



Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American right*. New York: The New Press.

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As historians, not many people get the privileges to see historical events that changed contemporary world. 2016 was definitely one of those years in US - denied scientific facts, hatred, beliefs and most of all - polarization. At the same time, Arlie Russell Hochschild retired from her career and gave her final speech at Harvard University. In this colloquium, she discussed her new book and following shock of new president election. Many panels asked her opinion on such sudden changes of US society. I read this book of her, "*Strangers in Their Own Land*" (2016). Before the colloquium started, I felt like she knew all of these going to happen.

Four years have passed since then. Now with the dire global pandemic striking worldwide, the most fatal living weakness of US society – which I saw in her book – has been revealed. As an urban historian and planner, I tried to recap her book.

As she stated in the beginning of the book, she studied in Berkeley, living her entire life in the State of California – ‘the liberal blue state’. The book itself contains her journey to the ‘red state’ Louisiana. She tried to start from historical beginning of the ‘southern conservatism’. However,

not like typical political history studies, this book is all about collecting life history of people in Louisiana State.

It has four chapters: First chapter, *The Great Paradox* contains several interviews with southern folks. On second chapter, *The Social Terrain*, Hochschild explained urban background and history of Louisiana such as environmental hazard, chemical industry, political situation etc. On third chapter, *The Deep Story*, she tried to analyze 'deep' inside thoughts of her interviewees who decided to choose conservative ways of life and view. Last chapter, *Going National* is the answer of her research question: Why did 'red states' advocate tea party? Why did they choose such ways of thinking?

It is surprising to see how contemporary American history impacted each person's life. Readers could notice that every interviewee's conversation shows irony: She met a small local retailer, middle-aged, white man who supported the governor who decided to move toward neo-liberal style free market economy. He knew it would harm his business but he insisted that it is the 'righteous free market' and 'southern way'. He constantly believed that he is a middle class, patriotic American family dad. She also met an old black man who suffered from tar labor in Baton Rouge. It was obvious that he got his fatal damages from chemical plants but the chemical company gave him only around 80 dollars for new clothes – with 50% deduction, because the formal uniform had a fair condition. Even if this man was treated unfairly and inhumanly, he did not blame the company. He supported the conservative party which tried to waive the company's medical compensation. Hochschild continued her journey and interview – She met an old black couple who believe their socio-economic isolation is 'Rapture' of the god. She met a white, middle aged woman who proudly serve tea party based on her love of Christianity and morality.

Hochschild called this phenomenon as '*The Great Paradox*'(p8). Her analysis on why aimed straightforward on urban history of Louisiana. She understood local ethnography which continued for decades. First was religion. Louisiana is one of strong Bible belt states. This shared belief made an internal idea of 'team player loyalty' inside southern community. Second was culture: strong 'cowboy' macho men, housekeeping women, Christian stoicism etc. Although these ideas were outdated, many local believed that these are their own 'heritage'. Their feelings were hurt when they faced criticism. The last was the 'American Dream'. Economic rise after World War II and desegregation forced southern states to change into urban atmosphere. Farmland became industrial plants. With typical suburban life style combined, southerners were socio-economically isolated and ignored: a low education rate, poor medical conditions and so on.

None of them is real. Then why cannot these victims deny it? They believe what they can't have. They believe their place is a good place – manor style suburban housing with Chevy car, Sunday church, bacon and egg, humble-working blue collar dad, mom's southern fry dishes, tailgate, free market, low tax, freedom from 'big brother' federal government ... and the list goes on. But the cruel

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fact is - they are the 'strangers in their own land' with the great paradox. The most crucial point of Hochschild is that American polarization is not just an ignorant matter. It is deeply wired with modern American history. She tried to say that the conservatives were victimized by many delicate situations.

On her field trips and interviews, it is obvious that she considered southern local characteristics. She experienced conservative rallies, Cajun customs, tea party meetings, and Sunday church. Each one's life history was collected in her book and readers can see comprehensive comparison between external and internal history of southern US.

Hochschild's work seems urgent one – based on the current condition of American society. Her life history collection has its own value but it would be good to see relative actions to solve ongoing problems. Also, like other narrative studies, we could argue about generalization. Even if she is strong liberal from Berkeley, her book was surprisingly non-biased. It was very rare to see her opinion or thought on contexts. Still, if we want to connect this book to the real world solution, we need some summaries and generalizations at some degrees.

Although her interview records have very small amount of cases, years of quantitative data collection and information show relative matching on the whole evaluation of the contemporary American society. Thus it would be good to see expansion upon other fields such as civil engineering or public policy making. Since Hochschild retired, this book has been her legacy to provide possible collaboration from humanitarian criticism to the pragmatic solutions.

Present US society is in dangerous conditions. Its own communities have had long unbalanced history since WWII. Positivism has been facing socio-economic issues which cannot be solved by science and free market. Poverty, polarization and ideologies have been threatening basic living rights of people. Now with this global pandemic, the situation goes worse. Even now, people deny medical crisis and insist their freedom. Still, Hochschild asks people to understand each other from narrative historical conversation. The most valuable lesson from her book is that southerners were not ignorant. Even it is 'strangely' wrong, they followed their custom and moral. She criticized that miscommunication between present US liberals and old southern localism made polarization worse. Thus both needed to understand inquires which came from many different local histories. This idea is ultimate evolution form her past researches. It shows different direction from major liberal perspectives.

"Strangers in Their Own Land" has collaborative value for history, sociology and anthropology. Her types of studies are still lacking at the real world urban planning perspective. In other words, there are still disconnection exists between liberal arts perspective and real world planning process. Hochschild's work shows possibility for future urbanism that balancing technology and localism. Southern US region is one of those places desperately need socio-economic reformation. This book can be working as a compass those who try to research and solve such gaps.