

Book Review

– *Racial alterity, Wixarika youth activism, and the right to the Mexican city*, by Diana Negrín, The University of Arizona Press, 2017

Diana Negrín provides a compelling historical-geographical analysis of Wixarika young people negotiating sedimented constraints and asserting their needs in urban and rural contexts in western Mexico. Towards this end, Negrín draws from and contributes to multiple fields of study and disciplinary debates, notably in human geography. The book is gracefully written and well organized. An introduction captures the broad contours of Mexico's racialized geography. Negrín then deftly weaves together several arguments through five substantive chapters, which connect the long-running production of an ideology of Indigenous otherness to policies and practices of racial domination that materialize in state-backed development projects in Wixarika territory and in spaces of inclusion and exclusion in the cities of Tepic and Guadalajara. In a generative conclusion, Negrín opens timely questions around interrelating themes of Indigenous autonomy, national economic development, liberalism, and citizenship. These key themes are made compelling for readers, in part, because the book is a product of engaged research; Negrín works from a social position of inter-generational family commitment to the Wixarika communities on which her book is focused. As I note here, other strengths of the book suggest directions for future research and teaching around these themes.

As a first strength of the book, I note its methodology, particularly Negrín's approach to youth activism. On the one hand, Negrín carefully situates the protagonists of Wixarika youth activism in specific places and relationships; she recognizes heterogeneity behind flattening representations of Wixarika (in, for example, heritage tourism). Chapter Five is particularly rich here, for the way Negrín abides by the singular lives of young people living in tension with inherited notions of cultural authenticity and spatial belonging. On the other hand, Negrín's analysis allows readers to come away from the book with a sense of the historically constituted conditions of immobility that Wixarika communities struggle against. Young people's disruption of spatial-temporal circumscription can accordingly be understood politically, as a profound challenge to Mexico's geography of social difference and national belonging.

A second notable strength of this book is Negrín's innovative analysis of Mexican nation building as a process forged through racial alterity. Her genealogies of the social categories at play in the racialization of contemporary Mexico draw from diverse sources, and establish connections between disparate forms of cultural production, including school curricula, fine art, journalism, scholarly knowledge production, and city boosterism. Negrín shows how disparate representations of cultural difference have, at distinct moments, converged around a shifting common sense that licenses the subjugation of Indigenous communities. These representations have historically been mobilized to draw Indigenous communities into relationships of economic exploitation or self-effacing performances of otherness. The intimacy of this otherness with normative discourses and practices of Mexican identity shapes Negrín's abiding concern, "the experiences and negotiations of urban Wixaritari within the context of particular places and situations" (Negrín, 2019, p. 188).

Finally, this book provides robust historical-geographical case studies of Tepic and Guadalajara, both of which have been relatively neglected in urban studies of Mexico. Chapters Three and Four, especially, narrate the emergence and transformation of these cities in regional, national, and international context. They also provide a satisfactorily detailed sense of cultural landscapes and social relationships within each city as experienced by Wixarika residents. The power of the case studies derives in part from Negrín's account of racialization in previous chapters. The case studies also provide traction for the notion of a "right to the city," so that Negrín can interpret the political geographies of Wixarika young people as demand for space in which to live with dignity, which has historically been denied to Indigenous people in Mexico. Where many scholars vaguely invoke "the right to the city," with passing reference to Henri Lefebvre, to make sense of contentious politics in spaces of everyday life, Negrín presents "the right to the city" as a political concept made meaningful by people who mobilize for that right.

Negrín deserves an audience of not only researchers but also students. This book lends itself to productive use in the classroom, particularly for advanced students in youth studies, ethnic and racial studies, and urban studies. Students will benefit from Negrín's clear presentation and operationalization of key concepts, and may enjoy seeing familiar arguments (e.g., Said's critique of Orientalism, or Alexander's critique of liberalism) resituated in the context of Mexico. Negrín's book may also prove valuable in making sense of the contemporary politics of Mexico's so-called "Fourth Transformation," in which President López Obrador and his allies promote national development through discourses and policies that, in familiar ways, enplace Indigenous communities to the effect of naturalizing the introduction in their territories of large-scale infrastructure projects. Negrín's book is timely, innovative, and deserving of a wide audience.

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