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## **Book Review: Michael Knapp et al., *Revolution in Rojava***

**Review author: Patrick Huff**

**Michael Knapp, Anja Flach and Ercan Ayboga (trans. Janet Biehl), 2016, *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan*. London: Pluto Press (320 pp., paperback, £15.00)**

*Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan* is a comprehensive and accessible survey of ongoing struggles for peace and freedom in the embattled region. In recent years images of Kurdish female fighters taking on the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) have made international headlines. Syrian Kurdistan is known for strong patriarchal traditions, and the spectacle of armed women smashing IS certainly raises eyebrows. Unfortunately, much of the popular media coverage stops there, treating women in struggle as curiosities and failing to delve deeper. *Revolution in Rojava* commits 320 pages, arranged in 15 concise chapters, to a timely and necessary intervention. The volume covers a wide range of topics, including political organization, women's liberation, social economy, ecological challenges, the healthcare, and the revolutionary justice system. Ultimately the book offers in-depth descriptions and cogent analyses of a society, a culture, engaged in a profound act of democratic reconstruction.

The three co-authors bring a wealth of intellectual and grounded practical experience to the book. Michael Knapp, a historian, and Ercan Ayboga, a Kurdish activist, co-founded Tatort Kurdistan (Crime Scene Kurdistan), which monitors German arms traffic to the region. Knapp is a member of NAV-DEM, Democratic Society Centre of Kurds in Germany, a national level body organized on principles of democratic confederalism that coordinates 260 civil society associations. Anja Flach, an ethnologist, spent two years living alongside Kurdish female guerrillas in the mountains of North Kurdistan. Her two previous German language books are based on this experience. *Revolution in Rojava* includes a foreword by David Graeber, anthropologist and Occupy Wall Street alum, and an afterword by Asya Abdullah, co-president of Rojava's Party of Democratic Unity (PYD). Readers will find the book's glossary a helpful guide through the alphabet soup of acronyms peppering the text. Full disclosure: I recently co-organized an academic workshop in which Ayboga and the book's German to English translator, Janet Biehl, participated.

Graeber's foreword critiques "the loser left," self-styled radicals that have secretly stopped believing in the possibility of revolution (p. xiii). What Graeber calls "cool-kid clubbism" is one version of this tendency, those who prefer existence in a radical niche to actual radical politics (p. xiv). Knee-jerk anti-imperialists are another case in point: their argument is that the United States is

an imperialist power; and Kurds have forged tactical battlefield alliances with the U.S; thus the Kurds are unwitting or intentional agents of U.S. imperialism.

The book clarifies the notional idea of Kurdistan, which existed long before the borders of the present states in which it lies. Today Kurdistan's subaltern geography exists in political superposition, running roughly from Eastern Turkey through Northern Syria and Iraq to Western Iran. From the perspective of central Kurdistan the geographic frame of reference shifts. Thus the Kurds call these areas Bakur (North), Rojava (West), Basûr (South), and Rojhilat (East), respectively. Rojava, a culturally diverse area, is home to Kurds, the majority ethnic group, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Aramaeans, Turkmen, Chechens, Armenians, and a few smaller groups. They practice a variety of faith traditions, including Sunni Islam, Aramaic Christianity, Chaldean Eastern Catholicism, and Ezidism. Ezidis, ethnic Kurds, practice an ancient monotheistic but non-Abrahamic faith.

Asya Abdullah offers a brief but thoughtful sketch of the philosophy of democratic autonomy. "Our society is diverse, like a mosaic, and the monistic state principle is entirely unsuited for it and cannot be implemented no matter how much force is exerted," she writes (p. 266). She suggests the vacuity of the homogenizing modernist state project and points to the necessity of accepting rather than repressing the reality of difference. The revolutionary impetus came from the Kurds but they recognize that democratic autonomy must be for all the peoples of the region.

Chapter three provides an overview of the theory and practice of democratic confederalism, the Rojava revolution's guiding ideology. Subsequent chapters explore its implementation across multiple domains of social life. In 1978 Abdullah Öcalan and a small cadre of revolutionaries founded the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), at the time a national liberation movement ideologically informed by Marxist-Leninism. In 1984 the PKK launched a guerrilla war against the Turkish state. The Syrian government, motivated by its Cold War rivalry with Turkey, allowed the PKK to operate in its territory. By the early 1990s corruption and internal fractionalization plagued the PKK. With the Soviet Union's collapse and subsequent regional political realignments, Syria was no longer a safe haven. Öcalan was pushed to leave. In 1999, after an international manhunt that seems straight out of a John le Carré spy novel, Öcalan was captured in Kenya and rendered to Turkey to face the death penalty, later commuted to life in prison. Öcalan has spent the last 17 years mostly in solitary confinement. Despite these significant challenges the period of the 1990s and early 2000s was also a time of earnest self-critique on the part of Öcalan, the PKK, and partisans of the wider Kurdish freedom movement. The PKK and much of the Kurdish freedom movement in Rojava and beyond now explicitly reject the quest for a state of their own and have instead set about building democratic autonomy in accordance with Öcalan's theory of democratic confederalism.

In addition to his own practical and hard won knowledge and wisdom Öcalan constructed his theory of democratic confederalism from an array of sources,

prominently including the work of libertarian socialist Murray Bookchin. Öcalan's radical reassessment of revolutionary theory and practice led his research all the way back to the Neolithic period, 10,000 years ago. The Neolithic saw a profound and enduring transformation in human livelihoods as settled agriculture began to supplant nomadic hunting and gathering and, to Öcalan's lament, the subjugation and enslavement of women to patriarchal authority. As the authors note, Öcalan's analysis is informed by a tradition in socialist thought famously expressed in Friedrich Engels' notion of ancient matriarchy and primitive communism. However, there is a crucial difference between Öcalan and Engels' ideas. "[I]n Öcalan's view, the emergence of hierarchy, class rule, and statism was not inevitable but forced" (p. 39). In other words, the emergence of the patriarchal state was a political project rather than a necessary stage in human social evolution. Öcalan views this transformation from egalitarianism to hierarchy as initiating ruptures between men and women and humanity and nature.

Part of why Öcalan views the Neolithic revolution as relevant to contemporary political questions has to do with his adoption of Fernand Braudel's concept of the *longue durée*, history's long-term processes and enduring social institutions. In Öcalan's analysis the Neolithic is relevant precisely because we are all still living in social structures that emerged there and came to full fruition in the Bronze Age some 5,000 years ago. Öcalan's term *statist civilization* references these enduring authoritarian structures. *Capitalist modernity* refers to the current configuration of statist civilization. To these Öcalan juxtaposes *democratic civilization* and *democratic modernity*, an enduring current of resistance running through history and its contemporary configurations. Some pertinent examples of the current of democratic modernity can be observed in the council democracy of the Paris Commune of 1871, the council system of Soviets before Lenin's Bolshevik Party crushed them, the workers' councils of the 1918 German uprising, the syndicalist organization of the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s and, of course, those being organized today in Rojava.

It is to Rojava that we shall now turn. The territory of Rojava is divided into three administrative cantons, Afrîn, Kobanî, and Cizîrê. Within and across these units a complex and rhizomatic web of commune, neighborhood, village, district, and regional councils have been developed. Boards consisting of mandated and recallable delegates operate at each level from base communes to the regional council to integrate and coordinate activities. Commissions of five to ten people exist at each level and focus on eight issues of collective concern: women, defense, economics, politics, civil society, free society, justice, ideology, and health. A parallel and autonomous women's council system exists alongside the general system. In addition each commission in the general system must have a male and female co-chair. Social movements, trade unions, and democratic political parties all participate in the council system through delegates. In 2014 the three cantons adopted an overarching political and legal framework called the Social Contract and within this framework each canton created democratic-autonomous administrations (DAAs). This system resembles a conventional constitutional order with its tripartite division of

powers in the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. The DAAs are formally distinct from the popular council system but, at least for the time being, practically dependent on it for implementation of decisions. The DAAs were created out of the necessity of interacting with the outside world. Without these formal structures international institutions that only recognize states would deny the cantons desperately needed aid, food, medicine, and the like. As the authors note, it remains to be seen whether the DAAs and the democratic council system will be able to coexist in the long-term. From an anti-state perspective the DAAs may constitute a serious contradiction for the goal of a stateless society.

*Revolution in Rojava* makes clear the democratic revolution is a woman's revolution and it is reconfiguring virtually every dimension of social and cultural life in Rojava. To be sure the emancipation of women in Rojava is far from complete, the old patriarchal structures and mindsets linger on, but the women's movement has made some truly astonishing advances. This did not happen overnight but is the culmination of a trajectory of struggle beginning with the organizing efforts of PKK militants in the late 1980s and 1990s. The movement's current configuration can be traced to the founding of Yekitiya Star in 2005, recently renamed Kongreya Star, as an umbrella organization for the women's movement in Rojava. The authors note that the term *star* is a reference to Ishtar, an ancient Mesopotamian goddess (p. 64). A key dimension of Kongreya Star's organizing work involves educating women in the movement's theoretical perspective called *jineolojî*, women's science. As Knapp and colleagues explain, "[j]ineolojî also wants to develop the vision of a good life and the councils are putting it into practice; theory and practice are always in communication" (p. 71). *Jineolojî* is essentially an applied or practical sociology guided by a feminist ethical framework. Perhaps one of the most important accomplishments of the women's struggle so far has been in the institution of the principle of dual leadership. Leadership positions in mixed gender situations must consist of male and female co-chairs and all decision-making bodies must have at least 40% female membership. Women are also at the forefront of the social economy as they create and manage cooperatives of all sorts. Women perform a valuable role on peace committees, which are integral to the new justice system as it focuses on communal consensus and restorative justice rather than issuing punishment for crimes.

But despite Rojava's incredible and inspiring achievements the future of the revolution remains precarious. Potential internal contradictions and external threats make even medium term predictions nearly impossible. Syria is suffering from one of the most brutal wars in recent memory. The forces arrayed against Rojava's revolutionaries are many and varied. The threats run the gamut from the Turkish and Syrian states to various right-wing Islamist groups. And, of course, there is the international rivalry between the United States and Russia that is directly influencing the course of the war. Even though the U.S. has offered limited support to the Kurds no one seems to see it as anything more than a strategic consideration that will be discarded as soon as the Kurds become inconvenient. The future is hazy but it seems clear that the democratic

movement in Rojava offers the best alternative to endless authoritarianism and war in the region. Echoing revolutionaries past, *Revolution in Rojava* concludes with a stark choice for Syria and, ultimately, the world: communalism or barbarism.

### **About the review author**

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**Book review: Kerstin Jacobsson (Ed.), *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe***

**Review author: Bojan Baća**

**Kerstin Jacobsson (Ed.), 2015, *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*. London and New York: Routledge (322 pp., hardcover, \$124.95)**

*Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* is Kerstin Jacobsson's latest edited volume on urban grassroots movements in Central and Eastern Europe, and it is yet another valuable instalment in her research agenda on the specificities of social movements in the post-socialist, (post)transition setting. In the first two volumes, which she co-edited with Steven Saxonberg (*Beyond NGO-ization: The Development of Social Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (2013) and *Social Movements in Post-Communist Europe and Russia* (2014)) Jacobsson successfully challenged the notorious "weak civil society" thesis used to describe the "post-socialist condition." She brought rich and detailed empirical evidence to counter the influential thesis, revealing a vibrant civil society and various forms of citizen-led mobilizations. In *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*, instead of simply providing additional case studies that fill the gaps in research on post-socialist civil societies which have generally neglected urban grassroots movements, Jacobsson takes a bold step, inaugurating post-socialism not simply as an area studies problem, but rather as a critical standpoint in social movement studies. Rather than treating the region as Europe's "other," the authors in this volume approach their empirical material as "an excellent opportunity to test and develop social movement theory" (p. 2), and thus avoid the ever-present theoretical biases and orientalist treatment of the region as one with a "backwardness" that needs to "catch up" with its Western neighbors. Rather, urban grassroots movements of the post-socialist region of Central and Eastern Europe (which includes countries in both Southeast Europe and post-Soviet space) are analyzed with nuance, taking into account the ambivalence, hybridity and liminality of the "post-socialist condition" and the distinct historical development, cultural specificities, and the unique socio-political transformation and economic restructuring of each society. Instead of treating the region as a repository of case studies for uncritical application of Western theoretical models, the contributing authors use the empirical realities of grassroots urban movements in Europe's semi-periphery to re-calibrate social movement theory.

*Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* offers two dense theoretical chapters (introduction and conclusion) and ten case studies that put forth analyses of urban grassroots movements without privileging high-visibility popular mobilization, broadening our knowledge of actually existing civil society



and social movements in the post-socialist landscape of Central and Eastern Europe. In the theoretical chapters, Jacobsson offers an extensive literature review on urban movements in the region (and beyond) and discusses the variegated terrains and forms of urban activism taking place in post-socialist contexts. She underscores “the importance of embedding the urban movements studied in a larger framework of an overall civil society in which also other actors such as NGOs operate, taking into account also the role of the state and public authorities impinging upon it” (p. 278). In other words, Jacobsson convincingly argues that the best way to understand the recent development of the post-socialist, post-NGO-ized civil societies is to focus on the urban contexts within which these “serve as spaces for agency and as bases where the exercise of active citizenship can be revitalized” (p. 279). Instead of studying high-visibility, large-scale, mass mobilizations, Jacobsson emphasizes the necessity of exploring diverse forms of *low-key* urban struggles happening on smaller scales that *politicize* issues related to everyday life and, in the process, transform “ordinary citizens” into activists. She synthesizes a much needed critique of the limitations and biases of dominant theoretical models in social movement studies, whose concepts and generalizations are based on the historical experience of affluent Western European and North American democracies and, subsequently, offers a re(de)defined conceptual apparatus for “capturing” empirical reality of movement-related activities that go beyond the so-called “third sector.” Social movements in the region are shown to be grassroots-driven, embedded in the informal sphere of everyday life and, for that reason, appear as low-visibility, small-scale collective struggles “related to everyday life in the neighborhoods or connected to the sub-cultures,” with predominantly peaceful action repertoires (p. 14). Jacobsson concludes that “the distinctive post-socialist experiences could, rather than an expression of ‘otherness’, then be seen as a resource available for urban movement scholars globally to freely use and explore” (p. 282).

*Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* includes ten detailed case studies by experts on the region to substantiate Jacobsson’s theoretical claims. Drawing on both European and U.S. paradigms in social movement studies, the authors use predominantly ethnographic, interview-based methods to offer in-depth analyses of eight post-socialist civil societies. In a chapter on the playfulness of resistance, Beatriz Lindqvist explores how creative public performances in Vilnius served as resistance to dominant neoliberal individuality and enacted alternative lifestyles to dominant symbolic codes. Ioana Florea analyzes the ideologically ambiguous heritage protection movement in Bucharest that defended “urban identity” of the city, while at the same time excluding marginalized groups that did not fit into its middle-class cultural value system. Olena Leipnik investigates the overlooked activism of the elderly, by analyzing motives and values in five cases of civic engagement in Ukraine where seniors struggled to count as social actors. Sabrina Kopf scrutinizes the “anti-political” bike activism in Belgrade as a local manifestation of the “right to the city” movement, and describes cyclists’ struggle against neoliberal urban planning and their demands for their equal share of public

space. Bojan Bilić and Paul Stubbs deconstruct the underpinning ideology and biases of the “urban” signifier in post-Yugoslav political activism and protest politics. Elena Tykanova and Anisya Khokhlova explore two distinct cases of grassroots mobilization against the neoliberalization of public spaces in St. Petersburg by focusing on how civil society actors protect public space against top-down urban planning, and the ways in which they frame/legitimize their claims to contested spaces. Karine Clément convincingly exposes mechanisms that transformed local grassroots initiatives into a large-scale, mass mobilization around universalist political demands in contemporary Russia. Dominika V. Polanska looks at the role of alliances and brokerage between squatters’ and tenants’ organizations in Warsaw and how these grassroots movements announced a new phase in the development of Polish civil society. Alexandra Bitušiková investigates how transactional networking among grassroots movements in Banská Bystrica democratized urban governance on the local level. The final empirical chapter is written by Jolanta Aidukaitė and Kerstin Jacobsson, and analyzes the positive effects of Europeanization on grassroots activist communities in Vilnius.

These case studies show that urban grassroots movements in the region cannot be easily classified as contentious or non-contentious, but instead occupy a liminal position by often employing both radical and non-radical repertoires while simultaneously vacillating between being service providers and political claim-makers. More importantly, these ten case studies bring to the fore processes of “political becoming” (political subject-formation) among traditionally apolitical social actors. As Jacobsson posits, “individuals participating in mobilizations typically develop a new sense of individual and collective agency and empowerment, which is of particular importance in post-authoritarian and low-trust societies” (p. 279). By focusing on a non-normative conceptualization of civil society, Jacobsson’s book offers valuable insights into actually existing, “vernacular” civil societies occupied by both progressive and regressive urban movements. Overall, the detailed and rich empirical material on urban grassroots movements in Central and Eastern Europe presented in this volume “yields insights that are useful for theory building even on more general issues such as agency, resistance, citizen-making and political becoming” (p. 283).

*Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* is not important only for scholars interested in social movements, but provides a good starting point for urban studies and civil society studies scholars who are interested in the post-socialist landscape in a region characterized by rapid economic (neo)liberalization, profound state reforms and abrupt transnational integrations. The analyses provided in this volume offer new understandings of how social actors re-think and re-gain political (collective) agency in post-socialist urban spaces that are often negatively affected by privatization and marketization, neoliberal ideology and institutions, urban restructuring, and the general incapacity of public authorities to meet the daily needs of ordinary citizens. By studying urban grassroots movements within these contexts, Jacobsson and her collaborators present “a much-needed corrective to the (still)

predominant picture of a weak, passive and NGO-ized civil society in the region” (p. 16). Despite the volume’s meticulous focus on contemporary urban movements across post-socialist spaces, what remains wanting is a *diachronic* analysis of both urban and rural grassroots movements in the region. Overall, the book offers both theoretical tools and empirical evidence that should guide future research and prevent researchers from omitting or, worse still, misunderstanding collective actions taking place in the region. By eschewing the generality with which social movements in the post-socialist space have been treated in scholarly literature thus far, *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* broadens our view on and understanding of urban grassroots movements.

### **About the review author**

Bojan Baća is a PhD candidate in Sociology at York University, Canada. He received his BSc in Political Science from University of Montenegro and his MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Central European University. His doctoral research – based on extensive archival and ethnographic research in Montenegro – explores the relationship between socio-economic/political transformation and civic engagement in post-socialist societies and, more broadly, the role of activist citizenship and contentious politics in democratization processes. He can be contacted at bojan.baca AT gmail.com.

## **Book review: Dario Azzellini (Ed.), *An Alternative Labour History***

**Review author: Gerard Kester**

**Dario Azzellini (Ed.), 2015, *An Alternative Labour History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy*. London: Zed Books (360 pp., paperback, £13.29)**

Initiatives for worker self-determination have emerged all through history. First in reaction to feudalism, then to industrialist exploitation, and now to global financial capitalism. In the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a number of self-management projects appeared on the scene, either factories occupied and taken over by workers, or communal projects. Recuperated enterprises or ‘factories without bosses’, where workers took over the management of failed private firms, rapidly grew in number. The value of *An Alternative Labour History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy*, edited by Dario Azzellini lies in the detailed description of innovative cases of worker-managed enterprises in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico, Italy, Greece, France, Turkey, Egypt and the United States. It is no wonder that an author who is also film maker is excited about these examples of worker organization. Azzellini’s volume approaches each case with enthusiasm, showing the rebellion of workers against the nefarious consequences of neoliberal financial capitalism. In this book, as in several of his earlier publications, Azzellini has become a staunch reporter of the ‘occupy, resist, produce’ movement, describing worker resistance that is often heroic. Going by the title of the present book one expects to expand one’s knowledge about the future of these recuperated enterprises and indeed the authors’ aim is, as he writes in the introduction, to advance scholars’ and workers’ understanding of, and appreciation for, the historic significance and necessity of self-administration, workers’ control, collective decision making in assemblies and workers councils (p. 4). Yet, the lack of a conceptual and theoretical framework on the labour history of worker control and workplace democracy makes *An Alternative Labour History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy* descriptive rather than analytic.

The cases described in Azzellini’s book rise from below which make them genuine but at the same time vulnerable. A number of these recuperated companies, writes Azzellini, also embrace the idea of a social form of ownership, as “common property”, managed directly and democratically by those most affected, also by others than only the members of a particular workplace. Not only productivity but also things like health, education, ecology, sustainability and solidarity are taken into account. These projects have the potential to play a role in building a broad-based social movement and an impetus to a wider political vision; they can become an impetus for the imagination of an alternative vision of the economy. Analysing a wide variety of worker control

experiences in recuperated enterprises, Azzellini maintains that what he terms new social relations are developed and practiced in the recuperated workplace, including affection, reliability, mutual help, solidarity and equality. He goes on to say that workers of recuperated factories consider themselves part of a broader movement (pp. 95-96). However, one immediate challenge in the cases described was the recovery of employment rather than ideological motivation. In a chapter on the experience in Uruguay, writer Anabel Rieiro summed up what may happen next: individual survival under corporative collective management, or a political step towards transforming into a different type of society, generating alternative political space for the realisation of democratic labour relations. Rieiro concludes that it is neither the recovery of the enterprise nor the act of making it viable again that automatically generates political subjectivities conducive to transformation as people are chiefly concerned with individual survival (pp. 291ff). Rieiro rightly demystifies the romantic revolutionary spirit Azzellini tries to evoke in his generalising comments. Aline Suelen Pires' recent study of recuperated firms in Brazil confirms Rieiro's observations. Pires concludes that the leading motivation in the cases she studied was not resistance to capitalism or socialist revolution but a fight to keep jobs and support the family (Pires 2016). Initial enthusiasm dwindles sooner or later and recuperated firms eventually grow into more or less traditional capitalist firms, with growing wage differentials, financial incentives, hierarchy, hiring contract workers who are excluded from the original community. Workers' initial sense of involvement and bonds of solidarity appear to weaken in the long run. *An Alternative Labour History* fails to analyse this process.

Spread over the introductory chapter and several following chapters is some conceptualisation or classification, for instance, on the concept of social ownership (pp. 69-70) and a short section on "common features" and "common challenges" (pp. 91-97), but reference to major theories of worker control and self-management - for example the classical texts of Branko Horvat and Jaroslav Vanek among many others - is conspicuously absent. The history included in the volume is limited to the cases of Chile under Allende, Austria after the First World War, and Japan after the second. Here Azzellini pays for the lack of theory. His choice of cases does not appear to have a logic. It is difficult to comprehend that there is only a single paragraph (pp. 15-16) about Yugoslav self-management. True enough, party control was a major problem there, but for several decades worker self-management in Yugoslavia was a true laboratory of worker control at workplace level in the so-called "basic organisations of associated labour." Workers were in full control of the management of their workplace and of the policy of their enterprise. In a book on the labour history of worker control it is an oversight to simply ignore that experience.

Even more difficult to comprehend is that Azzellini ignores the studies of factory occupations in the 1970s in Europe which show much more similarity with the challenges faced by the recuperated firms about which Azzellini writes. Whether spontaneously introduced or by created by government initiative, these firms sooner or later did not survive. The occupied factories were often already

bankrupt firms, taken over by workers to keep employment and not because the workers were ideologically motivated for self-management. Even when recuperated firms extended their existence for a long period of time it was generally only a minority of workers who internalised self-management values – mostly the workers who played key roles in the occupation or take-over of the firm, and who were elected to represent the entire workforce. In my own research of the self-managed Drydocks (5000 workers) in Malta I concluded that after a period of 20 years, there was a cultural gap between, on the one hand, the elected representatives who had evidently internalised self-management as a way of life, and on the other hand the rank-and-file workers including the shop stewards, who had fallen back on adversarial labour relations in the very firm of which they were themselves the masters (Kester 1980, 1986). It is difficult to develop self-management in the cultural environment of a global capitalist system, and indeed the Drydocks was privatised again after 25 years self-management. Even more eloquent is the fate of the kibbutzim in Israel. More than fifty years ago the initial principles were internal democracy, self-management, avoidance of hired labour, and relative equality in distribution of rewards. But eventually liberalisation policies undermined these principles, collective ownership changed to private ownership with inheritance rights and salary distribution is in accordance with the contribution to the kibbutz economy (Achouch 2016).

Recuperated firms remain isolated cases with a completely different style of labour relations. For the learning process to cope with that organisationally as well as culturally, little or no support structure was available to workers in recuperated firms. They failed to organise themselves, establish alliances, find appropriate legal formats and most importantly, to set up a common supporting structure to provide education and training, to conduct research and evaluation or to assist in marketing and financing. How to assure that spontaneous take-overs escape the fate of similar experiences in the past? Azzellini mentions the need for support by political parties and unions, the lack of legal forms for worker control, and of financial support (p. 91), but does not elaborate. There is no well-reasoned analysis of the factors which have led to the eventual defeat of workers control of recuperated enterprises in the past and, therefore, the book offers no contribution to overcome the difficult and complicated challenges to make self-management a durable social movement. Why, for instance, is the conceivability of substantive trade union support not explored? Azzellini writes that autonomous workers are able to question and to achieve much more than unions because unions represent – by their own logic – employed workers only (pp. 11-12). Even when he adds that only a small minority are different, he underestimates the potential importance of the role of trade unions in supporting and developing alternative labour relations. This may appear from descriptions in various chapters in *An Alternative Labour History*. Moreover, in labour history – supposedly the leading theme in Azzellini's book – trade unions did support Worker Councils in a number of countries; these were seen as the start of an attack on the power foundations of production relations and on capital ownership structures. In the 1970s the French trade union leader

Edmond Maire published his trade union vision in a book in which he argued that the road of trade union struggle should lead to worker self-management (Maire 1976). Recently, a major icon of trade union studies, Richard Hyman, pleaded a trade union launch for a struggle for a genuinely alternative economy. The struggle for the democratisation of work and of the economy requires a new, imaginative – indeed utopian – counter-offensive, a persuasive vision of a different and better society and economy, an alternative to the mantra of greed, he wrote (Hyman 2015). It is precisely here that trade unions have a golden opportunity: to give the principle of democracy new ideological content, to elaborate it and relate it to the economy. It is a pity that *An Alternative Labour History* misses this perspective completely.

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## About the review author

Gerard Kester (now retired) was associate professor at the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague and director of the African Worker Participation Development Programme. He conducted numerous research projects on the democratisation of labour relations in Asia, Africa and Europe and published the results in academic books and in manuals for trade union education and policy. Contact: gerardensonjakester AT ziggo.nl

## **Book review: Peter Waterman, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement***

**Review author: David Featherstone**

**Peter Waterman, 2014, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement: Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist*. Helsinki: Into Publishing (466 pp., ebook, free)<sup>1</sup>**

In 1968 eight British Communists in Prague signed a letter to the Communist Party of Great Britain's *Morning Star* (the party's newspaper) which argued that they "totally condemn the present occupation of Czechoslovakia". It asked for support for "the Czechoslovak Communists' appeal to us to mobilise support" and to "Condemn the action of the five powers and demand the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops". This action took place during the repression of Alexander Dubcek's "socialism with a human face" which challenged top-down Stalinist socialism with a commitment to political participation and democratisation. As Jiří Pelikán, the reforming Head of Czech Television during the Prague Spring, argued in an interview with *New Left Review* in 1975, "the demand for freedom of expression, particularly in Eastern Europe" was "not at all just an intellectual's demand", but rather "the basic condition for the workers and peasants to take part in politics" (Pelikán 2011: 46-47).

One of the co-authors of the letter, along with Brian Bicat, and Monty Johnstone, who had "tried to dissuade embarrassed Russian tank crews in fluent Russian" (Hobsbawm 2007), was Peter Waterman. Waterman was then working for World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in Prague and his account of the Soviet invasion of Prague from the point of view of a young "official" working for a Communist-led international trade union federation is one of the gems in his autobiographical account of a life as a "Long-Distance Internationalist". Waterman recalls discussing the events with Pelikan who he knew from International Union of Students (IUS) in the 1950s. Pelikan went on to become a leading left Czech dissident in exile. Waterman later returned to the UK, studied at Birmingham, became something of an expert in African labour, and in 1970 finally broke with the Communist Party.

Waterman will be better known to readers of this journal as an acclaimed scholar and activist of labour and social movement internationalism, who has had a role in many different left projects and publications including *The Newsletter of International Labour Studies*, the World Social Forum and, of course, *Interface*. *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement* gives a fascinating sense of Waterman's background and political

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.into-ebooks.com/book/from\\_coldwar\\_communism\\_to\\_the\\_global\\_emancipatory\\_movement/](http://www.into-ebooks.com/book/from_coldwar_communism_to_the_global_emancipatory_movement/)



and intellectual trajectories. It is a valuable contribution because such autobiographical accounts of intellectual and activist figures are relatively rare. Through the text Waterman gives important insights into the struggles that go into shaping intellectual positions and exchanges, and of the pressures exerted on them by various forces, and institutional dynamics both academic and political.

The first part of the book charts Waterman's experience of growing up in a Communist Jewish family in the East End of London. It gives a clear and vivid sense of the dynamics of such a family and also gives vignettes of friends who he grew up with, including Raphael Samuel, a celebrated social historian and one of the founders of the journal, *History Workshop*. Samuel's father was a Polish Communist who was manager of Collett's bookshop between 1942 and 1952. Samuel was involved in the Yiddish Workers Theatre movement and Waterman describes him as "a convert from talmudic Judaism to talmudic Marxism" (p. 22). His mother Ray worked with the Scottish Communist MP, Willie Gallacher, and wrote two semi-autobiographical novels. Waterman was an early member of the Young Communist League (YCL) travelling to Berlin and Bucharest in the 1950s for international communist festivals. He gives a vivid sense of his early tutelage as an activist in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) including being schooled in anti-imperialism by Ben Bradley – one of the Meerut prisoners (see Pennybacker 2009: 160-167). This was something which was later to impress comrades in India.

Waterman's involvement in the YCL and international communist networks through the International Union of Students took him to Prague, for the first stint in the last 1950s, when he worked in the city. He goes on to account for his rather shocked encounters on his return with what he wryly terms the "Actually-Existing Working Class" in the British army. This experience led him to realise the extent to which the working class comrades he had met in the CPGB were far from typical British workers! After serving in the army he studied African Studies at Birmingham, becoming interested in questions of African labour which would become a key area of expertise. In the early 1970s he travelled with his young family to work at the Northern Nigerian university, Ahmadu Bello in Zaria lecturing on 'World Contemporary History'. He recalls that in this environment – smoking grass and discussing Frantz Fanon – he was finally "making my tortuous way from the old left to the new" (p. 155).

His account, especially of his time in Czechoslovakia is enlivened by a stream of jokes, which draw attention to the ways in which official politics was negotiated, ridiculed and endured. The highlights of these are the sardonic Czech jokes from the 1960s: "Is it possible to build socialism in one country? Yes but it's better to live in another" (p. 55). These texture an account which could easily have reduced life as a communist official to a dull rendering of meetings or diktats. By contrast his account of his many years spent at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague doesn't always succeed in being quite so animated or textured. Though arguably this speaks to the way that academic life doesn't necessarily lend itself to vibrant narrative.

The ISS was, as Waterman notes, “the earliest European institute of ‘development’ studies” (p. 165) and he also notes that its establishment was shaped by links with returnees from the Dutch colonial project in Indonesia. Such linkages, as Uma Kothari has argued, were absolutely foundational to the formation of development studies in various contexts (Kothari 2005). It is clear that from the outset Waterman had a healthy scepticism of the whole endeavour of development and also of participation. He recalls that the left at ISS “might have made the most noise” and been “self-confident, energetic and polemical. But it was never a coherent body or project” (p. 167).

He notes his emergent position as a spontaneous workerist in the 1970s, though noting that he “never identified with full blooded *operaismo* as it shaped up in Italy in the 1970s” (p. 167). He gives a clear sense of the role of international dialogues at ISS, though certainly doesn’t romanticise them as with a discussion of faltering attempts to develop links with South West Africa People’s Organization. He also gives a sense of his early recognition of and engagement with feminism at ISS (though one feels that this hasn’t always informed the style of writing in *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement*, especially in the first part where there is much recounting of sexual conquests, as much as it might). There is extensive material here on the internal politics and dynamics of ISS, including the events which led up to his being forced out of the department of Labour Studies. That the account of ISS is linked into an account of his midlife crisis and the disintegration of his marriage to Ruthie Kupferschmidt makes for something of a bleak read. It also gives a sustained sense of how a committed political intellectual work can rub up awkwardly with broader academic institutional configurations and the stresses of living with these tensions. There was much I empathised with in this account.

What I found more compelling than the discussion of ISS politics was the account of his engagement with the emergence of ‘shop floor internationalism’ and the activities of the Transnational Information Exchange. There is also a very interesting discussion of the process producing *The Newsletter of International Labour Studies* with processes of pasting and print setting which startle a reader schooled in the internet era of internationalism. This discussion also gives important context for the emergence of Waterman’s influential analysis and championing of a ‘new labour internationalism’. It gives a clear sense of the significance and prescience of this set of interventions. *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement* also gives some very interesting sense of his intellectual biography and trajectories especially in relation to the emergence of his influential arguments about ‘social movement unionism’ (Waterman 1998).

One of the left political projects that has been influenced by Waterman’s ideas on internationalism and social movement unionism has been the World Social Forum (WSF). In characteristic fashion Waterman has been both an insightful proponent and critic of the Forum. Indeed it is interesting here that he argues that his long-term partner, Peruvian feminist activist Gina Vargas, was much more at home in the spaces and style of the forum. His discussions of the Forum

here add to his already published writings on the Forum in interesting ways. He contributes particularly useful reflections on the WSF as globalisation from below arguing that this “has to be seen as an aspiration to be achieved by the Forum process, not a reality already existent and represented” (p. 246). He also makes important points about the limited extent of WSF-union relations. Thus he argues, “I was certainly more *at home* in the WSF than in the traditional international union organisations” because “the traditional unions do not welcome” – “discussion, debate or even dialogue” (p. 248). He observes, however, that despite “the ‘open space’ at the Forums the WSF-union relationship was one of informal mutual instrumentalisation rather than of dialogue” (p. 248).

In the conclusion Waterman develops some useful reflections on the broader thematics of cosmopolitanism and internationalism and in particular takes on and critiques Sidney Tarrow’s account of ‘rooted cosmopolitans’ (Tarrow 2005). He usefully challenges Tarrow’s need to root left cosmopolitan cultures in a rather un-problematised account of place. By contrast he argues that “rather than qualifying, or joining together, ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘rootedness’” he “would still rather see us work out the possible meanings of a *post-nationalist* internationalism – ‘a new global solidarity’. This would be one which surpasses *internationalism* and is free of debts to cosmopolitanism. What we need is to re-imagine solidarity” (p. 271, emphasis in original). In this regard one of Waterman’s enduring contributions is his challenge to the limits of internationalism envisioned as articulations between discrete left traditions in particular countries (see also Featherstone 2012). *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement* is a vivid account of a life of internationalist activism underlines the importance of striving for post-national internationalist horizons.

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## **Book Review: Robert Ogman, *Against the Nation***

**Review author: Ina Schmidt**

**Robert Ogman, 2013, *Against the Nation: Anti-National Politics in Germany*. Porsgrunn: New-compass.net (129 pp., paperback, \$14.95)**

*Against the Nation* is a detailed exploration of the anti-national approach that has developed in Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, taking similar approaches from the US as its point of departure. Based on societal and political developments, Robert Ogman provides a close analysis of two specific movements, namely “Never again Germany” (*Nie wieder Deutschland*) and “Something better than the Nation” (*Etwas Besseres als die Nation*). The author discusses the interconnections connecting nations, nation-states, and nationalism that these movements represent and illustrates how anti-nationalists developed a new, leftist perspective towards the nation (for more on this, see Hoffman 2006). Ogman argues that the described developments, on the one hand the changes in the approach towards the nation and on the other hand the rise of racial motivated violence, caused changes within the political perspectives of the left. These changes resulted eventually in the establishment of anti-national movements, which broke with the traditional perception of the nation, nation-states and nationalism and developed new ones.

*Against the Nation* offers a comprehensive description of the developments and the ideology of anti-national movements, which the author weaves into the historical, political, and societal context of Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall 1989. The text describes these movements based on first hand materials, but stays on a descriptive level and does not ever formulate a particular research question, which means the book might well serve as reference or background volume. *Against the Nation* elaborates on a phenomenon not frequently discussed, and especially not in English (Legard 2013; cf. Schlembach 2010). All in all, the book provides an insightful contribution about a relatively little discussed subject and is surely important not only for activists and scholars focusing on the political left in general, but also addresses readers interested in these issues ranging from international relations to sociology to psychology.

Ogman takes a detailed look at the foundation and the approach of Never Again Germany and Something Better than the Nation, and analyzes them from the perspective of an outside observer. He explains that his research interest was sparked by the “U.S. left’s failure to counter nationalism and anti-Semitism within the movement and society more broadly” (p. 12). To highlight the rise of these movements, Ogman first describes the general approach of the radical left towards the nation following the anti-globalization movement born at the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999. Ogman describes the position of leftists from the U.S. in 1999, who perceived the nation-state as a “bulwark”

against globalization, interpreting the latter as destroying culture and oppressing the national society (p. 18). He argues that one particular, binary-laden interpretation of the opposition towards globalization led to a stronger focus on the national state as a counterweight towards the processes of globalization, which, when targeting the institutions of capitalist coordination on the inter-state level rather than the capitalist society, can result in nationalism.

The opposition against capitalism that eventually can lead to nationalism constitutes one basic feature that contributed to the rise of anti-national movements, the other being the underlying anti-Semitism found in some streams of the radical left. The anti-imperialist and internationalist ideology of Marxism and Leninism led to a rejection of the “colonial power” Israel and support for Palestine, which eventually resulted in Anti-Zionism that often had fluid boundaries with anti-Semitism (Van Hüllen 2015). More recently, the far-left critique of capitalism, especially in the context of the Occupy movement, provoked an opposition towards the “Zionist control of Wall Street” (p. 23) and therefore attracted like-minded people, even though the movement distanced itself from such tendencies. With respect to these overlaps of political right and left, Ogman refers to a position “beyond right and left” (p. 24), which assumed a collective unity beyond political perspectives, but in effect also attracted members of the right and far right. Having established this backdrop, Ogman describes efforts by left-wing groups to counter these right-left overlaps that emerged unintentionally out of a personalized binary or reductionist critique of capitalism, efforts which he says failed. It is this failure which Ogman establishes as the background context for his book.

Later, Ogman turns to the understanding of the nation in Germany, which he says has shifted since 1989 from a post-national to an affirmative ethnic-national identity. Significant political changes include, for example, the establishment of the *Jus Sanguinis* (right of blood), implementing that German citizenship could only be acquired to people which could proof that they are of German descent (p. 41), or the requirements imposed by the Aliens Act (*Ausländergesetz*) which significantly influenced that state’s treatment of immigrants. Ogman also refers to a “spike of racist violence in Germany” (p. 45), which coincided with the emergence of far right and neo-Nazi and nationalist parties and organizations and the sharp cutback on the right to asylum.

*Against the Nation* then turns to a close description of the first anti-national movement in Germany, Never Again Germany. Relying mostly on first-hand sources, the author describes the development of the movement in 1990, when its basic position consisted of the rejection of German reunification, as well as opposition towards an anticipated further expansion of Germany and towards the re-emergence of nationalism. Never Again Germany perceived nationalism as a social structure of modern capitalist society, arising from the logic of the market economy and international conflict of nation-states. The second movement which Ogman details is Something Better than the Nation, which

was made up of intellectuals, activists, and artists who travelled in a caravan through Germany and organized discussions, concerts, and public meetings in order to take a stand against racism and nationalism. In their view, nationalism originated in society as an interactive dynamic between the various levels of state and society. While the initial movements faded away in the beginning of the 1990s, other anti-national groups and their successors, like the alliance “... ums Ganze!” (... *about the Whole!*) or the anti-national magazine *Straßen aus Zucker* (Streets from Sugar) are active to this day. They base their ideology on the same ideas as the original movements but they have shifted their focus to international solidarity and political mobilization (Assoziation Dämmerung 2016).

The two anti-national movements documented by Ogman established an absolute, concrete, and negative universalism. In their view, the struggle against nationalism must address the basic structure of the capitalist society. Theoretically, anti-national movements based their view of nations on Benedict Anderson’s work, which claims nations are best understood as imagined political communities. They also leaned on Eric Hobsbawm’s viewing nations as a result of nationalism and not vice versa, which eventually led to a complete rejection of the nation-state as a special form of political rule.

Throughout *Against the Nation*, Ogman uses a descriptive rather than an analytical approach. He establishes a solid foundation for his analysis, describing and explaining the general background of the current leftist stance towards the nation in the US, and then shifts to concrete historical developments in Germany which led to the rise of anti-national movements, before turning to German anti-national movements. He concludes with general reflections about nationalism in the global economic crisis today and offers a new outlook on anti-national approaches. *Against the Nation* is an important volume, however the line between the author’s own interpretations and conclusions and the arguments taken directly from the material is blurry sometimes.

Considering the present situation in Europe, the topic of this book is of critical importance today. *Against the Nation* offers a background from which one can analyze and understand the positions of the political left and far left in Europe during the so-called ‘refugee crisis: leftist positions towards the nation-state are crucial for their approaches towards refugees. Today, direct anti-national references might, for example, be found in the call for open borders and claims for more generous asylum rights, which had already been voiced in the 1990s by anti-national movements. Ogman provides insight into how the developments on the left and the right are interconnected and dependent on each other, and documents developments on the political right in order to understand the rise of anti-national movements.

*Against the Nation* is a starting point for scholars interested in the German far left, their stance towards the nation with all its backgrounds, and their ideology and way of acting, as well as those seeking to understand the far left stance on nationalism and nation-states in general.

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## **Book review: Lorenzo Bosi, Niall Ó Dochartaigh, and Daniela PISOIU (eds.), *Political Violence in Context***

**Review author: Andrew Kettler**

**Lorenzo Bosi, Niall Ó Dochartaigh, and Daniela PISOIU (Eds.), 2015, *Political Violence in Context: Time, Space and Milieu*. Colchester: ECPR Press (324 pp., hardcover, \$99.99)**

*Political Violence in Context: Time, Space and Milieu* (2015) will become an essential work for the study of both the emergence and decline of political violence within social movements. Editors Lorenzo Bosi, Niall Ó Dochartaigh, and Daniela PISOIU offer a an inherently dialectical collection that exposes different structures for understanding violent developments within diverse temporal, spatial, and social contexts of myriad social movements. The work explores political violence in Northern Ireland, Italy, China, Japan, the United States, West Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere. The collection is at times frustratingly vague regarding the specific meanings the authors assign to questions of temporality, spatiality, and the radical milieu, but the editors can be applauded for engaging difficult and sometimes provocative analyses of how political violence emerges from both context and contention. Their scholarship follows on the work of Stathis Kalyvas' *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (2006) and the essays collected within Martha Crenshaw's *Terrorism in Context* (1995).

The authors define political violence as the many type of actions that aim to influence different state and social actors through the symbolic, physical, or psychological damage caused by violent means. Rather than take either a completely structural approach to how political violence materializes, or focus upon individual acts of violence as examples of idiosyncratic or deviant behavior, *Political Violence in Context* defines both structure and contingency as vital for understanding the advent of violent passions. For the authors, structure provides the possible catalog of choices for a violent actor. Agency, then, is the actual choice to pursue violent means from the limited possibilities that structural contexts provide in any space, time, or milieu. Essentially sidestepping an analysis of ideological forces, the editors instead choose to focus on the importance of fluctuating relational networks as their primary analytical lens for studying the emergence of extralegal violence. In doing so, the editors attempt to move beyond both the structural analyses of critical theory and the idiosyncratic examinations that resisted those Marxist and Frankfurt School structures. However, despite their attempts, the work relies on theoretical repertoires that retain a sense of determinism through the ascension of arguments that assert causal violence is stimulated by relational networks.

*Political Violence in Context* is a collection of essays encompassing work from scholars of all standing. This mixture is a positive for the collection, as the

numerous perspectives provide readers both the historiographical standards of the field and the emerging theories of younger scholars. To introduce the work within the established scholarship on political violence, the first chapter serves as a formal introduction into the social science literature on extralegal violence and terrorism. From the outset, then, the editors establish their position between the structure of critical theory and studies of idiosyncratic and particular causes of political violence. Their position is inherently dialectical. They define their terms between poles of thesis and antithesis, rather than from a *sui generis* position. However, the place they establish between these two fields is itself a contradiction, as the editors, and the contributing authors, write in conjunction with the macro, structural and theoretical thesis, rather than towards the idiosyncratic antithesis. The editors specify that they will “contextualize” the ascension and declension of political violence in different times, spaces, and milieus. Nevertheless, their reliance upon structural and relational theories rests upon a cacophonous tenor of systematic determinism for understanding violent actions.

Beyond these initial concerns regarding questions of agency and structure, the entire collection offers inquisitive scholars many new pathways for future research and brings up numerous novel questions to engage their own scholarship. The authors featured in the work seek out the how and when of political violence through an analysis of context, essentially disregarding what they define as the ‘false particularization’ that would be investigated with questions of why violent actors choose to act. This concern with the predictability of violent action out of relational contexts often becomes burdensome to the micro-historical case studies collected within the edition. The collection compliments rational actor theory, but also finds the ironic burden of often arguing against structure through the inherent use of a Marxist structuralism established deep within the theoretical contributions asserted as the collection’s historiographical background. For example, within the introduction to the section on temporality, Lorenzo Bosi’s reliance on mechanisms and processes does little to remove the reliance of “stages of development” that he finds as flaws in earlier studies.

As a whole, the volume highlights the role of “contention” as essential to understanding where and how political violence emerges. Violence arises, in many of the case studies analyzed, when police repression is too burdensome, or inflated beyond the proper punishment for the initial crime the group in question may have committed. These forms of general repression within the “cycle of contention” causes increased levels of violence through the resistance of groups to unreasonable forms of state power. In Northern Ireland specifically, these forms of police repression acted as triggers that ignited further violence within nationalist movements.

The first section, on time, centers less upon questions of temporal consciousness, and more upon the diachronic changes that occur within political movements. The authors specifically attend to where and when violence emerges, as opposed to how actors conceptualize their sense of time.

The second section, on space, looks at where violence emerges in diverse urban and rural areas, what types of violence occur in different places, and which spatial relationships lead to the decline of violence within political movements. The third section looks at how the radical milieu, essentially the ideological force of the movement within the civilian populous, supports or resists political movements as those movements enter and exit periods of violent exchange with the state.

The first section begins with a short piece by Lorenzo Bosi. He describes how different actors contend with each other over how to control and alter unfolding patterns of linear time. The focus in this short essay is upon the differential “mechanisms” and “transformative events” that can alter, speed up, or slow down conceptions of linear time within social movements. However, Bosi’s initial foray into questions of atemporality and the different temporal consciousness that can occur through transformative events is not convincingly followed up in the four chapters found later within the section, which instead emphasize different diachronic processes through the essential backdrop of linear time.

Bosi cites numerous historiographical touchstones for studies of temporality in social movements to better acquaint the reader with questions of revolution, event, and rational actor theory. These include William Sewell’s *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (2005) and Marshall Sahlins *Islands of History* (1985). These signposts are helpful to guide the reader through the multidisciplinary morass within which studies of temporality and extralegal violence are carried out. The following chapters in this section include essays by Donagh Davis on how delegitimizing mechanisms of repression created changing levels of contention within the violent processes of the Easter Rising in Northern Ireland, Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd comparing different multi-temporal trajectories as causal within violent political movements in Northern Ireland, Basque territory, and Macedonia, Patricia Steinhoff and Gilda Zwerman contextualizing the different temporal connotations of the repressive power of legal cultures in Japan and the United States. The section ends with Lorenzo Zamponi on changing temporal consciousness of specific events within public memories of Marxist student movements in Italy and Spain in the 1960s and 1970s.

The second section begins with an essay by Ó Dochartaigh which summarizes the importance of the state to the making of modern forms of spatial consciousness. The uneven application of spatial power, for the writers in this section, emerges from the different terrains and relational proximities that inherently existed under the territorial canopy of state apparatuses. The essay by Luis De la Calle, explores the environmental contexts that defined the types of violence applied as forms of resistance during the Peruvian Civil War from 1980 to 1995. Aurélie Campana follows with an analysis of the spatial controls attempted by the Chinese state against Uighur clandestine groups in Xinjiang after 1990, which led to the emergence of everyday resistance due to an intensive form of panoptical repression. In the next essay, Jake Lomax searches

the work of Kalyvas to analyze the spatial roots of the Invisible Commandos within a politically threatened suburb of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire after contested elections in 2010. The final article in the section, by Jovana Carapic, focuses on the survival aspects of “armed urbanism” and gang behavior in different spatial settings within Central America and the United States.

The third section opens with a piece by Daniela Pisoiu, which proposes to avoid deploying milieu as an umbrella term for ideology, morality, ethics, popular support, and historical background. This attempt is generally unconvincing, and the use of “radical milieu” by the rest of the authors is also vague and inexact. Jérôme Drevon follows with an essay on multiple waves of radicalization caused by changing relational networks within Salafi ideological groups in Egypt during the 1970s. Ó Dochartaigh writes about changing roles of civilian support for both the mass mobilization and decline of violence during the troubles in Northern Ireland. Luca Falciola summarizes the changing levels of acceptance of Marxist violence in Italy of the 1970s. Finally, Stefan Malthaner shares his insights on idiosyncrasies within the emerging violent political movements in Egypt of the 1980s and 1990s.

The collection ends, regrettably, without a conclusion. The assemblage of essays asks more questions than it answers, is relatively light on ideological causality, and could be critiqued for dodging controversial questions about the propensity for violence in different types of religious movements. However, the work offers depth to difficult questions of how violence emerges through a theoretical perspective that remains essential for creating public policy to mediate violent movements. *Political Violence in Context* essentially examines violence through structural terms by locating the growth of violence as inevitably occurring out of deterministic relational contexts, temporal contingencies, and contentions between local alternative spaces and the state. As a corrective to a field that had turned heavily to the micro, *Political Violence in Context* asserts the macro. But, in asserting such macro terms for the goals of future policy, the editors could not avoid the palimpsest of Marxist determinism.

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## **Book Review: Shaazka Beyerle, *Curtailing Corruption***

**Review author: Valesca Lima Holanda**

**Shaazka Beyerle, 2014, *Curtailing Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers (261 pp., paperback, \$25.00)**

Making politics more open and transparent is one of the main challenges for civil society. In *Curtailing Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice*, Beyerle puts together an interesting text that describes and analyses different approaches to fight corruption around the globe. To that end, she uses a mixed methods approach and a variety of case studies. From Latin America to Asia, this book sharply dissects social movements and civil society strategies to abolish corruption in different social contexts. Going beyond geographic boundaries, the author lays out an important analysis on theories of new social movements.

This book could be valuable for academics interested in understanding social movements' capabilities and strategies in contemporary politics. It may also be useful to activists involved in anti-corruption movements, since this book presents both an analysis and a detailed account of anti-corruption movements' emergence, development and goals.

The idea of nonviolent resistance is the core of *Curtailing Corruption*. Beyerle offers elaborate descriptions of anti-corruption movements, which implement non-violent strategies to tackle the corruption and lack of accountability of power holders.

The author sets the scene by offering a few useful characteristics of corruption nowadays. Corruption affects citizens' trust in politicians; and, as she explains in the conclusion, anti-corruption movements help to empower local citizens and encourage confidence in politics. Beyerle also makes an important clarification regarding the meaning of corruption: the real meaning of corruption, she says, has to do not only with personal gain, but it has also implications for human rights. In that sense, beyond being a criminal activity or an act of egoism, human rights activists argue that corruption is an act of oppression and must be abolished.

Despite efforts to fight corruption, impunity permeates all cases included in this book. It is interesting to observe, as the author develops the narrative, how top-down approaches to preventing corruption are ineffective most of the time, and only when social movements join in does the political scenario start to change. Beyerle includes strong analysis and explanations for the need for reform to come from *outside* institutions; as in many other contexts, those on the inside cannot see corruption or are benefiting from it (her case studies make these situations clear and contextualised, as in the case of Indonesia).

*Curtailling Corruption* includes contemporary and vivid case studies. Through them, the author builds her argument and reinforces it: efforts against corruption include active citizens' participation, as popular intervention may make corruption risky and difficult for those practicing it, a conclusion Beyerle shares, and which supports other academic work, such as Kaufmann (2005).

After two initial chapters addressing the current debates on anti-corruption movements and some analysis on contemporary politics, the author moves to case studies, which make up the bulk of this work. It is possible to observe that *Curtailling Corruption* is the result of an extensive fieldwork, as the author visited and interviewed social actors in distinct countries.

It was great to see the richness of the cases and the level of engagement anti-corruption movements promoted in their communities. But one could ask: was it that easy to fight corruption in the contexts presented in the book? That was one thought that did not leave me while reading the book. Beyerle provides a full account of each country's social and political contexts, which gives the reader gets a sense of what was happening internally and what motivated citizens to act the way they did. Despite the fact that the countries analysed have huge differences in income, size, population and corruption practices, it was clear that local actors opted for similar strategies. The challenges, however, were not as clear as the processes of fighting corruption. The case studies are well-selected and interesting, but after seven full chapters describing and analysing the movements it gets a little repetitive and tiresome. A summary of cases, as in the section "Highlights from Five Cases: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Kenya, Mexico, Turkey" could have made the reading easier and more enjoyable.

The downside is that the book includes only successful cases. Besides that the author gives the feeling that the challenges described were simple, it seems that every case ended positively. It should have been possible to show how and why anti-corruption movements have been successful but also fail sometimes. This flaw does not disqualify the chosen cases and analysis, but a comparative chapter on social movements in countries which tried to fight corruption but were unsuccessful would have made this book even more interesting.

Beyerle makes a strong case for supporting active citizens' participation in day-to-day political activities, and argues that these practices have a strong impact on local governments. The case studies include urban and rural resistance against corruption and suggest that successful experiences should be shared outside academia. The message is clear: politics of information and transparency are shaping the way social movements and social actors act to fight corruption in their local contexts. A stronger analysis would include movements that failed in a comparative perspective. Criticism notwithstanding, *Curtailling Corruption* is a must-read for everyone interested in social movements and anti-corruption movements.

## References

Kaufmann, Daniel. 2005. "Human Rights, Governance, and Development: an Empirical Perspective". Pp. 352-402 in *Human Rights and Development: Towards Mutual Reinforcement*, edited by Philip Alston and Mary Robson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## About the review author

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