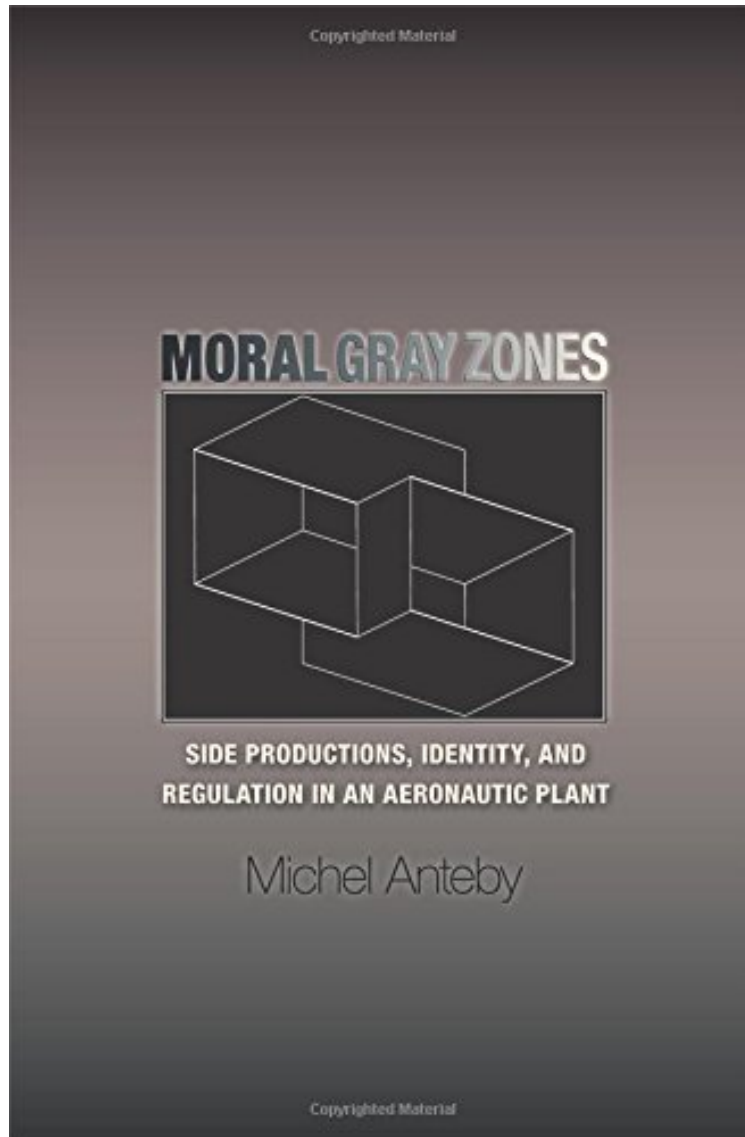


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Moral Gray Zones: Side Productions, Identity, and Regulation in an Aeronautic Plant

Michel Anteby

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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Fascinating Read!!By J.D.I would highly recommend this book to anyone interested in understanding organizational control, occupational culture, and occupational identity. I read this book as part of a class on ethnography, and it was one of our class's favorite sessions. The book is beautifully written

and the analysis throughout is trenchant. Once you start reading, it is difficult to put down!

Anyone who has been employed by an organization knows not every official workplace regulation must be followed. When management consistently overlooks such breaches, spaces emerge in which both workers and supervisors engage in officially prohibited, yet tolerated practices--gray zones. When discovered, these transgressions often provoke disapproval; when company materials are diverted in the process, these breaches are quickly labeled theft. Yet, why do gray zones persist and why are they unlikely to disappear? In *Moral Gray Zones*, Michel Anteby shows how these spaces function as regulating mechanisms within workplaces, fashioning workers' identity and self-esteem while allowing management to maintain control. The book provides a unique window into gray zones through its in-depth look at the manufacture and exchange of illegal goods called homers, tolerated in a French aeronautic plant. Homers such as toys for kids, cutlery for the kitchen, or lamps for homes, are made on company time with company materials for a worker's own purpose and use. Anteby relies on observations at retirees' homes, archival data, interviews, and surveys to understand how plant workers and managers make sense of this tacit practice. He argues that when patrolled, gray zones like the production of homers offer workplaces balanced opportunities for supervision as well as expression. Cautioning against the hasty judgment that gray zone practices are simply wrong, *Moral Gray Zones* contributes to a deeper understanding of the culture, group dynamics, and deviance found in organizations.

Moral Gray Zones brings classical mid-twentieth-century social theory into the twenty-first century... A marvelous book. --John Van Maanen (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)From the Back Cover "In this sparkling book, Michel Anteby challenges managerial images of polished efficient organizations that relegate employees' personal relations and private goals to a controlled periphery. As he focuses a skilled ethnographer's attention on the production of unauthorized personal objects within a French aeronautical factory, Anteby gradually reveals a profound truth about paid labor for others: workers make labor contracts bearable for themselves by creating space for their own creativity and relations to fellow workers."--Viviana Zelizer, author of *The Purchase of Intimacy* "Moral Gray Zones is superb. Rich, judicious, and well written, this trenchant portrayal of how control really gets done, moves the sociology of meaning forward."--Harrison White, author of *Identity and Control* "Moral Gray Zones brings classical mid-twentieth-century social theory into the twenty-first century. This lively look at a dying trade--craft workers in the modern factory--has relevance to almost any work world today. In fine detail, Anteby makes it clear that beneath surface performance contracts and economic exchanges at work lies a rich if hidden interaction in which laborers seek dignity and respect for what they do from coworkers and managers. That they succeed more often than not makes for a terrific tale of considerable interest--dramatically and theoretically. A marvelous book."--John Van Maanen, Massachusetts Institute of Technology "The book channels the spirit of industrial sociology of the 1950s, when students of work and organization encountered the shop floor up close and came away understanding how everyday behaviors formed the woof and warp of industrialization's social fabric. Anteby's use of the production of homers for understanding relations between workers and managers is ingenious."--Stephen R. Barley, Stanford University "An accessible good read, *Moral Gray Zones* makes a distinct contribution toward the understanding of informal structures, situated moralities, occupational cultures, and systems of control."--Peter V. Marsden, Harvard University "Moral Gray Zones is first-rate qualitative organizational analysis. Effectively organized and cogently argued, I was impressed by Anteby's marshalling of diverse streams of evidence. The extension of his ideas through the vast literature on multiple occupations is particularly stimulating."--Calvin Morrill, University of California, IrvineAbout the Author Michel Anteby is assistant professor of organizational behavior at Harvard Business School.