

Book Reviews | Reseñas

- *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture During the Long Sixties*, by Jaime M. Pensado, Stanford University Press, 2013.
- *Specters of Revolution: Peasant Guerrillas in the Cold War Mexican Countryside*, by Alexander Aviña, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Two great books, two young Chicano historians, one common interest: to unearth the recent history of resistance and the nature of state-making in Mexico. Pensado studies student movements in Mexico City during the 1950s and 1960s, and Aviña works on armed peasant resistance during the 1960s and 1970s in Guerrero. Methodologically, both books draw heavily on a combination of declassified security documents and interviews with participants. Analytically, both authors engage with the debate about the relative role of state violence and coercion during the so-called golden years of PRI-dominance. They also have something important to say about the meaning of the 1968 student repression at Tlatelolco for the broader interpretation of the Mexican political system. Both books successfully qualify and historicize '1968' and thereby criticize the dominant narrative.

Rebel Mexico provides a thorough examination of earlier student uprisings in the capital and thereby distances itself from a literature that 'tends to overstate the idiosyncrasies of the 1968 student movement' (p. 4). Furthermore, in the last chapter of the book, undoubtedly the most controversial, the book claims that the 1968 student movement never achieved a popular dimension, proved incapable to build a broader democratic movement, failed to transcend beyond the capital, and actually generated support for the hard line of the government. This partly ties into the claims of *Specters of Revolution*: first, looking from the provinces, 1968 should not be considered the cataclysmic event that ended the PRI's golden period; so far historians have overlooked that in previous years *and elsewhere in Mexico* 'civic insurgencies ... challenged the PRI regime's ability to ... respond to popular dissidence with nuance and negotiation rather than with violence and terror', (p. 73). Second, and perhaps even more importantly, the book disputes the widespread idea that the radicalization of peasant resistance in rural Mexico (especially in Guerrero) was mainly the outcome of the activist work of left-wing students who fled Mexico City

after the Tlatelolco massacre. Instead the book underlines the deep regional histories of protest, organization and mobilization of the 1970s peasant guerrillas and the state's violent response. These books thus seriously question the dominant narrative of 1968, which so far, as Pensado reminds us, has largely been written by a relatively small group of former *sesentaocheros*. Finally and interestingly, both books also make unintended but sometimes disturbing connections to present day developments in Mexico: the student and youth protests during the 2012 federal elections in the case of Pensado; the murder and disappearance of the 43 *normalista* students in Iguala is a tragedy that to a substantial degree becomes intelligible by reading Aviña's book. After all, the recent Iguala massacre forms part of a long regional history of political repression, cacique violence, and massacres. In a chilling play of fate, in the very last phrase of *Specters of Revolution* Aviña cites a survivor of the violence of the 1970s who is still searching for the truth about disappeared loved ones and hopes that 'the bones will tell us what happened', (p. 180). In 2015 even that may not be possible since, as the government has concluded, a huge fire apparently left absolutely nothing of the murdered students.

There are also notable differences between the books. While Pensado deals with urban, and to a large extent, middle class Mexico, Aviña studies the political and armed protests of poor (indigenous) peasants. A key difference is furthermore that the student movement is examined from a political and cultural perspective, whereas the Guerrero peasant guerrilla is analysed predominantly from a political and social perspective. Most importantly, the books differ in their conclusions about the role of violence and coercion during PRI domination, although I believe that this is largely explained by the differences between the key processes they investigated. One of the key arguments in Jaime Pensado's well written book concerns the development of *porrismo* in Mexico, which he defines as an '... extra-legal tool of repression and conciliation by the government and rival political elites ... to crush and negotiate with what authorities saw ... as the "rise" of "radical" student political forces', (pp. 3-4). Porros were groups of (quasi-) students who acted on behalf of elite actors within universities or in wider state institutions and engaged in provocations, disturbances and beatings with the objective to derail politicized student activism or, at least, to confuse the majority of moderate students and citizens by creating disorder and informational ambiguities. The emergence of this phenomenon should be understood as a move away from the use of overt force, although the state would not shy away from that when deemed necessary, such as to end the 1956 student strike at the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN), or the student protests in 1968. Throughout the 'long 1960s', the predominant strategy was that of taking different (and innovative) coercive mechanisms 'underground', into what I have called elsewhere the 'grey zone' of state-making (2012, pp. 26-32). Just as in the case of union bossism, political elites, deeply divided along factional lines and often with the help of secret police agencies, employed these tactics to control an increasingly restless student

population. Pensado also shows how over time *porrismo* became more violent during the Diaz Ordáz (1964-1970) and Echeverría (1970-1976) presidencies, when government-sponsored lumpen recruited from urban gangs replaced earlier more moderate and middle-class *porristas*.

The other side of this fascinating story is the radicalization of students, the gradual construction of political and cultural spaces of contestation, the broadening and deepening of their agendas, their linkages with national and international developments and discourses, most importantly the international counterculture and the Cuban revolution. For that purpose Pensado studies the IPN strike of 1956, the widely overlooked student strike of 1958, which he qualifies as 'one of the most important student actions of modern Mexico' (p. 132), the 1966 UNAM strike and of course the 1968 protest movement. Pensado's book is extremely rich in detailing the ways in which the New Left came to life in the form of conferences, film festivals, literary contests, radio programmes, and the foundation of new literary and political magazines. This energetic countercultural movement attracted artists, writers and academics from outside the university environment. He concludes that 'an international language of dissent, but also satire, humour, violence, and *desmadre*' characterized Mexico's New Left (p. 180). It is here that Jaime Pensado is at his best: in establishing the deep links between a political analysis of intermediation, power and authority, radicalization, factionalism, and a sophisticated study of cultural practices, manifestations and new languages of countercultural contestation. His is a multi-layered and nuanced analysis of a period that has long stood in the shadow of 1968. I would have liked Pensado to have incorporated references to student and popular activism outside of the capital, since it would have strengthened his key arguments.

This is the starting point of Aviña's book: to understand social protest and political mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s from Guerrero. *Specters of Revolution* tells the history of the radicalization of peasant politics, resistance and eventually guerrillas. It supports what Padilla (2008) called an 'escalating dialogue', whereby acts of state repression were answered by popular organizing, militancy and radicalization. Just as Pensado excavates the history of pre-1968 student activism in Mexico, so does Aviña examine the roots of Guerrero's 1970s dirty war. The book chronicles the major conflicts in the state since the major civic protest movement in the 1960s, that ended in the ousting of the governor, the controversial elections of 1962, and the worsening of social and political conflicts in 1967, a period during which Guerrero experienced several massacres and endless examples of less 'spectacular' but no less pernicious cacique violence against social and political dissidents. Aviña explains the how and why of the transformation of political and social struggles *within* the framework of the post-revolutionary state (during most of the 1960s) towards the willingness to take up arms *against* the post-revolutionary state in order to achieve economic redistribution, political and electoral democracy, local autonomy and perhaps most of all justice and dignity. The core of the explanation

is: 'state terror made guerrillas and guerrilla supporters', (p. 112). The second part of the book then studies with great care the emergence of two guerrilla movements, the Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria (ACNR), led by Genaro Vázquez, and the Partido de los Pobres (PLDP), led by Lucio Cabañas (the first was killed in 1972, the latter in 1974). The book examines the social and political biographies of their leaders, their roots in peasant communities, their ideological formation, disputes, strategies and eventual demise in the face of ruthless government persecution and repression. In doing so the author successfully develops an account of the deep local social, political and cultural roots of repression, coercion and violence in the heartland of Mexico's dirty war. In addition, Aviña's book also speaks to debates about the role of memory in social struggles, and the connections between local histories and to (inter)national Cold War dynamics.

While Pensado claims that Mexico City students failed to build a real popular power base, Aviña continuously stresses that especially the PLDP achieved high levels of peasant and community support. In the latter's view this also explains why coastal Guerrero became 'a counterinsurgent war zone', due to the 'terror unleashed by the Mexican military and police forces', (pp. 174-175). There can be little doubt that Guerrero occupied (and still occupies) a position on the darkest side of coercive state-making. From there Aviña draws a more general conclusion: 'Violence enabled Mexican golden ages and economic miracles', (p. 173). Even though Pensado's book underscores the role of violence and coercion during the period under review here, he would probably not subscribe to Aviña's general conclusion. His reading of state policies towards the 'student problem in the 1960s' renders a more ambivalent picture.

My conclusion is that they are both right. Understanding state-formation, popular resistance, and the relative weight of co-optation, violence and more covert extra-legal mechanisms of control *from below* in a socially and politically complex country such as Mexico will necessarily produce a differentiated picture in time and space. Just think about the more recent debates about drug violence and governance in current Mexico: simple and uniform categories are misleading. Stating that Mexico is not a failed state, doesn't mean that in certain parts of the country the state as a source of sovereignty and authority holds little meaning for people. The key contribution of the books under review here is that they both make a significant contribution to a history that was too long dominated by rather one-dimensional accounts of Mexico's Cold War politics and resistance. They should be obligatory reading for all interested in modern Mexico and the social making, politics and culture of popular resistance in Latin America.

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– *We are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements*, by Lynn Stephen. Duke University Press, 2013.

In June 2006 after the yearly negotiations for better working conditions had failed, the teachers' movement of Oaxaca took to the streets and occupied the city centre of Oaxaca. The governors' violent attempt to evict the teachers sparked the mobilization of individuals as well as urban, indigenous, peasant and women movements that united under the umbrella of the People's Popular Assembly (*La Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca*, APPO) in June 2006. APPO soon took over the whole city, including the occupation of the state senate, the governor's office, the state TV and radio stations and other installations. In response, the city was militarized and violent repression escalated. Citizens tried to defend their 'free radio stations' and neighbourhoods from police repression with barricades until on 25 November a final 'clean-up' operation swept the city that had been defended for months by the people as an act of hope for democratic change. In this book, Lynn Stephen presents a rich ethnographic study of the background, events and aftermath of this popular rebellion that brought about important changes in how many Oaxacans conceived of themselves politically

Her account is historically rich and well documented. It first traces the historical background of the organizations that stood at the basis of the mobilizations. She shows the history and multi-layered organizational networks of a number of movement organizations in Oaxaca and the context in which the 2006 mobilization took place. Set against this background, the book analyses different facets of the social movement in, around and after the occupation of the city and the creation of APPO. The careful description of the unlawful detention, torture and incarceration of three men as part of the escalated police repression in the latter part of 2006 shows how in the absence of a functioning justice system, the dissemination of the testimony of human rights violations on radio, television, on the streets and in front of organizations became an important mechanism to grant 'the testimony legitimacy and the weight of truth', (p. 120). At the same time it shows that the documentation and broadcasting of this testimony is an important mechanism of movement organizations to validate their claims and defend human rights.

This argument is further elaborated by showing the importance of community and grassroots radio stations as a medium for the transformation of political cultures. The documentation of the rise, expansion and resilience of (indigenous) community radio stations in Oaxaca amidst waves of repression shows how these have shaped 'the form and content of political agency in Oaxaca',

(p. 144) through the creation and dissemination of alternative ethnic and political identities that question and transform notions about who is a citizen, who can speak and who can be heard. The basis for these transformations are oral narratives; a point which is illustrated by the event-centred analysis of the emblematic women's takeover of state and commercial media during the 2006 mobilizations.

The analysis of the often unexplored group of those that are economically affected by popular protests, in this case the artisans, merchants and business owners that depend on the tourist industry, sheds important insights on the mixed backing the movement had outside of their direct support networks. Importantly, it also shows how the middle and upper classes became politically engaged in the conflict by organizing their own 'civil society' alliance that sought to mediate in the conflict through the promotion of dialogue among APPO, the state and the federal government. This formed the basis for electoral victories of the opposition in the city and state governments.

As Lynn shows, the movement was not confined to the city. It was grounded and brought about processes of change in rural Oaxaca. Interestingly, it also led to the creation of an APPO support group in Los Angeles (APPO-L.A.), U.S.A. This group organized meetings and marches in Los Angeles and mobilized financial support for the movement. In the analysis of the networks that unite rural communities with transnational support organizations, the importance of oral testimony and its recording and broadcasting is also neatly fleshed out. The final chapter presents the development of youth organizations that emerged from the barricades of 2006 and traces their development and impact on non-electoral forms of cultural and political change through art.

Although somewhat eclectic, this empirically rich and well-documented book forms a very welcome contribution to the social movements literature. It illustrates the academic virtues of long-term engaged anthropological research. Theoretically, it makes a strong case for the importance of oral testimony and the many ways of capturing and retransmitting it for the development of social movements and the advancement of human rights work, especially in a context of hard repression and violence. Lynn's own creation of a platform website that does precisely this is illuminating.

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– *Maya Exodus: Indigenous struggle for citizenship in Chiapas*, by Heidi Moksnes. University of Oklahoma Press, 2012.

The 'exodus' in the title refers to finding a way out of poverty and hardship, or, as it increasingly came to be understood in indigenous Chiapas, 'liberation from oppression'. The book presents an ethnographic account – in the best tradition of 'thick description' – on communal organizing and indigenous activ-

ism in the Highlands of Chiapas. It focusses on a particular segment of the population of the municipality Chenalhó, referred to in the book as *Catholic Pedranos*, which became closely associated with the San Cristóbal Diocese and liberation theology. The book examines how indigenous activism took on shape and meaning in interaction with non-indigenous actors working mainly from a human rights perspective. It shows how local histories get connected to global discourses as lived experience.

In the context of the Zapatista uprising of 1994, the Chenalhó Catholics formed the civil society association Las Abejas, which was similar to the Zapatista agenda for social justice, but committed to a position of non-armed activism. Las Abejas became world news as 45 of its members were murdered in the village Acteal (part of Chenalhó) by paramilitaries while congregated in church for prayer. The Acteal massacre became a global symbol of indigenous suffering and state complicity. One reason to read this book is that it provides a textured analysis of 'Acteal', showing how factional antagonisms in Chenalhó quickly polarized in the context of a failed peace process, militarization and growing political divisions amongst indigenous populations. Explaining Acteal, however, is not the primary concern of the book. Its aim is broader: it seeks to explore the development of political agency amongst the indigenous populations in the Highlands of Chiapas and the contradictions they have faced in seeking to move out of poverty and clientelism. The second reason to read this book is for the insights provided into local experiences with global discourses and networks, making it relevant beyond Chiapas and Latin America. It shows the local appropriation of rights-based discourses and the leverage that is derived from 'global' linkages, as well as the 'subordination' that is also embodied in these relations (p. 78). Based on her analysis, the author develops a critique of the limitations of external support to rights-based claims in a neo-liberal regime.

The book takes a historical approach. The development of political agency is linked back to traditional Mayan forms of community organizing and understandings of authority, and it traces how these have changed under the influence of contact with the Mexican state and the Catholic Diocese. It provides a fine-grained analysis of the interaction between the Diocese and the Pedrano Catholics that brings out the key role of the new religious leaders, the 'catequistas', who liaise local parishes and the Diocese and who, following the Acteal massacre, developed into intermediaries with the outside world. Local understandings of suffering and struggle, the reaction to Zapatismo, and the creation and course of Las Abejas are placed in the context of these evolving relationships.

The book steers clear of the celebration of indigenous social movements that is often found in Latin American studies and certainly in much of the literature on Zapatismo. The author has sought to capture the aspirations and frustrations of the people studied in all their complexity, showing how they struggle with some of the contradictions they encounter. Indigenous groups in Chiapas

pas have sought to redefine their relation with the state, trying to create 'spheres of political agency' outside of 'clientelist forms of control' (p. 262) but a principled position of autonomy comes at the expense of further hardship as it implies refusal of governmental support programmes and limited access to basic services. Indigenous communities all over Chiapas have become divided over this question, but no definite answers have been found. As the author states '... the choice of political strategy involves a continuous evaluation between whether to hold to these principled rights demands or to accept some pragmatic degree of state interaction', (p. 256). Close links with human rights activists and NGOs have to some extent been an alternative to the state and state resources, but this has created new dependencies. An important point of concern raised in the book is that external allies have tended to emphasize political and indigenous rights at the expense of economic rights. The author sees indigenous activists as somehow 'trapped' in a 'claim for citizenship' which has 'brought few concrete outcomes', (p. 255) and has done little to relieve 'poverty and economic marginalization', (p. 276). In response, a different kind of exodus has developed: thousands are now mainly migrating to the U.S.; Chiapas is catching up with other Mexican states at high speed. This is a bitter conclusion for both indigenous activists and those who have sought to support them.

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– *Land and Freedom: The MST, the Zapatistas and Peasant Alternatives to Neoliberalism*, by Leandro Vergara-Camus. Zed Books, 2014.

In *Land and Freedom*, Leandro Vergara-Camus has produced an impressive monograph representing years of work and a commitment to exploring new prospects for radical Left politics in Latin America. The book undertakes the daunting task of situating two very important social movements, Brazil's *Landless Rural Workers' Movement* (MST) and Mexico's *Zapatista Army of National Liberation* (EZLN), into comparative perspective on the basis of comparative field research. Chapters one and two focus on the historical development of capitalist agrarian relations in Brazil and Mexico, some consequences of current neoliberal policies, and new forms of protest that appeared with the MST and EZLN. Chapter three examines processes of politicization and the construction of alternative political institutions within each organization, while chapter four examines efforts through which members of the MST and EZLN attempt to gain control over their subsistence and material wellbeing. These two chapters are especially rich as they draw extensively upon Vergara-Camus' original field research. Chapter five, finally, relates differences in the MST's and EZLN's political strategies to successes and disappointments that each organization has met with in wider political processes.

For many scholars studying broad-based, media-savvy social movements like the MST and EZLN, it is tempting to focus on decrees, communiqués, Revolutionary Agrarian Laws, rule books, codified pedagogies, and, above all, the voices of highly visible movement leaders. These sources, of course, are fascinating in their own right, but when the normative visions they articulate become the privileged focus of analysis, then this, as Vergara-Camus suggests, can come at the expense of a 'concrete analysis of the actual practices and specific features of these movements' (p. 297). To overcome such limitations, Vergara-Camus offers a wealth of evidence that permits critical readings and raises new questions for inquiry.

A central theme Vergara-Camus explores concerns the MST's and EZLN's projects of building 'autonomous rural communities', which represent a territorialization of politics grounded in struggles for land. These are not merely economic spaces, but spaces for social and political production, or what Vergara-Camus evocatively calls 'laborator[ies] for the construction of popular power', (p. 155). These communities are not *faits accomplis*, however, but political *projects* and sites of struggle among differently positioned activists, leaders, and members of the grassroots involved in manifold internal and external contests for power. For example, Vergara-Camus offers a description of the EZLN as being built upon dense bundles of extant social relations and institutions, which qualifies any idea that 'Zapatista communities' might be cut from whole cloth, fully internally coherent, or existing in isolation from other (sometimes conflicting) local institutions. One fascinating aspect of his analysis concerns the Zapatista's establishment of 'Juntas de Buen Gobierno' (pp. 122-124 *et passim*) that have assumed certain functions of the state. Not only do the Juntas appear to have gained legitimacy that bridges divisions between EZLN activists and other political factions in the communities they share, but they even appear to have garnered legitimacy among a number of elected officials from the Mexican state, including judicial authorities and a former governor of Chiapas. This is fascinating given the claim by some EZLN leaders that their organization has severed relations with the state. Elsewhere, in one of the most 'dialectical' moments in the book, Vergara-Camus describes a dispute over electoral strategies that occurred between activists at different levels of the MST's organizational hierarchy. Interestingly, the long-term outcome of this struggle appears to have had transformative consequences for the actual shape of local MST institutions, namely, by mitigating leaders' top-down control of the elections through which grassroots members select representatives for their communities (pp. 246-250). In these cases, we see the complexities of autonomous rural communities in the making.

In his analysis, Vergara-Camus seeks to move beyond rigidified analytical categories, such as 'the peasantry', to offer an adequate account of the projects being advanced by members of the EZLN and MST. In this same spirit of categorial critique, I would suggest that Vergara-Camus' discussion of 'absolute private property rights' in Brazil is too general. First, as a conceptual category,

the umbrella concept of ‘private property’ is too undifferentiated. Second, at least in Brazil, the status of the radical concept of ‘absolute’ private property (in William Blackstone’s sense) as a robust social fact calls for more specific investigation. Even after the 1850 land law passed, and to this day, notions of *posse* and other squatters’ rights continue to have social and even legal currency. Vergara-Camus briefly gestures toward some of these observations (p. 46), but they remain mostly unexplored. Indeed, some of Vergara-Camus’ own evidence (pp. 84-87, 183) points to multiple, possibly patterned, and sometimes conflicting understandings of property, land, and freedom among members of the MST. I think a higher resolution and more differentiated analysis of property could help explain some of the diversity that frequently emerges within large social movements like the MST. It would be unfair, though, to expect Vergara-Camus to have achieved more than he already has. What is fair to point out, however, is the productivity of his approach as it helps raise new questions for further inquiry. In this sense, among others, *Land and Freedom* is as successful as it is engaging.

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– *Indigenous Movements and Building the Plurinational State in Bolivia: Organisation and Identity in the Trajectory of the CSUTCB and CONAMAQ*, by Radosław Powęska, CESLA UW, 2013.

Powęska’s first Chapter, *Social Movements Theory: Linking Identity and Organization*, is beyond doubt one of the best overviews of the debates on conceptualizing social movements that I have read in many years. It is not only complete, but it also meticulously addresses virtually all the issues when it comes to the strengths and flaws of the theoretical perspectives that have been proposed to understand and theorize social movements, ranging from the Resource Mobilization Theory, through Political Opportunity Structure analysis, to Frame Analysis. Conspicuously, however, his own approach boils down to quite a simple and almost mechanistic formula. Powęska sustains that a movement’s success basically depends on the degree in which a ‘movement’s beliefs, worldview and values are mirrored in the form through which the movement organizes and sustains action’ (p. 77). He announced this conviction in the Introduction, stating there that ‘I assume that a symbiosis between organizational structure and collective identity, or an organization-identity coherence, is needed’, (p. 22) if a movement wants to be effective and remain loyal to its own values. The book-structure is designed to make this point.

Following chapter II on historical and contemporary state-indigenous relations in Bolivia, he focuses on the role two major ethnic movements in Bolivia played during the process of designing a new constitution for the country, basically between 2006 and 2009. This new constitution was negotiated and written by the *Asamblea Constituyente*, and in that body, albeit through the vehi-

cles of political parties, various social movements attempted to influence the outcome. Powęska concentrates on two of these movements, which have different but well-articulated ethnic compositions. The first is the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (Unitary Union Confederation of Bolivia Peasant Workers) CSUTCB, and the second is the *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas de Qullasuyu* (National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu) CONAMAQ. The first is a broader movement, organized around peasantry rather than exclusively ethnicity (although in Bolivia there is a large degree of overlap), whereas the second is based on ethnicity. Chapter III on the CSUTCB and IV on CONAMAQ, and Chapter V on how they each operated during the discussions of the *Constituyente* basically argue that CONAMAQ did better. ‘The problem with the CSUTCB representation in the *Constituyente* was that it was diverse and mirrored the internal CSUTCB relations of power’ (p. 242), whereas ‘[T]he *asambleistas* representing CONAMAQ were from very [internally, TS] similar regions in terms of their ethno-cultural and socio-economic characteristics’, (p. 246). Because the CSUTCB was so internally diverse, it was more prone to political (party) influences and co-optation by the hegemonic party MAS. Thus, CSUTCB representatives more easily gave up demands that had initially been defended. CONAMAQ, on the other hand, ‘constantly renewed and strengthened the identification of its representatives to their organization, which renewed their solidarity and commitment’, (p. 289).

Commenting upon the book, let me first remark that Powęska’s analysis is very detailed, nuanced and cautious. His focus is not so much on how much influence CSUTCB and CONOMAQ exactly had, but on how effective they were in standing their ground and sticking to their principles. The book is well documented and is a pleasure to read. But I must say I still have my doubts about the theoretical point of departure. Could it not be that often heterogeneous and diverse social movements are more effective precisely because they can accommodate a larger variety of sectors and concerns, and therefore bring in more mass? And was, in a way, CSUTCB not more influential because of this –even if it gave up several of its initial demands? After all, CSUTCB was bigger and was closer to the power-centre of MAS. So, even if it dropped some of its demands because MAS wanted this, it nevertheless exerted quite an effect on various decisions of the *Constituyente*. Is sometimes a messier, more loosely organized, or more wavering movement not more effective, at least in terms of real changes brought about, because of its interruptive power or a more advantageous political opportunity structure? Is consistency the same as real impact? Can one really maintain that there is such an unequivocal ‘link between these internal characteristics of the movements and the character of their engagement in the Bolivian constitutional reform process’ (p. 285)? I have my doubts. But Powęska’s book provides a very worthwhile and rich challenge to these doubts.

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– *Movimientos estudiantiles en la historia de América Latina IV*, coordinado por Renate Marsiske. IISUE/UNAM, 2015.

Los movimientos estudiantiles han sido uno de los grandes protagonistas de la historia contemporánea latinoamericana, sobre todo en su dimensión social, cultural y educacional. El libro que a continuación se reseña, el cuarto volumen de una serie que desde 1999 coordina la investigadora Renate Marsiske, transita por algunos de los principales nudos críticos que vienen dando forma a este campo historiográfico.

Esta obra, conformada por nueve trabajos –parte de los cuales fueron presentados en el trigésimo Congreso Internacional de Americanistas que se llevó a cabo en Ciudad de México el año 2009–, se divide en dos secciones. En la primera se profundiza en el estudio de las dirigencias estudiantiles de Argentina, México y Brasil durante la primera mitad del siglo XX. En la segunda, en tanto, se incluyen trabajos que analizan las relaciones entre movimiento estudiantil, política y poder, ejercicio respaldado en estudios de movilizaciones puntuales en Argentina, Colombia, Chile y México.

En la primera parte del libro sobresalen dos textos destinados a investigar la realidad de uno los países que, debido a sus dimensiones y al factor lingüístico, se comprende como uno de los que más dificultades ha tenido para integrarse a la gran familia latinoamericana, Brasil. En uno Otávio Luiz Machado ofrece un panorama general de lo que han sido los movimientos estudiantiles brasileños durante todo el siglo XX, en otro Ellen Spielmann se sumerge en una obra de teatro ambientada en el mundo estudiantil paulista de 1968 para escudriñar en las preguntas que en ese entonces dinamizaban la lucha contra la dictadura. Esta sección, además, se completa con dos trabajos que exploran las complejidades de la dirigencia estudiantil. Uno, el de Renate Marsiske, sigue el derrotero de los estudiantes argentinos que encabezaron el movimiento de 1918. Otro, el de Miguel Ángel Gutiérrez López, se adentra en la Universidad Michoacana de la década de 1930 para estudiar cómo su estudiantado fue involucrándose en el gobierno de Lázaro Cárdenas.

En la segunda parte del libro destacan tanto el trabajo de Pablo Toro Blanco sobre la Federación de Centros de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile (FECECH), una de las organizaciones con que la dictadura presidida por Augusto Pinochet pretendió controlar al estudiantado chileno, como el capítulo de Jaime Pensado sobre el movimiento del estudiantado politécnico en 1956, uno de los menos explorados del México contemporáneo. Componen esta sección también los capítulos de Álvaro Acevedo Tarazona sobre las posibilidades que otorgan la historia y la memoria para entender el movimiento colombiano de 1968, el de María Cristina Vera de Flasch sobre las luchas que en las décadas de 1970 y 1980 dieron forma a la resistencia estudiantil a la dictadura de Videla y el de Sebastián Garrido de la Sierra sobre los dispares destinos que tuvieron algunos movimientos estudiantiles mexicanos en las últimas décadas del siglo XX.

Desde una perspectiva crítica se evalúa que el objetivo del libro, contribuir a la problematización del accionar de las dirigencias estudiantiles y de los vínculos entre los movimientos estudiantiles y la política durante la segunda mitad del siglo XX, fue cumplido a cabalidad, sobre todo si se considera que esta pretensión es más un horizonte que una meta propiamente tal. Con otras palabras, el texto sí se comprende como una invitación a que otros/as analistas se sumerjan en estos fenómenos y sí da herramientas para incentivar diálogos futuros que permitan construir comprensiones más integrales sobre estas materias.

A escasos años de 2018, fecha en que se conmemorarán momentos claves para los movimientos estudiantiles latinoamericanos – los cien años de la Reforma de Córdoba y los cincuenta años de los sucesos de México, Brasil y Uruguay, entre otros –, los esfuerzos por construir modelos de interpretación capaces de tornar comprensibles eventos que coexisten en un mismo espacio y tiempo se hacen cada vez más necesarios. Ya es hora de que los materiales que hoy más abundan en el abordaje de estos asuntos, las crónicas, las cronologías y los testimonios, sean complementados con análisis comparativos e interpretaciones que otorguen nuevos puntos de vistas sobre fenómenos que, todo indica, seguirán sucediéndose en los suelos latinoamericanos. Con diferentes posicionamientos teóricos, disímiles pretensiones y dispares alcances, cada uno de los trabajos consignados en este libro contribuye, a su manera, a ir dando cuerpo a estos desafíos. La tarea, por tanto, es tejer estos puentes que permitan relacionar el accionar de las dirigencias y de los movimientos para, de esta manera, contribuir a que los actores que dan vida a estos fenómenos se comprendan como parte de una rica tradición que, como tal, ha sabido de duras derrotas pero, también, de valiosas conquistas.

Andrés Donoso Romo, Universidad de Playa Ancha

– *El corazón de los libros, Alzate y Bartolache: Lectores y escritores novohispanos (S. XVIII)*, by Mauricio Sánchez Menchero, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades, 2012.

El corazón de los libros is a collection of three studies written by two authors that investigates transmission and adoption processes of knowledge in New Spain in the late eighteenth century. The volume offers a look into the world of production of scientific knowledge and of global circulation of knowledge. This ‘colonial’ knowledge had previously been thought to depend entirely on metropolitan sources and lacking new ideas. The libraries considered in this study are of various origins: some big collections host a great variety of topics while other libraries covered mostly medical subjects. Different smaller collections are also considered. The study focuses on two book collectors and scientists. The first is José Ignacio Bartolache (1732-1783), physician and public

advisor in Mexico. The second is José Antonio Alzate (1737-1799), a man of science, a translator, a publisher and author of numerous scientific treatises. The first chapter introduces the social background. The second chapter, written by Angélica Morales, gives an insight into traditions and disputes in botany in the second half of the eighteenth century. The last chapter addresses one special transmission of knowledge by Herman Boerhaave, considerably present in library collections of that period. An annex gives a very useful overview of the library collections per issue and to some extent the books are numbered. A bibliography that does not distinguish between 'source' and secondary literature as well as an index of names and places completes the book.

Sánchez Menchero – it should be underlined here that he presents a collective and interdisciplinary work – investigates the libraries of both men, their scientific writings, their correspondences and the impact their publications and private writings had on the scientific community in Mexico and abroad. Sánchez Menchero and Morales present inquiries into the question how adaptation processes and conditions of teaching locally affected the formation of knowledge in Mexico during the second half of the eighteenth century. The study uses new methodologies which are presented in the first chapter, for instance, combining a biographical approach with history of science, history of book-collections and of medicine.

Sánchez Menchero discusses the social background of José Ignacio Bartolache and José Antonio Alzate to illustrate the conditions under which they became learned people, their professional development in science, and their scientific methodologies in comparison to other young men of their generation. This context was shaped by the lack of printed books, the inquisition, as well as the language of lecture: both men translated actively from Latin, Greek, French and English into Spanish in order to improve their understanding of the studied texts. Furthermore, Bartolache's and Alzate's main interests were formed not only by lecturing but also by the possibilities of carrying out the acquired theoretical and medical knowledge, and gaining further knowledge by practice. Thus, books were meant to relate to the scientific instruments they procured or built.

A focused analysis of the library of Alzate is undertaken by Angélica Morales in the second chapter. She positions this collection in the standard European history of knowledge with some American particularities, such as the importance of the botanist Francisco Hernández. Alzate was critical of the systematization of plants developed by Carl Linnaeus. The Mexican doctor judged it difficult to combine the predominantly European model with local knowledge traditions. Alzate defended a system of botanical and medical knowledge that was opposed to the newly arising system of northern European knowledge. This was partly due to different systems of taxonomy of plants: Alzate based taxonomy on the medical use of plants, not on sexuality.

The third chapter addresses the role that the reception of Herman Boerhaave played in Alzate's and Bartolache's scientific reasoning. Menchero states

that Alzate shared the Dutch humanist's belief in the importance of empirical studies in medical questions, without often referring to the 'modern Hippocrates'. Bartolache, instead, alluded more extensively to Boerhaave as an example of modern medicine that evolved with research, in contrast to the Spanish Benito Jerónimo Feijoo. Bartolache underlined above all the importance of teaching medicine and stressed the need to follow the development of medicine in European countries other than Spain. But, as Sánchez Menchero recognizes, further investigation is needed to verify, for example, if other Mexican erudite men backed Bartolache's opinion. It would be important to know which edition or translation of Boerhaave the Mexican scientists used for their own studies.

Disappointingly, the conclusion does not add any new information or conclusive remarks, but very generally positions the discussed case studies in a broad field of cultural history, ranging from Certeau to Bahtin. As with the introduction, it repeatedly stresses the need for further interdisciplinary investigation on subjects of that kind, without making any further proposals of what such an investigation should or could look like. More instructive conclusions could have been drawn as to how different fields of history – history of science, social and political history, colonial history, histories of different geographical specializations – as well as book studies, medicine or botany can interact. There are two important lessons that can be learned from the study *El corazón de los libros*: First, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at scientific collections, publications and discussions in the Spanish colonies. Second, the interdisciplinary perspective allows for the discovery of local traditions in scientific knowledge production, against an assumption of mere adaptation of European knowledge.

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– *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*, by Ana María Ochoa Gautier. Duke University Press, 2014.

¿Cómo interpretamos la experiencia sonora? ¿Cómo decidimos si lo que escuchamos es un sonido humano? ¿Si es parte de la naturaleza o creado por la cultura? ¿Cómo sabemos si una palabra está bien pronunciada? Más que un acto 'natural', escuchar implica un conjunto de conocimientos a través de los cuáles interpretamos, categorizamos y jerarquizamos. *Aurality* explora cómo el siglo XIX colombiano creó conocimiento sobre la experiencia de oír. Analiza cómo se inscriben los sonidos y las voces humanas en un sistema político altamente jerarquizado, como el formado en Latinoamérica después de la independencia. Más aún, muestra cómo este conocimiento sobre lo acústico, forjó modos de definir quién es una persona, y quiénes – y en qué términos – hacían parte de la nación.

Ochoa emprende un exhaustivo examen del archivo colombiano, que inicia en los primeros años del siglo XIX, analizando las descripciones de Humboldt sobre los sonidos producidos por los bogas – los remeros de las embarcaciones dedicadas a trasportar a los viajeros desde los puertos marítimos del Caribe hacia las andinas ciudades del interior. Las vocalizaciones de estos hombres de ascendencia africana dedicados a navegar el río Magdalena, fascinaron a europeos y criollos, quienes con frecuencia las describían como sonidos animales. Para entender este choque entre el conocimiento sonoro de los bogas y los viajeros, Ochoa nos sitúa en un escenario más amplio: el de los debates ilustrados y románticos sobre los límites entre civilización y cultura, mostrándonos cómo estos encuentros coloniales dieron forma a un cuerpo de conocimientos que pervive en la antropología, la musicología y el folklore.

Esta preocupación temprana por las voces de los bogas es consistente con un interés de los letrados de la segunda mitad de siglo por registrar los cantos populares de la nación. Ochoa analiza los esfuerzos del intelectual conservador José María Vergara por formar un canon de las canciones populares, que sirviera como fundamento a una literatura nacional, inscribiendo este repertorio en un registro literario, más que en uno musical. Con agudeza, muestra cómo Vergara reduce la diversidad de expresiones culturales a una serie fija de tipos regionales. El ‘tipo’ como un referente a la vez racial y geográfico es central para los intelectuales decimonónicos latinoamericanos tanto en las artes visuales (Pancho Fierro, Ramón Torres Méndez) como en la literatura (Eugenio Díaz, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano), y en el caso colombiano, es la piedra angular de un proyecto de literatura nacional, costumbrista y conservadora, aspecto que ha sido estudiado en los últimos años por autores como Edna Von der Walde y Julio Arias Vanegas. Ochoa va más allá para mostrarnos cómo este procedimiento intelectual permeó el trabajo de los folkloristas del siglo XX, que repitieron el esquema tipológico de Vergara. Más aún, nos muestra que la noción de tipo no sólo impactó la producción literaria y visual, sino también la producción ‘aural’ sobre la nación (registro de cantos populares, acentos regionales, etc.).

Uno de los mayores méritos de *Aurality* es su esfuerzo por ofrecernos un archivo del siglo XIX que no se restrinja a los materiales hegemónicos. Así, Ochoa emprende el estudio del poeta, traductor e intelectual afrodescendiente Candelario Obeso, quien en su poesía desarrolla un sistema original de inscripción escrita de las voces de los campesinos caribeños colombianos. Es un intento de ingresar en la ciudad letrada que, por su idoneidad para escuchar las voces caribeñas, separa a Obeso de cualquier otro intelectual, ampliando su experiencia poética desde la ‘oralidad’ hacia el más complejo campo de la ‘auralidad’, en el que está en juego no solo la inscripción de la voz caribeña en un sistema escrito, sino la capacidad de Obeso de oír los sonidos del habla caribeña, imperceptibles para los miembros andinos de la ciudad letrada. Se trata de una dicotomía más específica que aquella entre oralidad y escritura, pues am-

plía la noción de voz para incluir no sólo las palabras sino también los sonidos más abstractos que escapan al rígido sistema de notación hegémónico.

Ochoa presenta un escenario fluido, en el cual los proyectos de la élite conservadora chocan, a veces incluso con miembros ilustres de la ciudad letrada como Jorge Isaacs, el famoso escritor de *Maria*. Isaacs cuestiona el modelo teológico de conocimiento de las lenguas indígenas sostenido por los misioneros, desautorizándolo, proponiendo un nuevo acercamiento secular que privilegia la experiencia y el contacto directo. Su planteamiento desencadena la ira del lingüista y político Miguel Antonio Caro, figura clave en la formación de una nación conservadora y católica a finales del siglo. Si bien la relación entre este proyecto político y la configuración de un corpus de conocimiento lingüístico sobre el español ha sido antes estudiada, Ochoa profundiza en el control de la pronunciación a través de la ortografía y la etimología. Esta generación de intelectuales temía la fragmentación del español debido a la diversidad de acentos y pronunciaciones, y para inmunizarlo reforzaron los sistemas de vigilancia de la lengua, permitiendo la inscripción de 'otras' voces, aunque bajo el estricto control de las reglas ortográficas. Este aspecto permite reflexionar sobre el concepto mismo de 'voz' como sujeto político de la nación, analizando el proceso de 'inmunización' de aquellas voces, que aunque hacen parte del repertorio de la nación, participan políticamente en ella sólo de manera atenuada.

Aurality cuestiona las lógicas binarias que oponen escucha/vista, oralidad/escritura, naturaleza/cultura, subalternidad/hegemonía, tradición/modernidad. Más que cronológico, es un libro genealógico y transdisciplinar sobre el siglo XIX colombiano. Por su sofisticación conceptual y riqueza de fuentes, no resulta fácil de leer. Pero este es uno de sus logros: es vez de simplificar, complejiza la diversidad de proyectos y actores del panorama poscolonial colombiano. Ciertamente se necesitan más estudios como este para entender la complejidad de la experiencia latinoamericana.

Mercedes López Rodríguez, University of South Carolina

– *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, by James E. Sanders. Duke University Press, 2014.

This book presents an erudite and rich analysis on the early history of the Latin American republics (although mainly focused on Colombia and Mexico). Sanders argues that early Latin American republicanism – what he calls 'American republican modernity' – was a genuine and authentic attempt to create an inclusive and original democracy. This attempt has, from the late nineteenth century onwards, been obscured and made invisible by Latin American intellectuals and politicians, on the one hand, and by twentieth century historiography, on the other. In its repetitive and urgent insistence on this point, his book resembles Carlos Forment's book of 2003, which tried to rescue the

humanist tradition in the region by similarly focusing on the early Latin American republics.

Sanders believes that Latin American democratic republicanism in many ways preceded and inspired Western democratic ideas and practices. At the end of his book, defending himself against potential criticism that he is exaggerating his point, Sanders writes (p. 235): 'I am arguing that the dependence of Europe and the United States on Latin America for the survival and maturation of democratic political culture in the nineteenth century has not been sufficiently acknowledged'. In a relatively short Introduction, Sanders sets the agenda of his book. He takes the execution of Austrian emperor Maximilian in Mexico in 1867 as point of departure: '[T]he bullets cut down not just a man but the very idea that civilization and modernity emanated from Europe' (p. 2). The Latin American republican consciousness, which expressed itself in the execution, challenged the primacy of Europe as the imperial and economic centre for dictating the future. Sanders suggests that this early consciousness contained democratic and inclusive elements (especially in terms of race) that would later be lost when U.S. imperialism and 'Western industrial modernity' took hold of the continent.

Sanders' book is chronologically composed around seven chapters that, although somewhat loosely connected, are all meant to sustain his main argument. He starts with the so-called Garibaldinos, the troops of the Italian nationalist Giuseppe, 'José', Garibaldi who was exiled to Uruguay in 1842 and fought for the beleaguered Colorado Party in Montevideo. These Garibaldinos were a mix of foreigners and slaves who aspired after freedom and citizenship. Sanders sees their fight as the symbolic battle 'between tyranny and besieged liberty and independence' (p. 28). In the second erudite chapter of his book, Sanders analyses the political and ideological debates which emerged in Latin America after Independence. He shows the rich variety of ideas on freedom, democracy and modernity in Latin America which demonstrated how 'subalterns were trying to find a voice' (p. 57). Next, he focuses on the history of the San Patricio Battalion, which fought the U.S. during the Mexican War of 1846-48. This War seriously tested the democratic ideals of the early republics, but did not alter them in any meaningful way.

Chapter 4 may be considered the lynchpin of the book. It is a very long (55 pages) analysis of the popular and subaltern attempts to influence Latin American republican modernity and to appropriate its ideas of citizenship. Chapter 5 focuses on the Chilean intellectual, Francisco Bilbao who, according to Sanders, more than any other single writer embodied the spirit of American republican modernity. The race question takes pride of place in chapter 6 which focuses on David Peña who became a famous representative of the Afro-Colombian population and embodied something that Sanders cautiously calls 'black liberalism'. With his death in 1877 the republican project with its democratic and inclusive promises ceded 'pride of place to visions of civilization explicitly white, European, and premised on limited citizenship' (p. 175). This

‘collapse’ is the object of Sanders’ last empirical chapter. He shows how the ascent to power by Porfirio Diaz in 1876 was symbolic for a new political and economic project based on authoritarian capitalism and exclusion.

There is much to say for Sanders’ insistence on a viable and resistant republican modernity in Latin America, which was sadly destroyed by late nineteenth century capitalism and exclusive authoritarianism. His examples are both interesting and eminently readable. At the same time, they provoke some crucial questions. The most important one is his tendency to see republican modernity as contained in time, between the 1840s and 1870s. Would it not be much more convincing to see republican modernity as one of the ideological tendencies characterizing Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth century? This would have allowed him to show the continuity between nineteenth century republican modernity and early twentieth century *indigenismo*, popular nationalism or socialism in Latin America. To me, this continuity of democratic republicanism is one of the most interesting elements in Latin American political history. At the same time, and this is my second commentary, it would have forced Sanders to place his examples in the context of already existing exclusionary and authoritarian projects in the nineteenth century.

All in all, his choice of Mexico and Colombia, shortly legitimized on p. 19, seems to colour his analysis more than Sanders would like to admit. The *Cono Sur*, for example, was less directly influenced by U.S. imperialism and more connected to Europe and seems to have gone through a different development. In a different way, the same is true for the countries in Central America and the Andes, where the large indigenous presence strongly coloured the debates on inclusion and democracy. It seems difficult to talk about a progressive republican modernity in countries like Peru or Bolivia. So, just as the book by Carlos Forment that I reviewed in this same journal (No. 79, October 2005, pp. 148-50), Sanders’ book presents many thought-provoking ideas and brilliant insights, but in the end fails to convince the reader. This is unfortunate because I think that both books point at genuine and authentic elements of Latin American political culture.

Michiel Baud, CEDLA & University of Amsterdam

Reference

Forment, C. (2003). *Democracy in Latin America, 1760-1900* (Vol. 1). University of Chicago Press.

– Mexico’s *Once and Future Revolution: Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule since the Late Nineteenth Century*, by Gilbert M. Joseph and Jürgen Buchenau. Duke University Press, 2013.

Studies about the Mexican Revolution are abundant. Nevertheless, this one is a fine textbook about Mexico and the Mexican Revolution, covering its historical context and its legacy up to the present. Gilbert and Buchenau extended the

scope of the book to analyse ‘Mexico’s “long twentieth century”, from the origins of Porfirio Diaz’s liberal oligarchic regime in 1876 through the neoliberalism of the present day’ (pp. 2-3). The authors maintain a chronological order of chapters fitted in successive periods: Porfirian Modernization and its Costs (1876-1911), The Revolution (1910-1920, two chapters), Forging and Contesting a New Nation (1920-1932), Resurrecting and Incorporating the Revolution (1932-1940), The ‘Perfect Dictatorship’ (a term coined by Vargas Llosa, 1940-1968), and The Embers of the Revolution (1968-2000). The introductory chapter is conceptual as is the concluding chapter.

Although formally a history book, Gilbert and Buchenau also touch with elegance the realm of the social sciences, for instance when they sketch the first and second phase of the Porfiriato and explain the evolution of a broad class alliance against the aged dictator, when ‘Mexican workers came to their nation as “mother to gringos and stepmother to Mexicans”’, (p. 26). They give concise but evocative portraits of all the principal political actors in the book: Madero, Zapata, Villa, Huerta, Carranza, Obregón, Calles and Cárdenas, and most of their successors. But the book is not only an analysis of conflicts, alliances and pacts between generals, presidents, regional economic and political elites, and warlords. In addition to a fascinating tale of the unwinding and sometimes contradictory course of the Revolution, the sometimes chaotic scenarios of the ‘many Mexico’s’, and the violence and destruction, both authors also give attention to underlying social processes, the formation of the peasant armies, the role of the women fighters, the emergence of social claims within the political turmoil.

Modernization, repression and reforms (especially those of Cárdenas), the forging of a post-war nation and the cultural construction of the Mexicanidad and the Revolutionary Family (the propagated martyrdom of five major leaders, ‘all of whom had spent a good deal of time fighting one another’, p. 111), economic growth and redistribution of land and opportunities, and of course the creation of the Party (after several name changes, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional) are the larger processes described in the chapter six. The next chapter is dedicated to the functioning of the PRI with its formidable capacity to adapt, innovate, but also ‘with an array of corporatist and regional mechanisms of control.... In the process, grassroots dynamics and social movements challenged the form and function of centralized rule and helped shape the ways the PRI modified its policies and positions’ (p. 150).

Chapter eight describes the demise of the PRI, the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968, the bankruptcy in 1982, the corruption during the sexenio of De la Madrid, the earthquake of 1985 followed by government ineptitude, the privatizations under Salinas, Mexico’s incorporation in the NAFTA, the emerging guerrilla movement of the EZLN in 1994, and the electoral defeat in 2000.

This is a well-written book by two authors with a deep knowledge and a long academic record of publishing on Mexico. One of the benefits of this publication is that in each of the nine chapters, Gilbert and Buchenau conceptual-

ize and discuss the most current ideas and interpretations of historians and social scientists on the Mexican Revolution (they even debate the upper case or lower case of 'revolution'). Thus, the text is both a perfect one volume history of the country and an overview of the academic debate on Mexico.

Dirk Kruijt, Utrecht University

– *The Great Depression in Latin America*, coordinado por Paulo Drinot and Alan Knight. Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2014.

A partir de las enseñanzas y prescripciones de la primera CEPAL/ECLA, la crisis de 1929 y la depresión de los años 30 del siglo XX fueron vistas durante un cierto tiempo como un clivaje decisivo en la historia de América Latina. Posteriormente, la indispensable compilación de Rosemary Thorp (1984), que incluía lo que luego se transformó en un clásico, el trabajo de Carlos Díaz Alejandro sobre las distintas reacciones de los estados latinoamericanos frente a la crisis y la depresión, a la que se sumaron los estudios de Victor Bulmer-Thomas (1994), vinieron a cambiar ese paradigma, acentuando las continuidades, y como consecuencia disminuyendo las diferencias en las condiciones económicas que presentaba la región entre la década de 1920 y las correspondientes a los años posteriores a la crisis. Condiciones que a su vez serían las que permitieron una recuperación más rápida de las economías latinoamericanas de la que lograron algunas de las regiones centrales de la economía mundial.

En la compilación que nos ocupa, y que de alguna manera parte de este segundo paradigma, el lector se encontrará con ocho artículos sobre distintos aspectos de la depresión en América Latina a los que se suman una introducción escrita por Paulo Drinot y un balance general de la situación en toda la región debido a Alan Knight, originados en un seminario que tuvo lugar en la *School of Advanced Study, University of London* en 2011. Se trata de una muy necesaria revisión de los efectos 'nunca inexorables ni directos', en palabras de Paulo Drinot, de la depresión de los años 30 en varios países de América Latina y en la región en general.

Los artículos específicos de este libro tienen que ver con las heterogéneas situaciones y los diversos problemas que atravesaron varios países latinoamericanos. Sobre la Argentina, Roy Hora examina los efectos de la depresión entre los trabajadores y las clases medias y su impacto en las características del primer peronismo. Le sigue un trabajo de Ángela Vergara sobre los trabajadores chilenos que enfatiza cómo la experiencia de la desocupación, en especial en las salitreras del norte, y el conflicto consiguiente marcó por largo tiempo la política del país. Los cambios en Brasil entre 1930 y 1945 son estudiados por Joel Wolfe quien encuentra que las políticas de cooptación de Vargas hacia los sectores obreros fueron menos efectivas que lo habitualmente aceptado, aunque

percibe en este período los orígenes del desarrollismo brasileño. En ‘La gran depresión en el Perú’, Paulo Drinot y Carlos Contreras analizan centralmente las políticas ideadas desde el estado para atemperar la situación de los sectores populares afectados. Luego, en un artículo de Marcelo Bucheli y Luis Felipe Sáenz se examinan las relaciones entre las élites domésticas, las corporaciones multinacionales y las políticas de exportación en Colombia. Sigue un examen de la transición política en Venezuela, realmente iniciada con la muerte de Juan Vicente Gómez en 1935, debido a Doug Yarrington y un análisis de la relación entre los regímenes militares que se apoyaban en sectores indígenas para enfrentar las amenazas de la izquierda en América Central, por Jeffrey L. Gould. Por su parte, Alan Knight se ocupa de estudiar el carácter y las consecuencias de la depresión en México, donde Cárdenas intentaba cumplir con algunos postulados revolucionarios que afectaban a campesinos y trabajadores urbanos. Finalmente, Gilliam McGillivray sigue las relaciones entre la depresión, el imperialismo y las revoluciones en Cuba, centrándose en las formas en las que los trabajadores, en particular los del azúcar, fueron afectados y sus efectos en la revolución de 1933. El libro concluye con un balance, también a cargo de Alan Knight que se interroga sobre las características y consecuencias de la depresión en términos de la economía, los cambios en el corto y en el largo plazo y también sobre sus consecuencias sociales.

Nos encontramos frente a un libro tan atractivo como desigual. Atractivo porque algunos de los autores de los artículos apuntan a características específicas o a la experiencia de actores también específicos durante la década de 1930, que en algunos casos se extiende a la de 1940, que no siempre han recibido la atención debida, aunque es de notar la predominante referencia a trabajos en inglés y la escasa atención a veces prestada a alguna bibliografía en español. El libro es también desigual como lo muestra el balance encomendado a Alan Knight, quien resume los efectos económicos y políticos de la depresión sin enfatizar lo que los trabajos incluidos tienen de más atractivo: el análisis de la experiencia de los actores. Desde esta perspectiva es también difícil compartir la idea final del libro basada en una frase ‘un tanto exagerada’ de Tom Payne y según la cual las crisis ‘*have their uses: they produce as much good as hurt*’. Para quien esto escribe, testigo involuntario de varias crisis argentinas y en particular de la de 2001, es difícil advertir lo bueno que, sin duda, debe haber en ellas.

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– *Enhancing Democracy. Public Policies and Citizen Participation in Chile*, by Gonzalo Delamaza, CEDLA Latin America Studies 104, Berghahn Books, 2014.

The period following the end of the military dictatorship in Chile has given rise to a series of studies that aim to describe and analyse the transition of the political and social scenario from different angles. Gonzalo Delamaza's book is part of a line of investigation on Chilean redemocratization that examines the links between civil society and the State, as well as the way in which said relations turned into factors for the development of both the concept and practice of governance in post-dictatorial Chile. More specifically, Delamaza thoroughly analyses the role of public policies, including the transformations they have undergone and the opportunities they have created for civil society in the transitional scenario. According to his investigation, social politics were the main tool used by the coalition governments to distantiate themselves from the military dictatorship and transform the inherited situation.

In conceptual terms, the book focuses on the problem of how democratic governance is created and the way in which this relates to and, at the same time, defines a type of citizenship and different ways of participation. The author, however, goes beyond the concept of governance itself to a wider discussion about the construction of democracy in Chile after the military regime. In empirical terms, the book concentrates on the public policies deployed by democratic administrations as a way of building said governance, as well as the link between the state and civil society during the coalition governments. To this end, the author carries out an extensive and exhaustive analysis that aims to support the study's main hypothesis: that the Chilean transition's achievements in economic and political terms did not have a positive correlation with strengthening civil society, but rather that the democratizing potential of civil society was limited by a transitional context that adopted a political elitist model and a restricted citizen participation.

In the first chapter, the Delamaza explains and connects the concepts of governance, public policies and social participation, and presents the different institutional forms of participation in the public policy agenda. Then, in the second section, he describes the history, political culture, state models and practices and the way in which, in his opinion, a series of unfavourable conditions for social participation had been defined and consolidated since the classic socio-political model from the middle of the twentieth century. The analysis continues with a top-down examination of state politics towards civil society, revealing that these are characterized by their heterogeneity and a tendency towards depoliticization. The way in which, through participation, civil society has managed to establish its demands is the topic of the bottom-up focus developed in the fourth chapter, which shows its lesser influence, attributed both to the structural weaknesses of civil society and the nature of its presence in public policy cycles. In the last chapter, the author investigates the links of a political elite which emerged in the dictatorial period but which suffered im-

portant transformations once it was integrated into the state system from the nineties onwards, consolidating itself as a powerful group that was hardly changed and not particularly diverse. In methodological terms, the author's use of different analytical tools is noteworthy: bibliographical and historical, going through the analysis of public policy content, quantitative observations and even a career path analysis.

As a result, the book provides a valuable, complete and careful analysis and becomes an obligatory reference tool for those investigating the dynamics of Chilean civil society and public policies with a focus on the former, as well as for those interested in the trajectory and links of the state with civil society in the country in the last few decades. Despite its focus on Chile, Delamaza's study will not only interest those studying this country, since his theoretical and methodological approaches could be also very useful for investigators looking to study in-depth democratization processes, democracy, governance, public policies and social and political dynamics in general. The book takes part in a wider debate on the dispute of the construction of democracy, not just in Chile but also in the rest of Latin America and, as such, is connected to the global problems of inclusion, different ways and levels of participation and also political representation.

It might have been relevant to explore in greater depth the topic of formal participation through institutional channels *vis-à-vis* the participation that is expressed through social movements. The author could have questioned whether a different trajectory for democratization, another paradigm for governance or a different definition of public policy would have had the capacity to anticipate or better channel the informal demonstrations and social movements that emerged in 2006 and again in 2011. In the same way, the problem of Chilean civil society's disposition towards participation could have been developed further. In the case of Chile, the question would be whether it is actually viable or possible to generate effective and transversal forms of institutional participation when, according to the 2015 PNUD Chile report, Chilean civil society demands changes but is not willing to assume their costs or get involved in them. It is worth asking, then, what role participative public policies play and what space they occupy, as well as what type of construction of democracy takes place in this scenario.

Camila Jara Ibarra, Leiden University

– *Critical Interventions in Caribbean Politics and Theory*, by Brian Meeks, University Press of Mississippi, 2014.

This book consists of 14 essays written by Brian Meeks since the early 2000s. In its preface, Meeks states that the essays share being part of 'an extended conversation ... with colleagues and friends ... concerning the course of radi-

cal movements of the 1970s as well as the possible paths for political and social change in the Caribbean since those momentous times' (p. vii). All essays indeed breathe these dialogues and Meeks' strong engagement with them. The book is built up in three sections. The first presents three essays on Caribbean theoretical debates. The first two focus on philosophical approaches of the 1970s Caribbean left (Chapter 1) and Afro-Caribbean thought (Chapter 2) emphasizing the absence of popular culture and popular philosophical constructs in both. Chapter 3 reflects on a debate between Meeks and Watson on Meeks' rereading of C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins*. It discusses the manner of Watson's critiquing as an example of (inadequate) Caribbean radical political praxis.

The second section presents essays on The University of the West Indies, emphasizing the need to nurture the university as place of free thought; The Black Power Movement, questioning the rise and fall of the movement; on Lloyd Best, exploring and explaining roads not taken in terms of Best's absence in actual politics as opposed to his contribution to Caribbean thought; popular perceptions of Cuba in Jamaica, arguing that the idea of Cuba as a locus of resistance is the basis of this; and finally on Grenada, carefully deconstructing theories on the built-up to the October 1983 leadership crisis and killing of prime-minister Maurice Bishop and arguing that failed attempts to 'deepen' democracy were the reason. The final section presents five essays in which Meeks' idea of 'hegemonic dissolution', captured by his statement that '[t]he social bloc in charge of [Jamaican] society is no longer ruling over a people convinced of its social superiority and its inherent right to "run things"' (p. 175) is centre stage and linked to various events in Jamaica and to possible future scenarios. All five papers include a section on the future sketching of social, economic and political avenues for Jamaica away from strong inequalities and divisions, and neo-liberal economic dependencies, to an equal, inclusive democratic society.

Meeks is able to present very complex theoretical and philosophical matters in accessible writing and he has a style that moves seemingly easy from the level of 'the everyday' to high levels of theoretical abstraction and back again. This, and his clearly extensive scholarship in and strong personal engagement with Caribbean politics and society make for great, informative and sometimes evocative reading. In this regard, particular outstanding are the essays 'Arguments within What's left of the Left' (Chapter 3), on Grenada (Chapter 9) and, on the public uproar and military intervention surrounding the arrest and extradition of Christopher Coke, alias Dudus (Chapter 13).

Despite the quality of the individual essays, I have two (minor) issues of concern regarding the composition and outreach of the collection. The first concerns the goal and potential impact of the book. Meeks (again in the preface) rightfully emphasizes the need for new radical and critical approaches to Caribbean theory and expresses the hope that this book will contribute to both reflection on the past and stimulating new debates that are necessary for the

‘dreaming, imagining and making of a better future’ (p. xi) . Despite the richness of the various essays, I was, after reading the last chapter, a bit disappointed. I missed a concluding essay attempting to bring them all together in a systematic manner, advancing its (shared) conclusions and as such open up the floor for the aforementioned new debates and dialogues. It may not have been Meeks’ direct aim to do so but it would have been a very valuable addition to the book.

The second concern refers to the outreach of the book. Despite the fact that the book title refers to *Caribbean* politics, it is dominated by the social-political trajectories of a few Anglophone Caribbean states, i.e. Jamaica, Grenada and to a lesser extent Trinidad and Tobago. The Cuban chapter is an exception but is still strongly linked to Jamaica. While most chapters present examples from other (mostly Anglophone) Caribbean countries and Meeks emphasizes the relevance of specific arguments for the larger Caribbean, he does not do full justice to Caribbean diversity in his analysis and presentation of theories, questions and ways forward. This is understandable from the fact that, despite Meeks’ engagement with and interest for the wider Caribbean, his scholarly focus is largely on Jamaica and Grenada. Yet, it does leave some caveats in the building of a broad Caribbean argument. Meeks’ moving from the University of the West Indies Mona campus to Brown University as the chair of the Africana Studies department may just be the right place to enrich his eclectic and prominent scholarship through comprehensive inclusion of social-political trajectories of nations and territories from the wider Anglophone, Francophone, Spanish and Dutch speaking Caribbean.

Hebe Verrest, University of Amsterdam

– *Black Power in the Caribbean*, edited by Kate Quinn. University Press of Florida, 2014.

Black Power in the Caribbean, edited by Kate Quinn, provides the first comprehensive and regional look at the legacies of Black Power throughout the Anglophone Caribbean. The outcome of a series of conferences designed to commemorate significant milestones, such as the 40th anniversary of the February Revolution in Trinidad, and to interrogate the transnational dimensions of Black Power, the volume revisits and reassesses specific iterations of Black Power in a range of Caribbean territories, and also directs our attention across territories in order to gain insights into their political and cultural effects. The volume appears at a juncture when a number of publications and conferences – such as the one hosted at the University of Pittsburgh in 2009 commemorating significant anniversaries of the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenadian Revolutions – are asking us to think through what Revolution might mean today, a moment when we are attempting to re-imagine what collective struggle could look like within the context of the neoliberal morass of doubt, uncertainty, and individu-

alism. In line with calls to investigate intra-left relations of conflict and collaboration, and in tandem with explorations of what sovereignty looks like in the non-independent Caribbean, the volume encourages us to consider both the material strategies that were successful, and the lasting affective dimensions of the movement in its various iterations.

Divided into two sections – one addressing the ‘big four’ independent Caribbean nations (Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, and Guyana), and the other examining those territories under various forms of colonialism (Antigua and Barbuda, Bermuda, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Dutch Caribbean) – the volume reviews and reconsiders several better known Black Power figures and events, and restores those lesser known to the canon. In seeking to understand what ‘Black Power’ meant in different Caribbean contexts, its commonalities and differences throughout the region, and its relationship to global events, contributors to the volume address the reluctance or inability of nationalist governments to make meaningful changes with regards to black liberation, both culturally and politically. The main themes outlined in the introduction, but more specifically parsed throughout the chapters, are as follows: 1) Black Power in the Caribbean did not put forward a singular and unified ideology but was heterogeneous; 2) because the movements rooted their analysis of black disenfranchisement in the histories of slavery, imperialism, and capitalist underdevelopment, proponents of Black Power conjoined analyses of race and class; 3) Black Power emerged in the context of both deepening American imperialism and global anti-imperial and non-aligned movements, and therefore developed a definition of blackness that included all non-whites (though this was sometimes and in some places more successful than others); 4) responses to the movement by governments were as diverse as the strategies pursued by activists, and ranged from violent repression to accommodation (and sometimes, co-optation); and finally, 5) the expression and dissemination of Black Power ideas and struggles often occurred through popular cultural forms, with musicians playing a large role in the movement, particularly in Jamaica.

Juxtaposing the independent and non-independent Caribbean has a number of important effects, one of which is the opportunity to consider how the framing of Black Power struggles across the territories may have made a difference in relation to their success. In several instances, but perhaps most clearly in Oostindie’s analysis of Black Power in the Dutch Caribbean, we see the importance of thinking through the relationships between labour struggles and Black Power struggles. And comparing responses to the guerrilla insurgencies in Trinidad and Tobago and Bermuda sheds some light upon the different exigencies facing nationalist and colonial states, especially in relation to the extent to which they must accommodate the interests of ‘foreign’ capital.

Black Power in the Caribbean also asks us to think about questions the movement didn’t address as fully as it might have during the period under consideration, and principal among these is gender. Several contributors – Rupert Lewis, Anthony Bogues, Quito Swan, Derrick Hendricks, and Brian Meeks –

make gestures in this direction. These authors show women as central to projects of economic self-determination in Jamaica (Rupert Lewis), to training in military, martial arts, first aid and surveillance in Bermuda (Quito Swan), and to the leadership and grassroots dimensions of the struggle to keep beaches accessible and free (Derrick Hendricks). Yet it is Nigel Westmaas's exegesis of Eusi Kwayana's contributions to Black Power that most suggests a broad-reaching understanding of liberation that includes gender. Westmaas argues that Kwayana consistently critiqued other pan-Africanist articulations for their exclusions, and his analysis in this chapter suggests that Kwayana's understanding of human freedom and equality might help us imagine a more general "queering" of our notions and language of revolution, redistribution, and reparation. Through its analysis of specific iterations of Black Power and authors' interrogations of avenues pursued (and not taken), *Black Power in the Caribbean* offers a critically important contribution to the literature, and will surely spur a much-needed renewal of attention to this era throughout the Caribbean.

Deborah A. Thomas, University of Pennsylvania

– *Rights of Way to Brasília Teimosa: The Politics of Squatter Settlement*, by Charles J. Fortin, Sussex Academic Press, 2014.

This book is about Third World politics and politicians. The reader acquainted with them will feel intimate to Brasília Teimosa in many accounts. Others might sometimes be moved, sometimes cynical. Charles Fortin describes the long and resilient struggle endured by a squatter community located in Recife's prime land shore. Recife, the capital of Pernambuco State in Northeast Brazil, housed about 300,000 souls in the 1930s when this story started. Its metropolitan region grew to 3,000,000 people in the 1970s and is now close to 5.5 million. Notwithstanding such growth pressure combined with spotted gentrification processes, Brasília Teimosa lies in between the city business district and its most expensive neighbourhood. In Fortin's words 'the neighbourhood matters because poor people occupy valuable land in the city. It matters because residents have managed by and large to remain there, not by chance, for over 50 years', (p. xii).

'Stubborn' Brasilia's story is generalizable to Brazil and the South insofar as it is similar to a number of favelas – except for its prime location and land tenure imbroglio. Favelas are always stubborn, be it geographically, geologically or politically. As the reader will discover when reading the book, in 1831 property located along ocean shorelines in Brazil was declared federal public domain; in the 1930s the State of Pernambuco together with Recife's Port Authority acquired the rights of use to the favela land in order to implement a port and an airfield that were never built; in 1953 President Vargas granted the very same rights to the State Fisherman Federation, giving rise to a never ending

quarrel among these two sets of actors and the people who had already arrived there due to the yearly droughts in the hinterlands. At times Brasília Teimosa was the focus of intricate national and international interests, as the Recife political scenario grew more and more communist during the 1950s and 1960s. If national policies seemed more lenient towards favelas and neighbourhood associations beforehand, the military (1964-1985) evicted people from entire favelas, arrested community leaders, local politicians and the communist governor of Pernambuco, while concentrating investments and resources in upper-income neighbourhoods. Brasília Teimosa's land was targeted to house a tourism complex up to the mid-1970s, but technical problems together with right of use issues ended up sending the plan to the shelf. During the military years the famous planner Jaime Lerner designed a plan to promote the removal of the community, which was finally rejected when counteracted by a community-designed plan in the 1980s.

Politicians at all levels and neighbourhood leaders, with few exceptions, took advantage of situations and of people's faith in this neighbourhood. The military president of the country paid himself a visit to the community in order to give land titles to residents – which were later proved to be false. But resilience seems to be the hallmark of this community and the few exceptions meant a lot: the initiatives of missionary Father James were decisive to the maintenance and intensification of group activities and to the foundation of the Residents Council; young people trained in church meetings became important and hard-working Council presidents, and Dom Helder Câmara's (Catholic Archbishop of Recife and Olinda) support through the Church's Justice and Peace Committee offered valuable legal assistance to the community. Thus, in the most erratic ways, Brasília Teimosa managed to break through the military dictatorship and make it to the 1980s. And so did Fortin's story – because is when it comes to an end. And that is precisely when the book frustrates the reader: two of the most arresting moments in the story are left unanswered. When the author finally does meet Dom Helder Câmara, the book's most famous personality, he does not tell us what the interview was about. By finishing the story in 1988, the reader does not know what happened to the community movements: there is not a word on the neighbourhood's fate.

To the reader used to chronologically and/or thematically organized ethnographies or reports, this book will come as a surprise. It is an urban romance which goes back and forth in time and whose main character is the author himself. Not being acquainted with Brasília Teimosa, as will be the case with most readers, one feels like Fortin unveiled the story as it came to him, not as it happened in reality. In the concluding remarks Mr. Fortin ends the story telling the reader how he evaluates his years in the Peace Corps in the state of Bahia, a whole different and personal story. Due to the absence of a logical organization, the text reads choppy and repetitive. As the author sheds more light on actors than on facts, he keeps shifting focus and points-of-view. Maps, charts and figures do not present subtitles (not even titles sometimes) or explanations.

Sometimes the reader will find it hard to understand what is being pictured or told. Although somewhat romantic or naïve at some points – certainly throughout chapter six and particularly when Fortin depicts military governments as ‘frustrated and desperate to do something that would relieve social pressures by paying more attention to the “civic wounds” of poor people’ (p. 76) – it is a worthwhile reading for those concerned with poor people’s struggles, resilience and accomplishments in a world where petty politics play the most powerful role.

Lucia Capanema-Alvares, Universidade Federal Fluminense

– *Affordable Housing in the Global Urban South: Seeking Sustainable Solutions*, edited by Jan Bredenoord, Paul van Lindert and Peer Smets. Earthscan/Routledge, 2014.

The edited volume by Jan Bredenoord, Paul van Lindert and Peer Smets aims to reassert the role of housing for achieving sustainable urbanization by placing emphasis on its multi-dimensional nature and the consequent requirement of both an institutional and a disciplinary integration for housing delivery. This essential assertion is moved by the explicit ambition to contribute to the international debate on the new urban agenda and is reflected in the variety of contributions by well-established authors and experienced researchers in the field. After a main introduction and a mixed thematic section on low-income housing, the subsequent 17 chapters are divided across three sections based on macro-regions, followed by a concluding contribution by the editors.

As the title underscores, the dimensions of affordability and sustainability are the selected entry points to advocate for pro-poor pluriform housing solutions and to influence the habitat agenda. Besides discussing these two central dimensions with regard to housing delivery, the relevance of a stakeholder approach is highlighted with vigour as part and parcel of the plea to incorporate self-managed housing practices in public and formal delivery systems (p. 2). Both the thematic and the country policy chapters expose the significance of co-production for the provision of sustainable dwelling environments where the cooperation between sectors, resident empowerment and the elaboration of locally grounded livelihoods are acknowledged as fundamental ingredients for a holistic approach to urban and housing development (p. 4). Placing the latter under the umbrella of governance is also a way to recognize the range of contexts, actors and stakeholders that should be accounted for in the articulation of new low-income shelter strategies in the urban Global South. Such variety is not only a trait to be mirrored in policy formulation, but becomes a word of caution in the editors’ closing comments with regard to the treacherous reliance on uniform urban planning and land management tools (p. 401). Moreover, the conclusion highlights the fact that similar outcomes of housing delivery sys-

tems may result from distinctive governance networks, an aspect that is particularly crucial for community-driven development and cooperative scheme stimulation. The concluding remarks also remind the reader that, while innovative policy packages and stakeholder constellations can be noticed in all scrutinized contexts, serving the poorest segments of society remains an extremely arduous objective to attain.

This insightful compendium deserves to be read, with well-informed accounts of policies and practices from the urban global South as complementary contributions to the various thematic state of the art reviews. The challenge of producing sustainable and affordable low-income housing is therefore reasserted with evidence from various countries across the globe. Nonetheless, precisely because of its ambitious aims and promising organization, the reader is left with questions about chapter clustering and its actual meaning for influencing the new urban agenda in particular, and urban research in general. At a moment when pleas for comparative approaches have engendered an exciting terrain for policy development and research across contexts and cultures, the reader is left to wonder why macro-regions are the privileged entry point to discuss such themes, and will only find an answer in the volume's final pages. The concluding discussion confirms the curatorial potential of an inquiry more overtly directed at opening up cross-national perspectives that the editors themselves signal when linking massive public housing provision programmes in Mexico and Egypt, or when noticing the differences in community-driven development in Asia and Latin America. Likewise, a comparative setup aligned with the main thematic section could have delivered further insight on the ways to confront land scarcity and the urban fabric's densification as major challenges for the delivery of aided self-help across the globe.

More than providing 'local empirical evidence' (p. xxv), the finest country papers of the collection posit the urban global South as the true terrain for the actual elaboration of resourceful approaches to the delivery of affordable and sustainable low-income dwelling environments. This reversal is not only key for knowledge production epistemologies, but also for the understanding of locally grounded innovative solutions in the context of extensive decentralization. As an example, it remains a pity that innovative experiences such as the Amui Djor housing in Accra fail to be mentioned in the contribution on Ghana, especially considering the editors' questions on what form pioneering practices will take in areas with rising urbanization rates and uneven social movement organization. Indeed, as acknowledged in the volume, Latin America is the context where the universally practised process of self-managed housing by incremental construction has been most speedy and effective. This raises interrogations on the impact of citizen mobilization and long-standing urbanization records on the development of self-help as an affordable sustainable practice and on the stakeholder arrangements required to promote and improve its delivery. By seeking for innovative approaches rather than presenting a definitive set of 'best practices', the volume presents a commendable effort to re-centre

and revise assisted self-help housing policies and practices, though the role of governance in this quest would have required further unravelling.

Viviana d'Auria, KU Leuven

– *¡Tequila! Distilling the Spirit of Mexico*, by Marie Sarita Gaytán, Stanford University Press, 2014.

Marie Sarita Gaytán's book, *¡Tequila! Distilling the Spirit of Mexico* is a welcome addition to the already vibrant canon of works that reveal, what Arjun Appadurai famously described as 'the social life of things'. While everything from rats to paperclips has had their social life scrutinized, it is usually food-stuff (cods, sugar, bananas, pigs, salt, lobsters) and their by-products (guano, anyone?) that have increasingly fascinated academics over the past fifteen years. These authors view consumable commodities as much more than tasty delivery mechanisms for calories; in their eyes food and drinks, while retaining their centrality as sources for sociability and conviviality, are also sites where some of our most contentious ideas about who we are as members of modern imagined communities are developed and struggled over.

In Mexican studies, it was Jeffrey Pilcher's *¡Que Vivan Los Tamales!* (1998) that set the agenda for much of the food scholarship that has followed. Gaytán does not wander too far off the path that Pilcher established. While Pilcher writes about tamales, mole, and chiles enogada, Gaytán is primarily concerned with showing how one iconic product, tequila, has been central to nourishing, as she states, the 'symbolic economy of identity' of Mexican nationalism. Rather than order this exploration of tequila's relationship to *lo mexicano* (Mexicanness) as a historical narrative, Gaytán organizes her book as a series of episodes she calls 'shots'. After exploring the theoretical and social concerns that ground her study in the Introduction, Gaytán uses the first chapter to answer how tequila became the liquid embodiment of 'Mexico's national spirit'. Central to this narrative is explaining why it was that other alcoholic drinks, especially pulque and the mezcal produced in regions outside of the state of Jalisco, lost out on this honour. Essentially, Gaytán argues that drinks like pulque and the mezcal produced in Oaxaca were at a great disadvantage because they, unlike the mezcal from the region of Tequila, were 1) produced and consumed in regions that were economically marginal and physically isolated; 2) not suitable for export beyond the point of production (pulque spoils in a couple of days); and 3) artisanal products that were too easily associated with Mexico's Indian population, not a good thing for a nation aspiring to be modern.

In the second part of the book, Gaytán explores two episodes in the symbolic life of tequila. In Chapter 2, she investigates the irony of how, in both Mexico and the United States, the teetotaller Mexican revolutionary, Pancho Villa,

became one of the most iconic representations of tequila and the poster child for Mexican male identity. In Chapter 3, Gaytán writes about how tequila became a fixture in the so-called *comedia ranchera* movies (ranch comedies) of the 1940s and 50s. In third part of the book, the author investigates how regional and national elites (large national and international tequila manufacturers, local, state, and national politicians, and tourism entrepreneurs) have leveraged tequila's purported authenticity and prestige as the place-bound essence of the nation's soul to create, protect, and fund businesses that almost exclusively benefit them and their international partners. In Chapter 4, Gaytán does an ethnographic study of the growth of tequila-centred tourism in the region in and around Tequila. She is especially interested in critically interrogating the so-called Tequila Express train and the theme park-like *Mundo Cuervo* (Cuervo World). In Chapter 5, the author outlines how the self-serving tequila elite have protected the reputation of their brand and defended their product against competition by regulating its production and consumption, acquiring trade legislation from world trade organizations, and securing world heritage recognition for Tequila from UNESCO. There are, though, limits to the manipulation of authenticity, and Gaytán does a superb job of showing in each of the chapters how tequila-inspired notions of national, gender, racial, and class identity have been challenged and destabilized by subaltern actors. For example, in the US tequila and Pancho Villa embodied a machismo that was violent, irresponsible, and unpredictable. This image, according to Gaytán, served as an excuse for American imperial expansion. Mexicans, on the other hand, preferred to see Villa, who stood up to American aggression when he invaded Columbus New Mexico in 1916, as a hero and the embodiment of a laudable, anti-imperialist, and responsible masculinity.

The contentious struggle over the meaning of what it means to be Mexican and tequila's role in this act of representation is at core of Gaytán's book and receives its fullest treatment in the Chapter 6, 'Consuming Complexity: Tequila Talk in Mexico and the United States'. In this chapter, Gaytán promises to 'provide an alternative lens' to 'the dynamics that ... shape cultural identity within and across national borders' by conducting oral interviews with 'individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds' (p. 138). It is a great idea. Unfortunately, while the author gives voice to the perspectives of Mexican professionals, educators, and middle managers as they recall drinking tequila while working or vacationing in Germany, the Vatican, Puerto Rico, or Puerto Vallarta, she does not extend the same courtesy to the working stiff consuming his tequila in a neighbourhood cantina or to 'the farmers, the workers, or the inhabitants' of Tequila who, Gaytán rightfully notes, make the tequila, but whose voices are marginalized.

So, while the book is clearly written, mindful of the vast secondary literature, and full of interesting insights (qualities that should make it both interesting to academics and a favourite among undergraduates), this oversight, and

the author's thin engagement with primary documents in the earlier chapters, has left me, at least, with a little hangover.

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