Altogether, this book is thoughtful and well conceived. It communicates a changing understanding and imagining of the oceans by various groups, only a relatively small portion of whom were scientists, but each of whom had their own ideas about the usefulness of ocean space and ocean science. It thus joins other recent work in the history of science in including not just laboratories and organisms, but also amateurs, patrons and publics, and setting their goals alongside and inclusive of those of scientific practitioners.

While of obvious interest to scholars of the 'oceanic turn', it should also find a much broader audience among those interested in how the public interacts with science and with the environment, and how these interests feed and are fed by political goals and fears. In the age of the Anthropocene, that audience could and should include graduate and undergraduate scholars in both the marine and other environmental humanities and STEM subjects, but also the general public, who might indeed be usefully challenged to consider how we imagine the oceans and why.

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Mark Solovey, Social Science for What? Battles over Public Funding for the 'Other Sciences' at the National Science Foundation

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Social Science for What? examines the relationship between the US National Science Foundation (NSF) and the social sciences from the end of the Second World War up to the late 1980s.

Building on Solovey's previous work on the 'politics–patronage–social science nexus in Cold War America', the book demonstrates the value of detailed examination of the policies and practices of scientific funding bodies. He argues that the NSF was influential in establishing a scientistic framework for understanding social science, one which considered the social sciences to be part of a unified scientific enterprise, and which thought that the comparatively immature social sciences could develop best by following the more advanced and objective methods of the natural sciences. This approach within the NSF made the agency an important site for scientific boundary work, shaping debates about the identity and direction of social science; it also meant that these fields remained marginal within the agency, representing just 5.9 per cent of funding in 1969, then just 3.3 per cent by 1989. By the 1980s, social scientists were joking that NSF stood for 'Non-Sufficient Funds'.

Solovey traces the history of NSF support, moving from the early struggle to ensure that the social sciences were included in the agency's remit in the face of hostility from both government and 'hard' science, to the relative high point of support in the late 1950s and the 1960s, through the increasing struggles against conservative opponents

in the 1970s, to the darkest days of the Reagan era. A series of case studies illustrate these shifting dynamics. For example, Solovey traces the NSF's support for 'big social science' and its relatively generous support for projects such as the National Election Studies (NES), which generated vast amounts of data on election results and voting behaviour. Economics – which was widely considered to be a mature and rigorous science – also fared well, even surviving relatively unscathed from Reagan-era attacks. Conversely, projects that were seen to promote particular social values frequently came under the spotlight, and the agency generally steered clear of research into 'controversial' areas such as race or gender. Solovey highlights the case of MACOS ('Man, A Course of Study'), a social-science-based educational programme for schoolchildren, originally developed in the 1960s, which drew on anthropological case studies to show the variety of cultures around the world, which was wound down in the 1970s amid criticism of its allegedly corrupting effect on the nation's youth.

Indeed, the book highlights the long history of partisan attacks on social science throughout the second half of the twentieth century: critics accused it both of being an unscientific waste of money that generated nothing useful and of being a dangerously subversive force promoting moral relativism, social engineering and liberalism. (An early critic memorably described the field as full of 'short-haired women and long-haired men messing into everybody's personal affairs.') Senator William Proxmire would nominate a research project each month for his 'Golden Fleece Awards', signifying work he considered to be a particularly egregious waste of taxpayer money. The media would often join in to mock 'zany' projects, although on one occasion a maligned study of 'A Theory of Necking Behaviour' turned out to actually be an engineering investigation into the deformation of metal under strain. Solovey cites the example of cultural anthropologist Sherry Ortner, awarded NSF funding for a study of religion and social change amongst Nepalese Sherpas, who was also named a Golden Fleece winner by Proxmire in 1979. In response, Ortner mounted a persuasive defence of the value of her research and of its potential to deliver insights that could improve the US's overseas development efforts. Conservative critics remained unconvinced.

Solovey concludes with a brief overview of the NSF's fate since the late 1980s, ending with the era of 'alternative facts'. Over this period, the social sciences have gained some improved status, while also continuing to face hostile attacks and budget cuts. Solovey suggests that the NSF has by and large succeeded in seeing off threats to scientific integrity and containing partisan attacks. In the process, it has funded high-quality research and defended the value of the social sciences as part of a united scientific enterprise. The downside of this has been that the social sciences have remained in the shadow of 'hard' science within the federal funding system, while funding has consistently prioritised research in a more 'hard-core' mode of research, rather than 'softer' or more interpretive work.

Social Science for What? demonstrates how the political economy of science has been intertwined in public debates about the place and purpose of science in American society. It is an engagingly written and timely account of the struggle to win status and secure funding for the social sciences in the United States. Solovey makes the case for funding bodies as a key site of debate over the nature, status and value of scientific endeavour, while also contributing to the vibrant field of studies of the recent history of the social sciences.

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