

the extent to which they are effective in curtailing police misconduct will also depend on the mission and functions transmitted to police by political actors, and the extent to which democratic politicians are able to hold police accountable to such mandates. In this sense, while the book correctly points out the dangers of police politicisation, it could also discuss the risks of excessive police insulation or autonomy.

Too many policy debates on policing in Latin America – and beyond – are mired by the inability to look past the latest headlines or viral social media posts related to such a polarising topic. *Policing and Politics in Latin America* is an essential read for scholars who want to immerse themselves in the historical origins and development of law-enforcement institutions in the region. It is also a key message for policy-makers that certain crucial variables – especially regarding professionalisation – need to be applied to have better police. The book reminds us that with police, as with any profession, only from those to whom much is given, can much be demanded.

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## **Simón Escoffier, *Mobilizing at the Urban Margins: Citizenship and Patronage Politics in Post-Dictatorial Chile***

**Cambridge University Press, 2023, xix + 250 pp.**

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Anyone with a passing knowledge of social movements in Latin America will take it as a given that there was an almost total demobilisation of poor people's movements in the Chilean urban periphery in the 1990s, following the return of democracy. Yet that was not always the case, as *Mobilizing at the Urban Margins*, based on a PhD, by Simón Escoffier amply demonstrates. A closer knowledge of the reality on the ground would have meant that observers should not have been taken quite so much by surprise by the unprecedented mobilisations of October 2019.

Based on a comparative study of two Santiago *poblaciones* – Lo Hermida and Nuevo Amanecer (once Nueva Havana) – with over six years of participatory fieldwork, this book is invaluable as a corrective of superficial understandings of democracy, citizenship and social mobilisations in Latin America but also, more widely, as a close analysis of how social movements and various factions of the Left interact.

Escoffier provides a long-term perspective and does not just start with the 1990s. Indeed, there is considerable attention paid to the origins of these settlements in the land seizures or *tomas*, organised by the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria

(Revolutionary Left Movement, MIR) in the late 1960s in the period leading up to the Popular Unity Government of 1970–3. We learn in detail of the tension between the Far Left and the socialist/communist mainstream in office. People still remember the visit by President Salvador Allende to their *población* when a local activist was killed by the police.

The basic thesis of this volume is a compelling one. Even under extremely repressive conditions, social mobilisation can endure in marginalised urban contexts with organisational capabilities allowing them to sustain collective action. In this process, organisations of the Far Left play a key role as does the memory of the time before the dictatorship that came to power in 1973. The mobilising myths and the sense of community created through struggle and achievements.

The story of Lo Hermida is not dissimilar to that of El Alto in Bolivia, subject of many studies in recent years, or other communities in struggle in other parts of the world. The community rejects stigmatising external conceptions around violence and drugs. Instead, it builds on self-esteem in an empowering way, building a mobilisational identity that stresses collective actions.

The arguments of the book unfold in six chapters beginning with an explanation of the mobilisational citizenship proposed that contrasts with classic liberal notions of citizenship. Despite the barriers to mobilisation when these are overcome, a new active form of citizenship is built. Chapter 2 introduces the history of mobilisation in Chile's urban settings, culminating in a very topical analysis of how the mobilised communities reacted promptly and were able to contribute to the large-scale, extremely effective protests of late 2019.

Chapter 3 then sets the scene for the comparative ethnographic enquiry focused on how some communities were able to maintain collective action while others were not. Political socialisation by left parties committed to community empowerment emerges as a key factor in explaining why communities such as Lo Hermida broke with what was assumed to be a general pattern of demobilisation under the democratic regimes of the 1990s.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 centre around the ethnographic experience of Lo Hermida in great detail, starting with the anti-dictatorial protests of the 1980s. One thing that comes across most clearly is the way activism builds identity through memory formation, for example around the radical beginnings in the 1970s. This created a sense of historical continuity and created a sense of cohesion and a mobilising identity that could advance contestation of the economic and political marginalisation and stigmatisation of the community.

Points that emerged for me when reading this book were not really criticisms as such, given how much I learnt or re-learnt from this book. Firstly, I am not sure that there really is a comparative study here, given how little we learn about the demobilised Nuevo Amanecer compared to the extremely detailed analysis of the 'mobilized citizenship' of Lo Hermida. The basic explanation seems to be that the more mainstream progressive forces active in the first did not practise the same radical grassroots democratisation of the struggle of the latter, but really, this is a study of Lo Hermida.

Secondly, I was not entirely clear where things stood with the Communist Party. They made a tactical turn towards armed struggle in the 1980s and the CP Youth (*la Jota*) played a mobilising role in the *poblaciones*. However, they were also part of

a compromising left tradition under democratisation. These contradictions are not clearly explained.

Thirdly, I was not convinced by the final thoughts on how the author 'would also like to bring mobilisational citizenship to the study of different Latin American urban contexts. Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil provide interesting cases' (2014), which read very much like the PhD bit on 'further research needed'. For one, there are strong national traditions of social movement studies in these countries and 'mobilizational citizenship' is not an obvious comparative frame. Many interviewees kicked back at the term 'citizen', as I found in the 1990s in Colombia when I tried to use the term 'civil society', which was not seen as progressive.

Overall, I cannot but admire this book, which I thought might be yet another 'application' of Northern political theory to the recalcitrant reality of Latin America. It is theoretically informed yet there is no theory-heavy air that would detract from the exciting story being told of how poor or marginal communities successfully organise. It is a close ethnography of these communities without the angst or ego of the researcher overpowering the diverse voices of the community. In brief, this is a magnificent contribution to social movement studies and a vital backdrop to understand the momentous events in Chile since 2019. It should be widely read beyond 'Latin American studies'.

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**Philip Fehling and Hans-Jürgen Burchardt (eds.),  
*Taxation and Inequality in Latin America: New  
Perspectives on Political Economy and Tax Regimes***

**Routledge, 2023, 303 pp.**

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Latin American countries face the triple challenge of increasing social inclusion, generating productivity-enhancing structural change and decent jobs, and addressing global warming through a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and investment in adaptation. An increase in public resources is a *sine qua non* to address these challenges; all the more so as most Latin American countries have a low tax-to-GDP ratio, considerably lower than expected given their income levels. Why is the tax ratio so low and how can it be increased?

*Taxation and Inequality* makes an important contribution to the growing literature addressing these questions. Coming from different disciplinary backgrounds (economics, political science, sociology) and geographical areas (Latin America, Europe and the United States), the contributors to the book analyse the