. To the credit of the publishers, they did not cull this chapter which should be of interest to international as well as Australian scholars. It is particularly good on portraying the vast geographical

spread of the continent and its effect on the national psyche. Current trends towards the marketisation of education, particularly higher education, are appropriately addressed.

The findings of the study are presented over four chapters, entitled "Perspectives on the University," "Perspectives on Government Policy," "Perspectives on Leadership," and "The Formation of perspectives." Of particular importance in the findings are: the extent to which notions of self and identity interact with notions of wider networks in influencing civic leaders' perspectives on their local university; the extent to which these civic leaders rely on recipe knowledge or more advanced notions of leadership in formulating their perspectives on the local university; and the origins of the perspectives of these civic leaders.

The argument is well made that the empirical research in the study central to the book was undertaken because the cases were not only of interest in their own right but also because other researchers and scholars can learn from them and thus generalise to their own situations. Potts is also convincing when arguing that the cases studied suggest the richness of the area for future research in other locations around the world. Above all else, what he does through his work is allow for some appreciation of the local dynamics of contextual meanings and the local-global axis. In particular, he illustrates the importance of local and regional influences on universities and how these are not subordinate to more global forces. Consequently, the empirical research in this study has implications for other countries around the world.