Good Intentions
Max Weber and the Paradox of Unintended Consequences
by Mohamed Cherkaoui

GEMAS Studies in Social Analysis Series
Editors: Mohamed Cherkaoui, Peter Hamilton, Bryan S. Turner

All of human life is affected by the awkward fact that, as Robert Burns said: “the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry”. Taking his cue from Max Weber’s seminal insights into this phenomenon, Mohamed Cherkaoui explores this paradoxical world where good intentions so often produce unintended consequences. A famous example is the role of Protestantism in the rise of modern capitalism. The book offers a profound analysis of Weber’s classic essay on this topic, and his theories about the sociology of religion and of rationalisation that lie at its heart. As Professor Cherkaoui demonstrates, this approach remains of great relevance to an understanding of contemporary problems such as Islamic fundamentalism.

Invisible Codes
Essays on Generative Mechanisms
by Mohamed Cherkaoui

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Invisible Codes is a path-breaking book about the concept of social or generative mechanisms, of which an early example is Adam Smith’s idea of the ‘invisible hand’. It deals with a problem long evident in sociological explanation, the ‘macro–micro’ dilemma. Professor Cherkaoui deploys a series of studies that deal with issues such as the causes of the French revolution of 1789, the persistence of social inequalities in education, and Max Weber’s Protestant Ethic thesis. In each case he is concerned with understanding how both classical and contemporary sociologists construct explanatory schemas that aim to integrate the macrosociological and the microsociological levels. His aim is to construct a research strategy based around the principles of methodological individualism for understanding macro phenomena. Mohamed Cherkaoui argues that transitions between these levels are best seen through a modelling of generative mechanisms, conceptualised as a coherent group of hypotheses about actors and the contexts in which they act.

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