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# Paradoxes of Individualization

Social Control and Social Conflict in Contemporary Modernity

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*'Houtman, Aupers and De Koster's book is a fine example of the new cultural sociology convincingly showing that culture is the decisive factor in understanding various phenomena, ranging from the role of the internet to the rise of populism. I have seldom come across a book so well written, so rich in its theoretical grounding and so insightful in its empirical accounts.'*

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Paradoxes of Individualization addresses one of the most hotly debated issues in contemporary sociology: whether a process of individualization is liberating selves from society so as to make them the authors of their personal biographies. The book adopts a cultural-sociological approach that firmly rejects such a notion of individualization as naïve. The process is instead conceptualized as an increasing social significance of moral notions of individual liberty, personal authenticity and cultural tolerance, which informs two paradoxes.

**Contents:** Introduction: the myth of individualization and the dream of individualism; Agony of choice?: the social embeddedness of consumer decisions (*with Sebastiaan van Doorn and Jochem Verheul*); Beyond the spiritual supermarket: why new age spirituality is less privatized than they say it is; 'Be who you want to be': commodified agency in online computer games; 'Stormfront is like a second home to me': social exclusion of right-wing extremists; Contesting individualism online: Catholic, Protestant and holistic spiritual appropriations of the world wide web (*with Ineke Noomen*); Two lefts and two rights: class voting and cultural voting in the Netherlands, 2002 (*with Peter Achterberg*); One nation without God?: post-Christian cultural conflict in the Netherlands, (*with Peter Achterberg and Jeroen van der Waal*); Secular intolerance in a post-Christian society: the case of Islam in the Netherlands (*with Samira van Bohemen and Roy Kemmers*); Bibliography; Index.  
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December 2011

196 pages

Hardback

978-0-7546-7902-8

£55.00

Paperback

978-0-7546-7901-1

£25.00

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