The older group is memorably described as '*plug-in volunteers* because they hoped to plug in and out as universally as plugs into sockets' (p. 117). Because their commitment was typically one or two hours a week for a few months at a stretch their contribution was not only of little value but could actually be harmful and undermine the intimate, family atmosphere and personal relationship so carefully nurtured by the paid staff. 'Plug-in volunteering is good for projects like picking up litter on a public highway, because the litter doesn't mind if a different, untrained volunteer comes next month, but the human recipient of personal face-to face aid usually does' (pp. 253–4).

More generally, Eliasoph explores the contradictions and tensions experienced by empowerment projects within three broad themes. 'Cultivating open civic equality' includes the challenges of participating under unequal auspices and democracy minus disagreement. 'Cultivating intimate comfort and safety' involves the creation by paid organisers of temporally finite, intimate family-like attachments; the need to stress publicly the importance of the basic need for food, safety and comfort; and drawing on shared experience in a divided society. And 'celebrating our diverse, multi-cultural community' includes different perspectives of what 'appreciating cultural diversity' can mean and what the young people who take part in the projects count as 'culture'. And she concludes by addressing the final challenge of her research approach – so what are you going to do about it? – by offering some recommendations for the better design of projects of this kind, notably the need for longer-term and more assured financial support; the courage to admit that 'bureaucratic' approaches to planning and managing projects might have a part to play; and the recognition that the best thing to do with 'plug-in volunteers' is to drop them.

The breadth and depth of the material presented in *Making Volunteers* is admirable but it does make for a difficult read. The book would benefit from a stronger and more explicit framework within which to locate its detailed insights and lessons but this might be the price one has to pay for the richness of detail and anecdote which makes the effort needed to read it energy well spent.

COLIN ROCHESTER
Birkbeck, University of London
c.rochester@bbk.ac.uk

Owen Jones (2011), *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class.* London: Verso. £14.99, pp. 298, pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279412000189

Chavs argues that the British working class has become an object of fear and ridicule. Noting the ignorance and prejudice that lie at the heart of the 'chav' caricature, Owen Jones seeks to reveal the poverty and desperation of the working class. His book claims to be both an indictment of the media and political establishment, and a portrait of inequality and class hatred in modern Britain.

The Introduction traces the phenomenon of the chav discourse, arguing that it is the product of a deeply unequal society, and that hatred of working-class people in British society is now mainstream. Social problems are seen more as the consequences of personal behaviour than as the injustices of capitalism. Turning to the case of Shannon Matthews, Jones notes the superficial similarities with the case of Madeleine McCann, but their very different treatment in the media which lit up, 'like a flare' (p. 20), class and prejudice in modern Britain. The campaign said more about the reporters than the reported, the victim was blamed and wider structural factors, such as de-industrialisation and the decline of the local textile industry, were

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ignored. Moving on to the working class, Jones locates its demise within Thatcherism and her attack on the trade unions; it is the defeat of the Miners' Strike which was 'the turning point in the history of modern working-class Britain' (p. 55). The 'right to buy' scheme further divided homeowners and council tenants. Jones looks at David Cameron's background, and has a good section on Iain Duncan Smith, but also at the ways in which New Labour has attacked the working class, specifically the 'non-aspirational' working class. It was the Tories that 'placed the chav myth at the heart of British politics, so as to entrench the idea that there are entire communities around Britain crawling with feckless, delinquent, violent and sexually debauched no-hopers' (p. 80). But it was since 1997 that social exclusion came to be focused on behaviour, and that Parliament became a middle-class closed shop.

The real focus here is thus the working class, and it is this theme, rather than that of 'chavs', which is pursued in subsequent chapters. Jones argues that, from the 1880s, the working class has been disparaged in the media, with examples that include Harry Enfield, Catherine Tate, the treatment of Jade Goody, and shows such as Jeremy Kyle and Little Britain. To be working-class is no longer to be respectable, and everything has come to be judged by middle-class standards. Meanwhile the 'new working class', those who sell their labour or who lack autonomy or control over it, is increasingly in work that is part-time and temporary, in service jobs, less likely than previously to be in a union, but with growing debt and lower status. Work has changed: 'how fast you type is more important than how much you can lift' (p. 166). Jones argues that society is 'rigged' in favour of the middle class, as seen in places as diverse as Ashington and Longbridge, and it is industrial collapse and Thatcherism that is the real culprit. It is need that leads to benefit fraud, and the absence of hope that causes anti-social behaviour. The marginalisation of working-class people drove them into the arms of the BNP, and Labour has no real answer to their problems. Jones concludes, therefore, that the demonisation of the working class runs alongside the flagrant triumphalism of the rich, that a new movement could be rooted in the Left and that the working class will organise to defend their interests.

Despite the book's merits as a polemic there are five main problems with it. First, the main title (no doubt the publisher's idea) is misleading. The book is less a discussion of chavs (probably best seen as a subset of the working class and the inheritor of a longer-term 'underclass' discourse) than a study of the problems of the working class. Second, while trenchant, the book is superficial, frequently touching on issues but then moving on very quickly; it lacks depth and at times resembles a catch-all. Third, the book lacks any real sense of historical perspective, rarely going further back than Thatcherism. Historical examples are often poorly chosen; Keith Joseph's 1974 Edgbaston 'eugenics' speech is cited rather than his 1972 'cycle of deprivation' theory (which is arguably more relevant). Third, while the book describes media coverage and the situation of the working class quite well, it is much less convincing on the reasons for the latter's predicament. Too often, the causes of a range of social issues are seen as exclusively structural, in an analysis more familiar from the 1970s, and this runs alongside a failure to face up to uncomfortable realities (such as working-class racism). Rich and poor might be 'two groups with irreconcilable differences' (p. 165), but there are a lot of people in between, and the reality is more complex. Fourth, the treatment of social class often descends into caricature, too earnest, and lacking a sense of humour. Of course these are serious issues, but there is a parallel demonising here of the middle and upper classes, and of the Conservative Party. And, fifth, there is the question of sources, with much material having been selected from interviews with journalists, politicians and academics.

The book thus tackles real and important issues, and is well-written, readable and trenchant. Its title and style could inspire undergraduates to take more interest in these issues than they might otherwise do. However against that the material cited here, while always lively, is sometimes familiar, unsurprising, anecdotal, repetitive or misleading. This is not in any way

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to deny the very real problems experienced by the working class and which Jones describes so vividly. But to have any chance of winning those particular political and ideological battles, we need a more honest analysis of the problems, more subtle and convincing explanations and a more plausible way forward.

JOHN WELSHMAN
Lancaster University
j.welshman@lancaster.ac.uk

Phil Allmendinger (2011), *New Labour and Planning: From New Right to New Left*. Abingdon: Routledge. £95, pp. 208, hbk/£29.99, pp. 208, pbk.
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In this timely and engaging book, Phil Allmendinger traces the relationship between New Labour and the statutory planning system in England. This was a period of hyperactive reform, and the book shines a light on New Labour's approach to governing. As such, the volume will be of interest not just to those interested in the specific reforms to the planning system – as usefully as they are detailed here – but to anyone seeking evidence of how the party acted in power from 1997 to 2010 and of how their reform proposals were enacted.

The period was marked by concerted attempts to reform the planning system through new systems for development plans, targets and incentives to speed-up planning decision making, and an overall desire for a 'culture change' to make planning more proactive, more enabling, more socially and economically responsive, and more inclusive (Shaw and Lord, 2009). Simultaneously, as a local authority service, planning was also heavily implicated by New Labour's drive to modernise the public sector. These reforms were wide-ranging, ambitious and decidedly more 'pro-planning' than the attitude of preceding Conservative governments.

It is therefore somewhat depressing to have to concur with the over-riding message in the book that there was disappointment with New Labour, with planning and with planners through this period. There was too much change, too quickly, based on the too little detailed understanding of planning by central government policy makers. At the same time, however, there was a real desire for planning to 'deliver' across a range of policy steams from an urban renaissance, to a more participatory governance, to delivering housing, to sustainability, and even to tackling obesity and terrorism through better designed communities. Whilst challenging, this was a real opportunity for a planning renaissance, for the profession to raise its status, but it is hard to disagree with Allmendinger's argument that planners failed to meet these expectations. The system was unable, perhaps ill-equipped, to deliver, and planners proved resistant to change. Leadership was lacking in the profession.

The book contains three background chapters, four chapters themed around different aspects of the New Labour reforms which impacted upon planning practice, and a conclusion. Chapter 1 provides the context of the shift 'from New Right to New Left' in UK government and its implications for planning. This includes a summary of the variety of narratives which can be applied to understanding planning under New Labour. Despite this conveyor belt of reform attempts, reflecting on the period shows that planning hasn't actually been radically altered. Allmendinger highlights the resilience of professionals, local autonomy and the co-dependence of the centre and local authorities in effecting changes. This leads him to suggest that we must explore both what Labour intended *and* how change was mediated through existing professional and governance arrangements, an argument I have made in my own research on the period.

Chapter 2 focuses in on New Labour and planning, employing a helpful analytical framework of 'what New Labour?', 'which New Labour?' and 'when New Labour?'.

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