

## Book Reviews | Reseñas

– *Authoritarian El Salvador: Politics and the Origins of Military Regimes, 1880-1940*, by Erik Ching. University of Notre Dame Press, 2014.

Historical research on El Salvador is on the up, after several decades of virtual abandonment. The deep crisis of the late 1970s and the ensuing civil war (1980-1992) presented contemporary scholars on El Salvador with a range of ideological as well as practical dilemmas that discouraged in-depth historical research. The war furthermore resulted in the destruction or deterioration of a range of historical sources, like local archives, either through violence or neglect. In recent decades, however, Salvadoran history has received renewed interest from a new generation of historians, among whom Erik Ching holds a prominent position.

In earlier work, Ching has helped spark fresh debate on the historical interpretations of the 1932 uprising and the subsequent massacre of thousands of indigenous peasants, thus far the most important focal point of the new wave of historical scholarship on El Salvador. His latest book however has a much broader scope, focusing on the contentious dynamics of political regimes from the closing decades of the nineteenth century until the rule of Maximiliano Hernández Martínez (1931-1944).

In spite of the fact that different regimes in the era under study were far from democratic, electoral processes did play a crucial role in shaping political contention, as demonstrated in chapters 1 and 2. Elections served to legitimize local power and political bosses used them extensively to try and diminish or even humiliate competitors. Ching offers many well-documented examples of how patron-client networks organized and mobilized in order to win local elections, by votes, as well as by intimidation. These networks furthermore allied with regional or national factions, enmeshing local strongmen with national politics, seeking arrangements of mutual benefit. This led to ‘regionally-based patronage empires’, which dominated Salvadoran politics and constantly jockeyed with one another for position during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Chapters 3 and 4 subsequently offer an in-depth look at the methods employed by local bosses to build their networks and compete with rival patrons

and their networks. Such rival networks existed in most communities, and were mostly shaped by kinship, ethnicity, and economic ties. When the dominance of the incumbent networks faltered, local bosses often resorted to violence to take the elections.

It wasn't until the first decades of the twentieth century, with the expansion of coffee, that the central state gained enough strength to become a factor of significant realignment in patronage structures down to the local level. Rather than different regional patronage networks competing over the presidency, now all political actors had to operate within the confines of a single network that the state controlled. Political violence gradually moved from being an occasional instrument for competition between rivals towards a form of state repression.

The move towards centralized authoritarianism was consolidated under the Meléndez-Quiñónez dynasty (1913-1927), the subject of chapter 5. In this period, Vice-President Alfonso Quiñónez simultaneously founded the first nation-wide political party, the *Partido Nacional Democrático* (PND), and the first nation-wide paramilitary network, the *Liga Roja*. Ching goes to great lengths to demonstrate how, in practice, local patron-client networks intertwined with the PND as well as the Liga Roja, using clientelism, the electoral machine and violent intimidation in mutually reinforcing ways. After a short period of reform and relative political opening of the system, dealt with in chapter 6, the presidency of Martínez, as is demonstrated in the concluding chapters, reinforced authoritarian rule and strengthened the role of the military in it, initiating what would become a decades-long succession of military governments in El Salvador. However, the alignment of local patron-client networks with an official political party and its affiliated paramilitary groups continued to define the political system.

Ching's impressive critical review of original historical sources, including significant material previously undiscovered or undisclosed, has allowed him to build an historical account of Salvadoran politics in the period at hand, unprecedented both in its empirical wealth as well as its analytical depth. One of the key contributions of this work is its attention for the political prominence of the interplay between clientelism and factionalism, and of how different Salvadoran regimes have struggled to contain factionalism within a patrimonial framework. Furthermore, by extensively combining data on local political and national politics, Ching manages to reveal the interactive and complementary dynamics between national and local politics very vividly and convincingly, and balance between the roles of elites and constituents or clients in these networks. His attention to the variations as well as the continuities in patrimonial politics and regime formation allows for a well-balanced historical account.

The book however does carry a few omissions that might be addressed in future work. The main absentee is the Catholic Church, and the role it played in patronage networks as well as in the gradual adjustments within the regime toward more authoritarian arrangements. Influential local networks connected

to the church known as the *cofradías* only appear in Ching's analysis sporadically, and then in relation to his analysis of the conflict dynamics of the 1932 massacre. Ching also does not engage the socio-cultural dimension of Salvadoran patronage, or *compadrazgo*, in which reciprocity and church certification play an important role. The term does not appear in this book, nor does he engage with earlier research on this topic, such as that by Segundo Montes.

No doubt, Ching's book is a milestone for historical research on Salvadoran politics. In scope, empirical debt, originality and analytical argumentation, this book fills an enormous gap in historical research on the country. It will serve both as a source of inspiration and as a baseline for much of the historical research that still needs to be done in El Salvador and beyond. Particularly fruitful is the in-depth attention he proposes for the workings of patrimonial factionalism from the local to the national, and vice versa, as well as the variations over time.

Ralph Sprenkels, Utrecht University

– *The Promise of Participation: Experiments in Participatory Governance in Honduras and Guatemala*, by Daniel Altschuler and Javier Corrales. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

As the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) come to an end, with mixed assessments, a growing number of scholars and practitioners have wondered how development might unfold if the poor had wider scope to influence local decision-making and allocate scarce resources. This notion is particularly compelling in rural hinterlands where the state's presence, at least overtly, is weak, and where local knowledge regarding needs and resources is greatest. Add to this the variety of customs, traditions and leadership structures found in rural settings throughout the developing world – from clan-based and tribal to indigenous traditions – and arguments in favour of Participatory Governance (PG) mount. But without more compelling evidence of its systematic impact, PG has remains relegated to the fringes of development discourse, and practice.

The thorough research and robust original data (both quantitative and qualitative) presented in Daniel Altschuler's and Javier Corrales's *The Promise of Participation*, is therefore a clutch addition to our collective understanding of both the opportunities, and obstacles, to purposefully incorporating PG into policy. The authors focus on education reform in what they refer to as 'brown areas' of Guatemala and Honduras, referencing Guillermo O'Donnell's (1993) notion of sub-state regions with limited direct state influence. They ask specifically whether parental participation in experimental community-managed schools (CMS), or public schools in which parents have direct oversight and management responsibilities, enhances *political capabilities* by spurring political learning, reshaping political networks, and/or affecting patterns of political

representation and claim-making by newly empowered citizens (p. 17). After surveying over 2,000 parents associated with CMS, complemented by qualitative interviews across eight case study communities, the authors provide a rich and methodologically sound picture of how PG unfolds in rural communities of Central America.

One side-effect of this richness is that the thesis becomes muddled by the end: the strong declaration of PG's positive influence on civic participation and political capacity that starts the work weakens by the end, as myriad obstacles from patronage and local elites, to the fluctuating influence of the state itself, unravel the initial link originally established between CMS and robust citizen political enlightenment.

The quantitative analysis of survey work (Chapters 4 and 5) demonstrates that, despite competing influences, training and learning associated with CMS participation influences future civic participation and generates, on some level, 'positive spillovers'. CMS, in sum to this point, can be utilized to 'break the inertia of participation even in "brown areas"' (p. 77) – a powerful observation. These early results are qualified, however, and the authors subsequently appear to take great pains to underline how CMS influences citizen political capability robustly, despite evidence to the contrary stemming from their own work.

These complications to PG are the book's strength, however, even if they are treated more as footnotes rather than key points. To the credit of the authors, Chapters 9-13 explore in great detail some of the challenges that diminish the potential influence of CMS on civic participation. These include the subtle and frequently overlooked role of religious leaders, political parties and, though not explored enough in *Promise*, indigenous leadership on village politics. As noted above, while this muddles the original thesis, it only underscores the diversity and spatial variability in local governance that has complicated state-building, democratization and top-down development throughout Central America and, indeed, throughout the developing world in the first place. Communities in brown areas subtly (when not overtly) resist the state, or privilege local traditions over imported ones. This is not a reason to discard PG, but is instead a reason to further explore its potential role in development and democratization.

Arguably the most profound observation by Altschuler and Corrales, in fact, comes near the end when they conclude that, 'to expand the scope of spillovers from PG would require a concerted state effort that is both hands-on and hands-off' (p. 181, emphasis added). In Guatemala, 2014 saw a rash of journalists, union leaders and community activists killed, while the state continued its legacy of failing to enact pro-poor reform of any meaningful significance, demonstrating its severely crimped commitment to rural development. At the same time, work from India to Guatemala is identifying state-local *complementarity* as a critical variable in explaining localized gains in development and civic participation, particularly in brown areas where state influence is both a necessity on the one hand, but also a perceived threat to cherished au-

tonomy on the other. States need be both hands-on *and hands-off* – an idea most development agencies struggle to grasp.

As written, *The Promise of Participation* might inadvertently hinder the adoption of PG by mainstream development policymakers, given its long list of caveats and qualifications. At the same time, however, Altschuler and Corrales help underscore the complexity of local political dynamics and the tensions inherent in a system of weak states and local political demands. This complexity is all the more reason PG needs both further implementation, and examination. Altschuler and Corrales undoubtedly assist in the latter, but their book might have worked best had it been written in reverse – starting with the complications, and pointing a way forward after that.

Matthew Klick, University of Denver

### Reference

O'Donnell, G. (1993). On the state, democratization and some conceptual problems: A Latin American view with glances at some post-Communist countries. *World Development* 21(8): 1355-1369.

– *Along the Bolivian Highway: Social Mobility and Political Culture in a New Middle Class*, by Miriam Shakow. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

Bolivia made a new political start in 2006. The first indigenous president took power, bringing along a farewell to neoliberalism, a new welcome to political idealism, and a different, more solidary, equal and redistributive model of development. High hopes and euphoria abounded, and belief in a polity that could actually be fair and clean re-emerged. Nevertheless, concrete expectations differed considerably between different sectors of MAS supporters. Hence, this ‘ideal of a pure political life in a new society of prosperity for all, free of clientelism, clashed with the need to get a job, to support others who needed jobs, and the moral imperative to attain and maintain a middle-class lifestyle’ (p. 180). Shakow’s key argument is condensed in this sentence. Her book focuses on the uneasy merger of an emerging middle class sector’s aspirations for a better life and social mobility with Evo Morales and the MAS political project. And it does not suggest that these emerging middle classes as a whole rejected the MAS ‘socialism’, or that the MAS programme, homogeneously, would despise this sort of petty bourgeois. The argument is much more sophisticated, and too genuinely ethnographic to come to such simple conclusions.

The book is a fine example of micro-ethnographic work, much needed in a country where dichotomous political labels dominate the explanations of current events and controversies. Thanks to a methodology of long-term local fieldwork, Shakow can seriously question the conclusions of quite a series of publications on Bolivia’s current transformations which suggest that the clash between indigenous and non-indigenous, between socialists and neoliberals, or

between ‘rich and poor, rural and urban’ (p. 72) were the determining political confrontations. That, Shakow argues, would be a very reductionist account of things. Especially when looking at the ‘upwardly mobile in Sacaba’ (p. 5), the town near Cochabamba in central Bolivia where she did her research, it becomes clear that things are much more nuanced and complex.

The book, for that reason, is structured along lines differing from most attempts to interpret Bolivia’s turbulent present in which keywords like economy, decentralization, democracy and left-versus-right are used. Instead, after introducing the theme, the upcoming middle class in Sacaba is presented: the people trying to use the ‘coca boom’s bounty’ (p. 32) to enter the middle class. Many of them saw the MAS’ rise to power as a reason for new hopes, but also many were ambivalent towards MAS’ emphasis on equality and redistribution, since they themselves were also attracted by ‘an ethic of social superiority’ (p. 33). The next chapter addresses ‘the intimate politics of these new middle classes’ (p. 34) and suggests that *ambiguity* may be the most adequate term to portray people’s reactions and strategies: people wavered between sympathy for the MAS’ modernizing and industrializing ambitions, their doubts about the equality-goal, and their ‘individual dreams for the attainment of middle class status’ (p. 72). The third chapter elaborates on how this worked out in practice: some struggling for material superiority, some pursuing a similar higher status but basing it on being *profesionales* and combining it with support for MAS equality ethics, some identifying with the ‘subaltern’ people that MAS pretended to represent, in spite of the fact they themselves meanwhile gathered some wealth (p. 117); whereas the fourth chapter beautifully unpacks to what sort of political expectations, strategies, and disillusion this led. These disillusion varied, from unfulfilled hopes for improving business opportunities to anger about not being selected as candidate for local elections – a thing perceived as ‘betrayal’. In chapter five such ‘laments of betrayal’ of those whose expectations were shattered are addressed. The ‘ambiguities’ of political imageries among different MAS supporters was hardly ever more beautifully illustrated than in the case of various MAS sympathizers that would, on the one hand, declare themselves (like the MAS) against the old clientelistic practices, that would therefore denounce the MAS for again practicing clientelism in the Sacaba setting, and would, on the other hand, complain about having been passed over when it came to giving out eligible positions for elections or allotting municipal jobs – ‘in spite of having done so much for the party’ (pp. 158-60; 168-80). The beneficiaries of clientelism, obviously, tend to be much more tolerant towards its persistence. Chapter six, on the definitions of what a ‘community’ should be, once again points out these ambiguities: some policy strategies were based on quite romanticized images of community that simply no longer coincided with ‘the middle class aspirations of many rural residents’ (p. 207).

In the Conclusion, Shakow wraps things up: MAS initially, for political reasons, portrayed Bolivia as ‘a struggle between super-elite and impoverished

subaltern'. But 'Bolivia's middling folk confounded MAS' and allied social movement's strategies' (p. 211). This micro-political analysis provides a very important correction to simple political dichotomies: Bolivia's present is both more complicated and therefore also more interesting than that. My only critical comment would be that the author sometimes ends with too grandiose conclusions about 'human nature': humans are 'always' motivated by both individual and collective interests (p. 154), and 'self-interest is a central facet of public life' (p. 208). Anthropologists usually avoid these sorts of generalizing proclamations.

Ton Salman, VU University Amsterdam

– *Land Grab: Green Neoliberalism, Gender, and Garifuna Resistance in Honduras*, by Keri Vacanti Brondo. University of Arizona Press, 2013.

The Garifuna of Honduras' northern coast – descendants of an intermixture of marooned African slaves and native Amerindians – have received quite some attention in the social sciences, for example as a transnational migrant community. In this ethnography Keri Vacanti Brondo 'localizes' the Garifuna communities by focusing on their declining power over natural resources in the context of state-sanctioned and private sector-led 'resource grabs', and the struggles this process has set in motion. Brondo's book combines feminist political ecology with critical race and ethnic studies and gender analysis, providing a rich ethnographic account of changing gendered politico-economic dynamics, resource management and Garifuna ethnic mobilization.

The first part provides a historical analysis of Garifunas' changing livelihoods during the banana boom and bust, and their related identity politics in the context of an exclusionary state that slowly started recognizing Garifuna as equal citizens. In the 1980s Garifuna activists started to strategically identify themselves as Afro-indigenous in order to counter the neoliberal development model. The following chapters focus on Garifuna land rights in the town of Sambo Creek. Many Garifuna have lost land to mestizos (and foreigners). Particularly Garifuna women's land use rights have become restricted, as ancestral lands lost to outsiders were traditionally used by women for crop cultivation. The commodification of land has particularly benefited men. Brondo then engages with wider Garifuna ethnopolitics, indigeneity and activism, all of which are profoundly gendered. The most 'activist' Garifuna grassroots organization is led by women and its development approach closely mirrors feminist critiques of development. The successful production of Garifuna indigeneity has, however, set in motion new expressions of localized racism and mestizo counter-discourses. The complexities of roots, rights and belonging at the local level are outlined with rich quotations and descriptions. Subsequently Brondo takes the reader to Cayos Cochinos, an island group that has been 'commodified' as

a resource for tourism through private-led protected area management or ‘green neoliberalism’, with Garifuna inhabitants excluded from planning and restricted in their use of marine resources. The author gives a distressing example of inequality when she describes how, contrary to the inhabitants (mostly fishermen), participants of an Italian reality TV show recorded on the Honduran coast are given access to local marine resources. Neoliberal conservation often equates tourism; indeed, ‘voluntourism’ (volunteer tourism) and research tourism are emerging on the islands. In an account based on personal experience, Brondo is more nuanced compared to earlier chapters in her evaluation of these types of tourism. Gender reappears at the end of the book, when Brondo outlines developments after the coup d’état in 2009, such as the Model Cities debacle and tourism developments leading to land loss. The conclusion of the book gives some hope as Brondo outlines how threats to Garifuna identity and livelihoods are opposed by strengthened activism based on expanding networks at multiple levels.

‘Land Grab’ provides the reader with a broad yet in-depth understanding of the contradictions and complexities of ethnicity, gender and changing political economies and livelihoods in contemporary Honduras. While there is no lack of literature on local resistance movements against globalization and neoliberalism, Garifuna activism is unique and interesting in its complex ethnic and gendered nature: their ‘indigeneity’ and historical bond to local territory is less straightforward given their *Caribbean* indigenous and African descent; and the matrifocal character of the Garifuna – with women traditionally having more control over resources – also sets them apart from many indigenous populations. Her long-term engagement in the region adds an interesting longitudinal view from which current developments can be understood.

The lack of explicit engagement with recent ‘global land grab’ debates may cause disappointment in some readers. The book does add an interesting case study to the debate on tourism and conservation-related ‘land grabs’ and land governance. However, more comparison with similar cases and more in-depth discussion of land governance would be helpful, particularly because Brondo does not delve into the inherent contradictions in the collective vs. the individual, and customary vs. formal land tenure debates. The author and her Garifuna respondents seem to highly value collective land titling (and struggle for it), whereas in other parts she frames collective land titling as an example of ‘neoliberal reregulation of land’.

Rather than engaging in land governance and ‘land grab’ debates, Brondo frames her findings in the ‘green neoliberalism’ literature. While this is logical for some of the chapters, it is not equally relevant for the entire book. In addition, the term neoliberalism is used so frequently that it remains empty; for example, land privatization and commodification could be placed in an extended historical perspective. Also, we could ask ourselves if centralized state conservation is necessarily better than current hybrid governance models.

Having said this, Brondo has succeeded in combining a number of relevant complex topics and providing a compelling, in-depth and reflective representation of an intriguing population under global change. The book is written in an accessible and fluent style, and I would recommend it for scholars and students interested in identity politics, gender and ethnic studies, anthropology, development studies, land governance, grassroots mobilization, and natural resource management.

Femke van Noorloos, Utrecht University

– *La Frontera: Forests and Ecological Conflict in Chile's Frontier Territory*, by Thomas Miller Klubock. Duke University Press, 2014.

Thomas Miller Klubock delivers a powerful, innovative, and often heartrending book that combines social and environmental history to explain the fate of Chile's southern temperate forests and the people that claimed them from the 1850s to the present. He argues that these histories are intimately intertwined and that the struggles over possession and use of the forest frontier influenced Chilean state formation. This is a story of the forest, its ecology, and how that moulded the people who inhabited it, how they used it, and how landowners went about the task of dispossessing and subjecting them.

Most analyses of the Chilean forest begin with the successful development of industrial forestry for export during the military dictatorship of 1973-1990. Ecologically, the model fomented extensive plantations of exotic species, mainly Monterey Pine and Eucalyptus. They recuperated eroded agricultural soil, protected watersheds, and replaced degraded native forests stripped of economically valuable native species with an economically valuable resource. Its shortcomings included the destruction of native forests, monoculture vulnerability to pests, monopolization of water resources, and soil leeching due to the absence of understory. Hot button topics of social conflict focus on the Mapuche peoples' struggles over dispossession of their territory by landowners and forest companies.

In an illuminating contribution, *La Frontera* shows that current ecological debates about the forest go back to at least the mid-nineteenth century. Changing perceptions of the forest and its economic and ecological utility shaped in whose benefit the forest was used. So did politics. The book offers a bottom-up view of that history, depicting the almost unrelenting state-supported exploitation of not only Mapuches, but also of the Chilean *campesinos* and poor settlers (*colonos*) that inhabited the forest before the 1980s and that since then have been all but driven out leaving only the Mapuches to contest dispossession.

In the 1850s the forest frontier was an inhospitable place peopled by a warrior indigenous nation in which the Chilean state had a weak presence. Thus,

the state decided to colonize it with European family farmers in the 1850s, followed by Chilean landowners, who would clear the forest for large-scale agricultural use. In a trope that has lasted until today, it was believed that only they had the capacity to make the land economically prosperous.

This set up two enduring dynamics that have driven ecological and social conflicts on Chile's frontier to this day. First, the state generally supported Chilean landowners and European immigrants in their drive to acquire land. However, as early as 1880s massive deforestation caused the region to suffer from soil erosion, watershed depletion, and climate change. In response, reforestation with exotic species became state policy long before the military dictatorship of 1973. The second dynamic involved feeble or non-existent property rights due to the weak presence of the state on the frontier, a dynamic from which European family farmers were exempt because they had secure title. This facilitated land grabs to dispossess Chilean peasants, poor Chilean settlers, and Mapuches who often only held customary rights to use land. Even where titles existed, the state supported estate owners' unscrupulous moving of borders to appropriate thousands of hectares. This history plagues land disputes to this day.

Miller Klubock expertly weaves the history of Chilean forest policy into this narrative. He proves that, throughout the history of the frontier state, strategy consistently focused on the preservation and *industrial* development of forests for the environmental and economic development benefits described above. He also shows that forest policy doubled as an instrument of state building in this ecologically and socially heterogeneous and difficult region. Rarely, however, was forest policy made with the interests of peasants, settlers, forest workers, and indigenous in mind. When social conflicts became acute the state did, on occasion, support their customary use rights and attempt to curb excesses in labour abuses.

Allende's government (1970-1973) was the shining exception to this rule. It pursued a policy based on the multiple use of the forest. It also strongly supported the livelihood needs of forest dwellers and used the state in their interest rather than in that of the landowning class. Thus, it was a precursor of today's community forestry or grassroots development approaches to socially and ecologically sustainable forest use. It stands in sharp contrast to the industrial forestry model – with all of its ecological shortcomings – that the state had traditionally advanced.

The military dictatorship and subsequent democratic governments that followed represented an historical juncture. Before them, policy struggled to balance dispossession with protection of customary use arrangements of forest dwellers to control social conflict. After 1973, forest policy unabashedly favoured industrial forestry and drove people out. Today's vast expanses of plantations are enclosures without people. Only the Mapuche are left to contest forest policy and to struggle for alternative community forestry approaches in

an inhospitable political climate. And so, we come full circle to contemporary debates about the fate of the Chilean forest and its inhabitants.

No book is perfect. The writing is repetitious in places. The narrative could have frontloaded the broader concerns of the author to strengthen its analytic bite: the political conditions conducive to grassroots development and agroecology approaches to forest policy. How can defenders of the forest and alternative uses best advance their cause? But that is another book. *La Frontera* makes its social subjects come alive. It convincingly shows that the debate over the forest has a long history and that we cannot understand forest policy without taking social history into account. This is political ecology at its best.

Eduardo Silva, Tulane University

— *Mexico and the United States: The Politics of Partnership*, by Peter H. Smith and Andrew Seele (Eds.), Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013.

The compilation *Mexico and the United States: the Politics of Partnership* is an ambitious attempt to reassess the status quo and future of the US-Mexican relationship in the light of the international and domestic changes since the beginning of the new millennium, including the post-9/11 US foreign policy shift, the onset of the global financial crisis, the emergence of new global players, and democratization in Mexico. The widely respected Latin American studies scholars and professors' underlying concern is to improve bilateral cooperation. Published in early 2013, and subsequent to the US and Mexican presidential elections, the book determinedly widens its target audience beyond academia to policymakers in both countries. The authors seek to spur the formulation of policy alternatives that are coherent, efficient and mutually beneficial within the framework of an envisioned mutual foreign policy strategy.

—With regard to that framework, Smith presents a pragmatic and theoretically driven assessment of the status quo. He pinpoints how the diverging elite and academic perceptions in both countries of the new world order are a major challenge for achieving a bilateral relationship based on mutual benefits. While US foreign policy attention has drifted away from its neighbour towards Asia, Mexico has lost its 'strategic sense of national purpose', leaving both countries in a 'state of flux'. He argues that if elites on both sides opt for a multipolar worldview the 'inconsistency and fragmentation' of the relation can be overcome (p. 35). Andrew Seele and Alberto Díaz-Cayeros present a more optimistic account of US-Mexican relations. Through an analysis of the different areas of bilateral cooperation, the authors show that the economic and social interdependence of the US and Mexico, including the increasing involvement of local government and non-state actors, will eventually 'deepen the roots' of cooperation (p. 57). While asymmetries continue to create friction, the chapter highlights that Mexico can and has successfully pushed for specific policy content

including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Mérida Initiative in the pre-9/11 context. Finally, John Bailey and Tonatiuh Guillén-López' chapter suggests that greater collaboration is needed among the different subareas of policy-making to reduce fragmentation but predict that their identified solutions are distant.

Chapters 5 to 8 systematically address and analyse these issues. Blecker and Esquivel make an unsurprising but noteworthy observation: NAFTA failed to close the development gap between the two nations showing persistent differences in income distribution, growth and employment. While the latter has been one of the main driving forces for the migration flow from Mexico to the US combined with a high labour demand, FitzGerald and Alarcón's analysis suggests that anti-migratory policies are counterproductive given the demand and supply dynamic of the labour market. To protect and improve migrant workers' rights efficiently, the authors indicate that the US needs to work unilaterally, but embedded in a mutual agreement with its neighbour. A major immigration reform would protect migrant workers, facilitate the legalization and ease the acquirement of permanent residency. But migration is not the only dynamic with transboundary implications; increasing economic growth and demographic development in the border region have led to more than three decades of bilateral environmental cooperation, including the successful but not always efficient management of transboundary natural resources. As environmental issues cannot be ignored within the wider strategy to develop the US-Mexican border region, the authors recommend a series of actions that can be undertaken to strengthen institutions to improve implementation as well as to build new ones. Finally, an assessment of the causes and strategies against the proliferation of the activity of drug trafficking organizations cannot be left out in a comprehensive analysis of binational relations. It is yet another example of how policymaking is shaped by the complexity, interdependence and asymmetry of relations. The authors contemplate that none of the three most common solutions to reduce drug-related activities and violence seem to withstand critique, suggesting drug and crime should be dealt with separately. While a legalization strategy could help to relocate the centre of concern on drug trafficking organizations, drug use should be framed as a public health and safety issue.

Although some of the individual chapters are hardly pioneering given the abundance of specialized literature, I highly recommend this book to get an all-encompassing assessment of current US-Mexican relations. Its recommendations are still relevant, considering signs of an improving partnership with Obama's latest immigration reform for instance. Nevertheless when looking at the efficiency of cooperation, Mexico's need to internally solve its democratic deficits of pervasive corruption and lack of accountability has only been marginally addressed in this volume. After continuous references to a lack of a strategic framework the reader may wonder what that framework actually con-

sists of, yet it does provide an opportunity to generate new solutions in response to the identified facets of the problem set.

Sara Eichert, Universidad Complutense de Madrid &  
University of California, San Diego

– *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana*, by William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh. University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Since the Cuban revolution in 1959, US-Cuban relations have been dominated by conflict. Invasions, covert operations, assassination plots using poison pens and exploding seashells, Cold War activities, threats, and a grinding economic blockade can illustrate the relations since then. For ten years two eminent US scholars have worked through piles of documents, many of them previously classified or in private archives, to describe some unknown aspects of the relations. William LeoGrande, professor of government at the American University, and Peter Kornbluh, director of the Cuba Documentation Project at the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., chronicle the history of bilateral efforts toward rapprochement and reconciliation between the superpower and the socialist Caribbean island. They have conducted interviews with dozens of negotiators, intermediaries, and policy makers, including Fidel Castro and Jimmy Carter. They describe how, despite the political clamour surrounding any hint of better relations with Havana, serious negotiations have been conducted by every presidential administration.

In ten chapters the authors describe in chronological order the ‘back channels’ used by every US president so far, showing a broad spectrum of attitudes on the side of decision-makers in Washington. One extreme was President Carter, who told the authors in an interview: ‘I felt then, as I do now, that the best way to bring about a change in its Communist regime was to have open trade and commerce, and visitation, and diplomatic relations with Cuba’ (p. 155). During the following administration Secretary of State Alexander Haig, in contrasting, told President Reagan in 1981: ‘You just give me the word, and I’ll turn that fucking island into a parking lot’ (p. 225).

The authors sketch a path toward better relations starting with John F. Kennedy’s offering of an olive branch to Fidel Castro after the missile crisis, to Henry Kissinger’s top secret quest for normalization, to Barack Obama’s promise of a ‘new approach’. Obama said in fall 2013: ‘We have to be creative and we have to be thoughtful and we have to continue to update our policies. Keep in mind that when [Fidel] Castro came to power I was just born, so the notion that the same policies that we put in place in 1961 would somehow still be as effective ... in the age of the internet, Google and world travel, doesn’t make sense’ (p. 402). The surprising speeches given by Obama and Raúl Cas-

tro in December 2014 underline the relevance of using ‘back channels’ for complicated issues and foreign policies such as between the two dissimilar countries.

Nevertheless, the authors articulated their scepticism, because ‘over the years, there has been a long trail of broken commitments from Washington. If anything, the historical record suggests that the Cubans have been too eager to negotiate and too gullible in believing US promises, which, time after time, were made but not kept’ (p. 407). Additionally the authors explain that today’s overall situation is different from the past. Raúl Castro initiated ambitious reforms and offered unconditional talks with Washington. Besides, younger generations of Cuban exiles are more open to normalization than older. In general, the history of the hidden dialogues between Cuba and the United States demonstrates that it is possible to replace sterile hostility with reconciliation and much preferable for national and international interests. The experiences gained through these talks can be utilized for evidence-based dialogues and decisions. Agencies and their staff in the US foreign establishment should rid themselves of what former Senator Fulbright called the ‘arrogance of power’. With the intention to support learning from history, the authors suggest: ‘As President Obama and his successors consider whether and how to engage with Cuba, the experience of ten presidents before them offers some useful lessons’ (p. 408).

The book offers important perspectives on current political debates at a time when leaders of both nations have declared the urgency of moving beyond the legacy of hostility. LeoGrande and Kornbluh conclude with ten lessons for US negotiators. Among these are the following (p. 408ff.): Even at moments of intense hostility, there have always been reasons and opportunities for dialogue; although Cuban leaders have always been willing to talk, they instinctively resist making concessions to US demands; Cuba wants to be treated as an equal, with respect for its national sovereignty.

This book gives a rich overview of the hidden sides of the relations between the US and Cuba. LeoGrande and Kornbluh’s diplomatic history is the most authoritative description and assessment of US-Cuban diplomatic relations in the last five decades. It supplements the official versions. The book is a particularly timely contribution, because it is meant to serve as a guide for policy makers and citizens interested in the ‘art of the possible’.

Edgar Göll, IZT – Institute for Future Studies, Berlin

– *Haiti: Trapped in the Outer Periphery*, by Robert Fatton. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014.

The end of 2014 marked a decade since the overthrow of Haiti’s popularly elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the violent cleansing of his party, Lavalas, which was banned from electoral contests since. From 2004-2006,

Haiti was ruled by an internationally-imposed ‘interim’ government. First invaded by the US Marines supplemented by Canadian and French forces, these Western armies gave way to one of the most multilateral occupations in history: the United Nations Stabilization Force, MINUSTAH, with troops that came from Pakistan and Uruguay, from Chile and Guatemala and Bolivia, from Jordan and Brazil, from Sri Lanka and Nepal and many more.

MINUSTAH brought cholera to Haiti, previously unknown on the island, and which has now killed thousands of people. MINUSTAH troops have sexually abused children, conducted search-and-destroy operations in the poor neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince, and opened fire on crowds of demonstrators. Economic life is dominated by multinational corporations, who treat Haiti as a site for cheap labour. Social services are provided by international NGOs, who are accountable to foreign donors, or, in many cases (as with USAID or the Canadian DFATD), foreign governments, and these NGOs have completely botched the country’s recovery and reconstruction after the 2010 earthquake.

If Haiti were governed by Haitians, it would definitely qualify as a ‘failed state’. Interventionists in Europe and North America would call for a multilateral effort, involving military, diplomatic, and economic programmes, to help the country get back on its feet. In the face of such utter dysfunction, with abject poverty and a failure to rebuild after the earthquake, a failed justice system and a violent army firing on demonstrators, how could the world community do less?

But Haiti is not governed by Haitians, but by a matrix of international institutions. Haiti is thus a perfect case to study what the international community can achieve when it takes control of a country (in this case, against the will of its people).

Several scholars have analysed the role and motivations of external forces in attacking Haiti’s popular Lavalas movement. Peter Hallward, in *Damming the Flood*, told the story of how the coup was organized. Jeb Sprague, in *Paramilitarism and the Assault on Democracy in Haiti*, paid special attention to the role of covert military action deployed against the country’s democratic movement. My own book, *Haiti’s New Dictatorship*, evaluated the international regime imposed in 2004 as if it was a domestic one, comparing it to the record of Lavalas in power. The conclusion of all of these studies was that, even though it was a drastically curtailed sovereignty, a regime that values national sovereignty (as Lavalas did) can use whatever resources it does have in the interests of its people. The UN occupation, by contrast, has devastated Haiti over the past 10 years.

As an eminent scholar of Haiti and a member of the Haitian diaspora, Robert Fatton Jr. provides a big picture to this scholarship with his analysis of these external forces, *Haiti: Trapped in the Outer Periphery*. Fatton places Haiti in Wallerstein’s world-system at the outer periphery, worse off even than the semi-periphery and completely subject to the power of the core countries. After a chapter developing the concept of the outer periphery, Fatton shows the con-

sequences to Haiti of being in the outer periphery: misery, violence, and constant outside interference. Fatton calls the institutions of Haiti's internationalized dictatorship – including the US, the UN, the NGOs, and the multinationals – the *International*, and he outlines the *International's* complete control as well as its developmental and democratic failures in the years following the 2010 earthquake.

Fatton's new study is a departure from his previous work, including his best-known book, *Haiti's Predatory Republic*, in which he analysed the role of domestic forces and classes in undermining democracy and development in Haiti. The current book is a better representation of Haiti's predicament: the most important decision-makers about Haiti are not Haitian, not even the Haitian elite. The book's strength is in the analysis of Haiti in the world, trapped on the outer periphery, by a scholar who is so knowledgeable about Haiti's particular struggles and dynamics.

The book's main weakness is in its failure to follow its own analysis to its conclusions, especially about Lavalas. Criticizing Lavalas as 'the vehicle of Aristide's messianic presidentialism', with 'authoritarian seeds', Fatton effectively dismisses the challenge posed by Haiti's movement to the core countries. Lavalas was not targeted because of its 'messianic presidentialism', but because of its egalitarian principles, its democratic aspirations, and its capacity to mobilize people. The world-system is big and far-reaching, but Lavalas proved that it was possible to challenge it. By dismissing it, Fatton's argument carries an implicit hopelessness, inappropriate for the country whose revolution overthrew slavery and whose democratic movement was among the first in the hemisphere to challenge neoliberalism.

Justin Podur, York University

– *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, by Linda M. Rupert. University of Georgia Press, 2012.

Professor Linda Rupert shows that the small and relatively dry island of Curaçao in the Dutch Caribbean has a surprisingly rich and influential history. Rupert's book essentially moves Curaçao from the margin to the mainstream of Caribbean history and society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The general thesis is that Curaçao was the epicentre of legal and clandestine trade in the southern Caribbean. Collaboration, communication, and creolization or hybridization were at the centre of regional and international trade. Rupert claims that other studies have addressed creolization as a culture phenomenon and contraband as an economic system. She argues: '... creolization was not confined to the cultural sphere. Economic interactions required and facilitated social interactions, which in turn, were deeply influenced by specific economic configurations. Creolization and contraband thus were symbiotically and dia-

lectically related.’ (p. 7) Put differently, for trade to occur, racial, class and ethnic difference had to be put aside because each ethnic group needed and depended on the other for survival.

According to Rupert, trade resulted in the relaxing of political, religious, ethnic, and racial barriers within society. Curaçao traded with the Dutch Caribbean islands, other neighbouring islands, the United States, and Europe. However, Tierra Firme in Venezuela had the most impact on Curaçao in terms of its religious and racial identity formation. Sephardic Jews and Africans were the main participants during the peak period of Creolization and contraband trade, although not on an equal basis. Curaçao’s black majority often developed their own regional networks, shaped by their own particular needs. Through these networks, they were sometimes able to flee from the island to freedom (p. 95). Africans were also involved in trading livestock, agricultural products, hides, and salt but were very often under the leadership of Jewish traders. Rupert shows that these dynamics would not have happened if were not for a dire need for trade. Trade opened doors of opportunity for economic growth, socio-cultural exchanges, new languages, intra-structural development, slave escape routes, religious conversions, and social change. Trade forged deep alliances that cut across regional and international boundaries. Nonetheless, the inhabitants of Curaçao also maintained an independent identity that separated them from other Caribbean islands as well as from Europe. One unique area of identity formation was Papiamentu.

The dialect of Papiamentu is spoken by all social classes, not only the lower class, which is unusual for Caribbean dialects. Rupert argues that the use of Papiamentu across all classes was a result of trade and social mixing. Rupert writes, ‘If creolization by its very nature transgressed clearly marked socio-cultural boundaries, then the development of a successful creole language that was accepted beyond the confines of slave society – especially one that was not even based on the dominant language of the colonizer and which was spoken by whites as well as blacks – was a particularly egregious violation’ (p. 213). The aforesaid analysis should not be completely surprising. Historically, Curaçao was unsuitable for plantation agriculture because of the dry environment, and therefore the inhabitants had to develop creative ways to survive, even if that meant putting aside race and class differences and engaging in trade beyond the confines of the island. These activities were further fuelled by population growth and consumer demand and were not controlled by the dominant class (as was so noticeable elsewhere in the Caribbean at the same time).

Rupert concludes that Creolization was a manifestation of economic exploitation and cultural creativity in this particular slave society in the Americas. She demonstrates how individuals from different backgrounds ‘interacted and borrowed from each other regardless of imperial structures’ (p. 248). Likewise, intercolonial trade (legal and illegal) demonstrates how in the face of imperial domination and restriction the people of Curaçao found ways to pursue their own economic survival by circumventing the regulations imposed on them.

Rupert thinks that illegal trade ‘was a way for locals not only to assert their economic power but also to exercise some element of cultural power as they made consumption choices and chose trade partners in line with their own needs and interests, ones that often were outside the limits established by imperial authorities’ (pp. 248-249). These actions represent a classic case of resistance and accommodation within the ambit of power and control. While the arguments are strong, one is forced to ask: are they really believable in a former race and class conscious slave island in the Caribbean? The idea that whites and blacks came together in a segregated society for economic survival in response to imperial domination that inadvertently led to cultural camaraderie across different ethnic groups sounds sensational. Black slaves had always occupied the basement of Caribbean society and had remained so after one hundred years of emancipation. In spite of this criticism, Rupert’s book contributes enormously to the understanding of how trade and hybridization helped to shape Curaçao in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Professor Rupert has produced a landmark study which will be difficult to match.

Lomarsh Roopnarine, Jackson State University

– *After Love: Queer Intimacies and Erotic Economies in Post-Soviet Cuba*, by Noelle M. Stout. Duke University Press, 2014.

Noelle Stout opens a unique window into the study of emerging post-Soviet neoliberal subjectivities focusing her ethnography on the ways that market economy practices intersect with everyday intimate relationships. Set in Cuba beginning in the 1990s, Stout’s study challenges the commonly held belief that intimacy and love are defined exclusively through the identities and interpersonal relationships of individuals. Documenting Cuba as it transitioned into increasingly market mediated relationships, *After Love* traces in exquisite detail how economic restructuring produces particular intimate relationships and erotic dispositions.

The ethnographic detail of *After Love* makes the text a particularly rich site from which to understand the cultural impact of changing economies as individuals both resist and embrace new commodities and forms of being. As an example, Stout explores how sex comes to be commodified in Cuba by narrating Oscar’s life story. A gay man living in Havana, Oscar both embraces and rejects the role that money plays in defining his sexual encounters and partnerships. As sex work gains currency in the tourism industry and in Cuban society more generally, Oscar uses both his own financial security to mediate his desires and status and also actively reminisces on the love that was possible prior to the market-based commodification of sex. Focusing on the processes through which queer subjectivities are constituted in an increasingly neoliberal culture, Stout suggests that gays in Havana do not just embrace changing eco-

conomic relationships but actively draw on mainstream socialist ideas of hard work, decency and mutual respect to define gayness itself and to challenge the inequalities inherent in the new economy.

*After Love's* ability to trace the links between status, race, intimacy, love, desire, subjectivity and economic transfers illustrates the claim often made by anthropologists that changes in economic systems are also always cultural changes. In post-soviet Cuba where a *jinetero* (male prostitute) can earn more than ten times the wage of a medical doctor, defining social status or the motivations for sustaining intimate relationships requires regular negotiation. Whilst racial categories continue to actively shape status, the reduction of economic opportunities and state support in post-Soviet Cuba challenge the previously prevalent stigmatization of sex work. Stout's account of transnational patronage relationships with kinship overtones is another salient example demonstrating a cultural re-imagining that is brought on by new types of economic transfers. Orlando's story, for instance, registers the role that remittances as gifts play in solidifying the quasi-kin relationships developed by long-term and repeating 'sex tourists.' How personal obligations, affect, and the quality and quantity of appropriate economic transfers come to be defined in such cases shows that Cuban gays are not simply at the mercy of foreign visitors nor are they just subjected to the commodification of love prevalent in transnational fictive kinships.

The narratives presented by Stout also pose a challenge to western scholarship that bases itself on culturally-specific identity categorizations and does not recognize how the use of increasingly globalized identity categories constrains scholarship when operationalized in local contexts. Categories such as gay and transgender, for instance, are understood, rejected and utilized by Cubans in complicated ways that sometimes echo their meaning in the US and Europe but more often than not take on new meanings in the Cuban setting. Transgender as a category is particularly thorny in translation as it pivots close to Cuban notions of *travestis*. Stout's narratives show how the emic categories of *pingueros* (ostensibly men who have sex with foreigners for money) or *travestis* (men who began their sexual development adopting a gay identification and increasingly taking on feminine modes of being) are fluid and contextual but also consciously defined in reference to global categorizations of what constitutes transgender and gay. Stout even questions her own original framework for studying the increasing levels of social and state tolerance of homosexuality as problematic. Working with gay Cubans she comes to understand that the commodification of sex work, increasing market engagement, the practical entanglements of love and making a living shape daily life for gays in Havana much more than social or state discourses of acceptance. This, for her, has policy implications as gay rights activism is exported beyond the bounds of the US and Europe. The rights that gays in Havana seek, for instance, might have much less to do with a recognition or social acceptance of their sexual identi-

ty than with a more commonly shared need to subsist and thrive in a new economy.

As an ethnography, *After Love* gives a richly evidenced account of how Latin America's neoliberalization changes the very possibilities for economic and intimate relationships. Focusing on queer identities, Stout's work is a welcome addition to the scholarship on neoliberalism in the region as it is able to illustrate the complex interplay through which neoliberal subjects constitute themselves through the resistance, re-imagining and embracing new forms of economic transfers through 'love' relationships.

M. Gabriela Torres, Wheaton College, MA

– *Intimate Activism: The Struggle for Sexual Rights in Postrevolutionary Nicaragua*, by Cymene Howe. Duke University Press, 2013.

The last three decades have seen dramatic transformations in the politics of sexuality in Nicaragua. Based on ethnographic field research, *Intimate Activisms* offers an analysis of the role of sexual rights advocates as mediators in these transformations, by exploring their 'thick experience' as activists, the multiple discourses that inform their praxis, the way they negotiate their goals and strategies, and the configuration of sexual subjectivities in the intersection of global and local influences. After a historical overview of how the politics of sexuality in Nicaragua have been influenced by the legacy of US interventions, the Sandinista revolution, and the development of the feminist movement, the book focuses its attention on three key sites of activists' interventions: lesbian discussion groups, public events and mass-media interventions.

The author shows how activists engaged in the construction of particular forms of sexual subjectivity, for instance, through the presentation of lesbian and gay characters in the TV series 'Sexto Sentido' and through the 'intimate pedagogy' (p. 62) of the discussion groups that tried to create a space where participants could discover their identity as lesbians. In their interest to normalize and claim equal rights for same-sex sexualities, these interventions tended to favour 'egalitarian' lesbian and gay identities and relationships, which implied a gender-conforming self-presentation and homoerotic relationships without a gendered distinction between a masculine and a feminine partner. This contrasted with other forms of sexual subjectivities, like those of the *cochonas del campo* [country dykes] that the author met in a rural discussion group, women who understood themselves as masculine and active, and who established relationships with women they saw as feminine and passive. Activists' preference for 'egalitarian' forms of identity, however, responds to a 'very particular understanding of equality in terms consonant with liberal values' (p. 85) and to a narrative of progress that portrays those 'egalitarian identities' as global, modern and emancipated, while rendering invisible other forms of

subjectivity and relationship, or condemning them as self-delusional, backward, prejudiced and *machista*. Howe's sophisticated analysis raises important questions on the politics of identities in sexual rights activism, especially regarding the way these dynamics are experienced by those who do not conform to the liberal and middle-class ideals of 'egalitarian' relationships, such as the 'cochonas del campo'.

The book also examines different approaches to sexual rights activism, and how these differences are related to both national and transnational political influences. The organisers of the Sexuality Free From Prejudice events, on the one hand, framed 'sexual diversity and equality as broad social concerns' (p. 99), aiming to promote a cultural transformation in the larger Nicaraguan population, rather than focusing on a particular marginalized group. The Lesbian and Gay Pride events, on the other hand, addressed lesbian and gay rights more specifically, and posed a more open challenge to the anti-sodomy law and other forms of homophobia in Nicaragua. Through an exploration of the complex dynamics between and within these distinct approaches, the author illustrates how sexual rights advocacy in Nicaragua can be better understood as a struggle, as a 'a polymorphous set of practices' (p. 124), rather than as a movement, and shows how these different approaches 'are hybrid ways to articulate trans-local political values, placing them in conversation with local political logics' (p. 110). These multiple values and logics emerge from diverse intellectual forces that have influenced Nicaragua's shifting political landscape, from the liberal discourse on choice, identity, democracy and rights, to the Marxian legacy of the Sandinista revolution and its communitarian ethos.

Considerable attention is paid in the book to Nicaragua's anti-sodomy law, which was made more severe in 1992 (although it existed prior to that) and was overturned in 2007, paradoxically, during the same legislative process that imposed a complete ban on abortion. The role of the anti-sodomy law both as a catalyst and an obstacle for sexual rights activism is examined, as well as the multiplicity of factors that might have been involved in its repeal. Although this legislative change cannot be solely understood as a result of the work of sexual rights activists, the book offers evidence of how they 'were instrumental in helping to create the conditions that would lead to the overturning of the country's anti-sodomy law' (p. 162).

Sexual rights advocates have contributed to create the conditions for policy and cultural change, the book argues, by playing a key role as mediators between global and local politics of sexuality, articulating transnational discourses on human rights and lesbian and gay identities, with the national political history and sexual culture, in 'a circular exchange between public cultures and political spaces in both South and North' (p. 156). Important challenges still remain, as discussed in the conclusions, and both the old and the new generation of sexual rights activists still struggle to transform *la vida cotidiana* (daily life) in Nicaragua. *Intimate Activisms* will be an interesting read for researchers and graduate and undergraduate students working on same-sex sexualities, so-

cial movements and gender and sexual politics in Latin America, and its emphasis on lesbian identities and organizing is particularly welcome, since it is still a little explored area in those fields of study.

Camilo Antillón, Universidad Centroamericana

– *The People’s Poet: Life and Myth of Ismael Rivera, an Afro-Caribbean Icon*, by Rosa Elena Carrasquillo. Caribbean Studies Press, 2014.

In recent years the genre of the biography has become increasingly accepted as a probe to explore broader historical contexts, particularly those relating to colonial histories in need of revisionist scrutiny. This is what Rosa Elena Carrasquillo has done in *The People’s Poet*, a biography on the life of Puerto Rican Latin singer Ismael Rivera.

In the book’s introduction, Carrasquillo explains that she aims to combine ‘the linear conception of time of a meta-narrative of a “post”-colonial subject with the revisionist, and even futuristic, need to create heroes of Caribbean popular culture’ (p. 3). She argues that ‘Puerto Ricans, like other black men and women of the transatlantic world, “need” heroes in order to humanize our past, present, and reimagine an empowered future’ (p. 3) – and rightfully so. While the colonial project rested on the dehumanization of black people, it has become the main task of the postcolonial project to affirm their humanity. An important way to achieve this is through ‘imagining, documenting, rationalizing and proclaiming’ (p. 3) the exploits of black individuals who dared to resist colonial practices and discourses.

According to Carrasquillo, Rivera ‘illustrates a type of hero of post-colonial times’ (p. 4) as he exercised great influence in Puerto Rico’s cultural domain, the domain where fierce battles over meaning and power were fought out, as political action on the island was limited due to the US governance system. Within this domain, Carrasquillo considers music as ‘one of the most salient aspects of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism’ (p. 6) and Rivera as ‘a model of cultural nationalism and Pan-Africanism’ (p. 8). The biography begins from these departure points.

Following the introduction, *The People’s Poet* consists of five chapters in which Rivera’s life story is unfolded. Chapter Two, ‘Musical Cradle 1931-1954’, describes his childhood in the poor slums of Santurce and shows how his dream of becoming a musician took off. Chapter Three, ‘The Golden Years: 1954-1962’, details Rivera’s heyday from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s and explores the popularity of his ‘new sound’ (p. 45) among all racial groups in Puerto Rico and the wider Latin world at a time when racial separation was the norm. Chapter Four, ‘Imprisoned 1962-1966’, discusses Rivera’s heroin addiction and his downfall when he got arrested for possession of the drug and sentenced to prison. Chapter Five, ‘Salsa Heights 1966-1979’, docu-

ments Rivera's return to society, which was followed by new highs and lows, including his success in the New York salsa scene and his second drug addiction. Finally, Chapter Six, 'Desolation 1980-1987', provides an account of Rivera's final years, in which he 'fell into an abyss of depression' (p. 177) and died of a heart attack at 56 years of age, just when he had gained renewed hope for another comeback.

Altogether, *The People's Poet* presents a detailed, nuanced and vivid portrait of the life of one of Puerto Rico's greatest musicians. It is obvious that the author had unprecedented access to Rivera's archives and family, notably his sister, who is the director of the Fundación Ismael Rivera, formed to preserve his singing legacy. In particular the discussion of the police report of Rivera's arrest, which has taken on mythical proportions, sheds new light on the incident that marked the end of his golden years. Moreover, Carrasquillo's attempt to understand Rivera's life in the light of Puerto Rico's cultural landscape and its wider socio-political contexts makes *The People's Poet* a valuable resource.

However, here the limits of the book come in sight as well. First of all, the connections made between Rivera's life and Puerto Rico's history feel at times artificial. Too often the experiences of the musician are stated to 'reflect', 'mirror' or 'match' the socio-political events taking place in society, without identifying direct links or impacts. This also calls into question Rivera's heroic status. My main unease with the book is due to the impression that he does not live up to his reputation as post-colonial black hero. Not only does he come across as irresponsible (mainly his repeated sexism, infidelity and drug abuse make him quite unsympathetic), but also, and more importantly, it remains unclear what contribution he has made to post-colonial change in Puerto Rico and wider Hispanic America.

While his songs and performances have undeniably inspired cultural nationalism and black pride in the Afro-Latin world, throughout his life Rivera largely seems to have avoided political action within the cultural domain. In fact, at times the author herself revokes Rivera's status as a hero by exposing hidden facts and deconstructing popular myths surrounding his life. This is both insightful and thought-provoking, but it would have been useful to deal with this more explicitly throughout the book, and to add a critical dimension to the theoretical celebration of black heroes. However, in spite of this, the retrospective and revisionist aspects of this well-written work make it a welcome addition to the academic genre of the biography – and of course a must read for all fans of Latin music.

Emiel Martens, University of Amsterdam & KITLV/Royal Netherlands  
Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies

– *Fútbol, Jews, and the Making of Argentina*, por Raanan Rein. Stanford University Press, 2014.

Como Raanan Rein cuenta en la Introducción a su libro, los estudios sobre deporte desde las perspectivas de las ciencias sociales fueron poco atendidos en América Latina hasta fechas recientes. Si el inicio puede datarse a comienzos de los años 80, a través de los trabajos del brasileño Roberto Da Matta y del argentino Eduardo Archetti, sólo a partir del nuevo siglo se produjo una suerte de estallido de la temática, así como su reconocimiento institucional y problemático. Desde mediados de la década pasada, en casi todo el sub-continente, estos estudios florecieron, aunque con ciertas predilecciones muy marcadas: el fútbol, como deporte privilegiado – a pesar de su importancia en Centroamérica, poco se ha escrito sobre béisbol, por ejemplo –; cierto énfasis sociológico y antropológico o su combinación ‘culturológica’, en desmedro de otras perspectivas – muy especialmente, la historia –; un desbalanceo brasileño y argentino, que colombianos y mexicanos intentan remediar, seguidos a cierta distancia por ecuatorianos y chilenos. Se puede afirmar que estamos frente a un campo en pleno desarrollo, que avanza sobre casos empíricos vacantes a partir de las afirmaciones teóricas ya establecidas, con cierta solidez, por la primera generación fundadora. Mucho se ha escrito sobre violencia e identidad; poco aún sobre medios de comunicación – un tema clave en la economía política del deporte latinoamericano – y sobre historia. Los mejores trabajos son las historias nacionales – los brasileños, a la cabeza, junto a la excelente *Historia social del fútbol argentino* de Julio Frydenberg, aunque limitada a las primeras décadas del siglo XX –, pero en general no abundan los trabajos historiográficos de envergadura (a pesar de que uno de los primeros estudiosos, el norteamericano Joseph Arben, era él mismo historiador).

Del mismo modo, poca atención se ha brindado a la cuestión étnica, fuera de los debates sobre los deportistas – nuevamente: los futbolistas – afroamericanos. En este sentido, la investigación brasileña es la más importante, desde el lejano trabajo periodístico de Mario Filho – *O negro no futebol brasileiro*, de 1964 en su edición definitiva – y los fundadores trabajos de José Sergio Leite Lopes a finales de los años 90. Pero casi nada hay sobre otras comunidades étnicas inscriptas en el deporte: aunque es necesario reparar en las investigaciones sobre la relación entre las identidades provistas por el deporte y las comunidades migrantes, especialmente latinas en los EE.UU., como las desarrolladas por Juan Poblete y Arturo Santamaría G. En esa dirección, el trabajo de Rein sobre los judíos en la Argentina y su inscripción identitaria – como hinchas y como dirigentes – en el club porteño Atlanta es decididamente fundacional, en la doble vacancia que estoy señalando. Por un lado, porque indaga rigurosa y minuciosamente una historia local, sólo en principio pequeña – un club siempre humilde, sin grandes épicas ni éxitos deportivos significativos, sin circulación internacional ni coberturas mediáticas, sin un solo héroe futbolístico para enorgullecerse –, pero que permite reponer los contextos mayores

de invención y desarrollo del fútbol en Buenos Aires y la Argentina, y su relación con la invención de identidades, narrativas e imaginarios de *barrio* en la metrópolis. Por otro, porque esa pequeña historia local da un giro en la primera mitad del siglo XX que la etnifica: el club Atlanta deviene, por obra de operaciones complejas que Rein describe y analiza con soltura y agudeza, el club *de los judíos* en la Argentina – no sólo en Buenos Aires. Esto le permite discutir las relaciones entre etnicidad, deporte e identidad de un modo original y, como señalé, fundacional – el propio Rein culmina su libro proponiendo posibles direcciones para análisis posteriores, comparativos y contrastivos, como podría ser el caso del Club Palestino de Chile.

Junto a esta relación entre fútbol y etnicidad, Rein se permite discutir ciertos lugares comunes de los fenómenos de violencia en los estadios, al comprobar los modos en que las *hinchadas* rivales invisten sus cánticos con contenidos racistas y antisemitas contra los hinchas de Atlanta ... y éstos, a su vez, prefieren los cánticos discriminadores contra presuntas condiciones *bolivianas* de sus contrincantes – el origen boliviano, en casi toda la Argentina, ocupa el lugar del afroamericano en una economía simbólica del racismo local: la invisibilización de los (relativamente pocos) negros da lugar a priorizar los rasgos indoamericanos como objeto del racismo. Esa ambivalencia entre discriminado y discriminador nos obliga a afinar el análisis sobre el conjunto de la cultura futbolística argentina. Después de todo, hace muchos años, discutiendo la cuestión de los cánticos discriminadores – racistas, sexistas, étnicos, homofóbicos – con un ex árbitro y ex policía que luego condujo la Seguridad Deportiva en la provincia de Buenos Aires, le recordé que esos cánticos estaban prohibidos por la AFA – porque los había prohibido la FIFA. El funcionario me contestó: ‘Ah, pero eso es para los judíos’. Esta anécdota le hubiera encantado a Rein para su libro.

Pablo Alabarces, UBA/CONICET, Argentina

– *They Never Come Back: A Story of Undocumented Workers from Mexico*, by Frans J. Schryer. ILR Press/Cornell University Press, 2014.

A concise 160 pages (including references), *They Never Come Back* recounts the experiences of undocumented indigenous migrants from the south-western state of Guerrero, Mexico. The author’s objective is to contribute to public debates concerning the contribution of undocumented Mexican migrants to the American economy with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and to advance an argument for a reform of existing immigration policy in the United States. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, which took place between 2001 and 2013, Schryer explores the lives of members of an indigenous people – the Nahuatl. With a focus on the sending community of Alto Balsas, which is thought to have a very high percentage of un-

documented migration, the author balances his discussion of migrants' experiences in the US with narratives of those they leave behind.

In addition to a Preface and Introduction, the book is divided into 13 chapters. A list of suggested readings and references, and acknowledgements conclude the work. The titles of Chapters 2 through 12 appear in quotation marks which reflect migrants' voices. These chapters describe how migrants make a living in Mexico, travel to the US, search for work, establish new relationships, voluntarily travel, return or are deported to Mexico, and contribute to the improvement of their communities. The titles of chapters 1 and 13 reflect the authors' own thoughts. He highlights the contradictory nature of an integrated economic system (NAFTA has eliminated barriers to trade and investment between the US, Mexico and Canada) that has failed to transform the Mexican economy, and the regulation of migrant labour through a militarized border. The descriptions of migrants' lives are to substantiate Schryer's later arguments concerning the need to reform labour mobility arrangements under NAFTA given the symbiotic relationship between Mexican labour and US capital.

The book's chronology is ordered to follow migrants' trajectory. However, there are several organizational inconsistencies which hinder the flow of the work. For example, the explanation for the title, *They Never Come Back* (Xkaman Waahloweh) is briefly mentioned in the Introduction, and then reappears in further detail much later in Chapter 12. The general idea of the book is nonetheless implicit in several chapters, in particular chapters 3 and 5, which discuss the reality of non-return and the experience of crossing the border, respectively. In addition, while there is mention of immigration policy throughout the work, the author only enters into a more in-depth review in the final chapter, as he prioritizes migrants' experiences in the preceding chapters. His review, however, does not specify the series of changes which have taken place in immigration policy within the US context since 1986, excepting more general comments regarding the increasingly restrictive nature of border control since the signing of NAFTA, as well as the possibility of changes under the Obama administration.

Schryer has positioned his work as an example of public anthropology, targeting American citizens in order to provide 'a better understanding of undocumented migrants and the contribution of undocumented workers to the American economy' (p. viii). Though directed to non-academic readers, the text is also useful to undergraduate students with an interest in migration studies, and to those within the discipline of anthropology because of the rich description of migrants' experience. For those contemplating fieldwork research, it should be noted that the text does not provide a comprehensive literature review on Mexican migration, or an extensive description of the methodology utilized. Schryer does supply a list of suggested readings and references to guide readers. However, advanced readers, as well as academics and practitioners, would have benefitted from more thorough referencing. In addition, it would have

been useful to include key works such as those by Bibler Coutin, de Genova, and Nevins.

Schryer's research confirms several of the themes which permeate the literature on undocumented migration including the vulnerability of undocumented migrants, the complexity of the transnational experience and increasing trend of households comprised of undocumented parents and documented and undocumented children. He aims to distinguish his work in several ways, but the most significant contribution is a description of a specific migratory pattern – the emigration of the Nahua from Mexico – within the past fifteen years. He provides insight into the experience of an indigenous people, who as non-Spanish speakers with particular traditions and customs experience particular challenges in the US. This detailed narrative of migrants' experiences, supported by excerpts from interviews, makes the book a valuable contribution to what Alvarez (1995) refers to as an 'anthropology of borderlands'. After reading this text, individuals with an interest in the public debate on immigration policy will be better informed of the rationale behind economic undocumented migration, the positives and negatives of migration for sending communities, as well as the social, moral and economic logic behind free(r) labour mobility. Schryer accomplishes his task of preparing a work of *public anthropology*, rendering the work easily accessible to the general public.

Natalie Dietrich Jones, The University of the West Indies

#### References

- Alvarez, R. (1995). The Mexican-US border: The making of an anthropology of borderlands. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 447-470.

## Read **Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies** online as part of your subscription

This journal is available digitally as part of the **ingentaconnect** research platform. Take advantage of ingentaconnect's state-of-the-art functionality and free services for end users, including email alerts and RSS feeds for new issues, social bookmarking and easy citation export, interlinking between articles to help you track down other relevant articles, and more.

ingenta**connect** >

### Access is just a click away...



- Register free at [www.ingentaconnect.com](http://www.ingentaconnect.com)
- **For libraries and institutions**, choose Set Up subscriptions
- **For personal subscribers**, select Personal subscriptions
- Select Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies and enter your subscription ID number
- You will be notified by email once your online access has been activated.

[ingentaconnect.com/content/csrc/aztlan](http://ingentaconnect.com/content/csrc/aztlan)