

Book Reviews

Kelly Bauer, *Negotiating Autonomy: Mapuche Territorial Demands and Chilean Land Policy*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021. Photographs, maps, acronyms, abbreviations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, 190 pp.; hardcover \$50.

Merle L. Bowen, *For Land and Liberty: Black Struggles in Rural Brazil*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Figures, abbreviations, bibliography, index, 248 pp.; hardcover \$99.99.

“There is no general formula for starting and effectively implementing significant agrarian reforms; rather, they must evolve and adapt according to the political and social dynamics that characterize a country at a given time” (Barraclough 2007). Is this the case for Brazilian and Chilean states when addressing Indigenous and quilombo demands for land? *Negotiating Autonomy* and *For Land and Liberty* provide core material and essential guides for understanding and getting a holistic and nuanced view of the past and present of the agrarian question in Brazil and Chile. Current debates on land reform and the agrarian question in Latin American should be undoubtedly completed with these two works. Both books represent innovative approaches to rural community studies in Brazil and Chile that bear attention from scholars in a variety of fields (to name a few: political economy, political ecology, peasant and agrarian studies, and moral ecologies) and researchers interested in the intersection of civil rights and sustainable development under neoliberalism.

Bowen and Bauer intersect on different and related topics, from the old and new agrarian (and ecological) question of the twenty-first century to the twists and turns of state-society interactions when implementing land programs for historically excluded subaltern classes. The following lines briefly discuss these parallels and intersections.

Understanding the holistic and multidimensional agrarian question of the twenty-first century. The agrarian question of the twenty-first century is related to a new range of global and national inequalities, in which the land problem remains unresolved, especially for Indigenous and black communities, as Bauer and Bowen show. Within the new agrarian question, national and transnational rural social movements have emerged “from below,” driving a new kind of demand for land and territory. As illustrated by Bauer, the 1980s and 1990s saw Latin American governments recognizing the property rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities as part of the abovementioned territorial policy shift. In *Negotiating Autonomy* and *For Land and Liberty*, Bauer and Bowen, respectively, explore the

inconsistencies by which the Chilean and Brazilian governments transfer land in response to Mapuche and quilombo territorial demands. Both volumes offer a history (mainly Bowen) and more recent perspectives (Bauer) on resistance and land demands from below in the twenty-first century. *For Land and Liberty* particularly assesses the nature of quilombola claims (historically and locally rooted) to land as a place of contestation over citizenship and its meanings for Afro-descendants, as well as its links to the wider fight against racism.

In the context of the new agrarian question, Bauer and Bowen can also provide an enlightening conversation with seminal works on land reform. One such is Lipton 1977, which describes land reform based on two simultaneous processes in which the state has a pivotal role: obligatory takeover of land by the state with partial compensation to large landowners, and cultivation of redistributed land (in either small production units or collective or cooperative farms) to increase preacquisition benefits. Could this definition be applied to Chilean and Brazilian land policies for Mapuche and quilombola communities?

Article 20B of Indigenous Law 19.253 (1993) in Chile and Article 68 (1988) in Brazil were a common point of departure to recognize access for Mapuche and quilombola communities. However, as Bowen and Bauer demonstrate, when implementing land reforms, the challenge is to develop state action that can effectively balance both state and societal factors under neoliberalism. Whereas Bauer stresses the fear of social unrest in Chile attached to a neoliberal political and social development model, Bowen illustrates the difficulties of linking distributive and social programs with structural reforms in Brazil.

Bauer particularly highlights how the Chilean government works to disarticulate Mapuche mobilization (through, around, and behind the facade of bureaucratic policies) through the implementation of Article 20B. Under different administrations, land for peace agreements represent the government's ongoing efforts to negotiate with mobilized Mapuche communities in pursuit of regional stability. Bauer (23) employs an eclectic method (based on interviews with community and government leaders, statistical analysis of an original dataset of Mapuche mobilization and land transfers, and policy documents) to identify the conditions under which we identify variation in policy implementation and different types of contestations (in each chapter) over the implementation of Article 20B. In this context, she seeks to understand how state officials and bureaucrats govern "the middle space" between civilian demands and state administration rationality.

In the case of Brazil, one hundred years after the abolition of slavery, the nation's new federal constitution in 1988 promised the descendants of fugitive slave communities the right to land. Article 68 (Bowen, 88) envisions the regularization of land rights to quilombo (descendent communities). Articles 215 and 216 recognize the right to specific cultural practices and protection of cultural patrimony, respectively. Bowen also applies a variety of methodologies (including oral history, historical archives, and quantitative surveys) to measure the efficacy of Article 68 in a comparative context of quilombo groups in the Iguape Valley of Bahia and the Ribeira Valley of São Paulo state. The result is a clear reminder that

differences between legislation and its implementation often leave terrible reminders of inequalities unaddressed (Bauer, 75).

In sum, Mapuche and quilombola experiences of land reforms and titling processes, as described by Bowen and Bauer, have not been understood as more comprehensive programs that require the centrality of the state not only to facilitate land redistribution but also to enhance the productive and social capabilities of small producers. In Chile, they were merely *apagafuegos* (trouble-shooting) measures to stop social unrest. In Brazil, Bowen shows that despite the magnitude of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT)'s land distribution programs (during four administrations), many of these transfers were merely regularized or legalized, and most of the land delivered was public and not very productive. Neither in Chile nor in Brazil were the bases of any land redistribution process, where expropriations from private landowners are generally part of the definition, fulfilled. Resulting reforms were not applied consistently, more often extending neoliberal governance than recognizing Indigenous or quilombo peoples' rights.

The political economy of social exclusion: state-society interactions under neoliberalism.

Bowen and Bauer explore the role of the state and social dynamics in understanding the twists and turns of Chilean and Brazilian land policies for Indigenous and Black communities from the 1980s (and earlier, with Bowen) to the global era. Their research intertwines with Bernstein's idea (2014, 1054) that the state is "the elephant in the room" in the programmatic goal of food sovereignty and in the recent wave of agrarian studies. Even though the state maintained a central role in the context of social interaction in these processes, few studies have rescrutinized how we understand the state or have explored the underlying assumptions about the nature and autonomy of the state that agrarian scholars accept.

In this gap in the literature, Bauer and Bowen are among the few scholars who have attempted to describe what is particular or unique about the role of the state in the countryside or in social conflict over resources. Their books bring the nature and role of the state back into the process of neoliberal globalization and also intersect with Evans's idea of "embedded autonomy," understood as a set of connections that intimately and determinately unite the developmental state with particular social groups with which it shares a joint project of transformation (Evans 1995, 50–59). This autonomy marks the efficacy of any economic policy, including land reforms. In Mapuche and quilombola land access programs we identify intermediate states that occasionally (or theoretically) approach this idea, but not enough to give them the transformative capacity of developmental states.

Bauer's contemporary perspective on Mapuche demands and Chilean land policy from 1993 to the early 2000s demonstrates that contrary to other Latin American countries, Chile illustrates a radical example of Indigenous land policy neoliberalization. The lack of territorial rights recognition at the national level diminished the capacity of local governments to redesign territoriality for Mapuche communities. Chile's Indigenous land policy clearly mixed neoliberal conceptualization with implementation. The quantitative analysis presented in chapter 4 further shows that Mapuche communities, forestry companies, and

broader political calculations influence policy implementation in nuanced and substantial ways. The policy response of Chile's intermediate state to Mapuche territorial demands is dynamically adapted to appease Mapuche communities, safeguard economic interests, and extend political interests, particularly after a community has received its first land purchases.

In the case of Brazil, Bowen's political economy of different quilombo communities from slavery to the present demonstrates how state actors colluded with large landholders and modernization schemes. Despite the color of the government, state modernization projects dispossessed black rural communities in the Iguape and Ribera Valley communities. The PT's social policies and conditional cash transfer programs improved housing, electricity, and monetary incomes for millions of extremely poor people and rural families. But the PT's emphasis on social measures rather than structural reforms (such as a real redistributive land reform, according to Lipton) resulted in only modest and temporary gains for quilombolas in the Iguape and Ribeira Valley clusters. These social measures implemented by an intermediate state never disrupted the endemic power of the landed elite, so that political and economic exclusion persists in black rural communities (Bowen, 15). In chapter 3, Bowen further shows that once the communities were granted cultural identification or collective land titles, they were not exempt from further threats to their autonomy. They still may be forced by large landowners or state conservation policies to abandon rights and resources in the process of applying for land titles.

Intertwining the environmental and agrarian questions. For *Land and Liberty* and *Negotiating Autonomy* add to the historical problem of land access the notion of its sustainable management. Latin America's land reforms did evolve and adapt over time, but states never understood peasants as an alternative to the dominant agriculture. Even though the current model of industrial agriculture and agribusiness found in Brazil and Chile may put the future viability of agriculture and food at risk, Bowen and Bauer show that states never acknowledged the diversity and fragmented nature of peasants as "alternatives" to neoliberalism. As documented by Bauer,

Even though communities like Nicolás Ailfo have the ability to make proposals that can be turned into programs for sustainable development, they have no one at the national level to hear or support these ideas and programs, and on the contrary, the public agricultural extension agencies already work from a "Green Revolution" perspective, offering the communities a previously formulated package that includes technology and credit and cannot be modified by peasants who receive it. (Bauer, 108).

As Mapuche and mainly quilombola communities demonstrate (see Bowen's chapter 4), sustainable, small-scale production is more resistant to external shocks, in part because it is based on peasant knowledge and local ecological conditions accumulated over centuries. In this scenario, any holistic reform of structures should combine the environmental sustainability of agroecosystems with the economic viability of the farms.

Bauer and particularly Bowen open opportunities to extend an intertwined dialogue between the environmental and agrarian questions. An example of such

interrelationships is the concept of moral ecology, created by historian Karl Jacoby and also applied in *Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance*, by Griffin et al. (2019). These authors undertake a systematic and multidisciplinary study of how elite conservation schemes and policies label traditional or ancestral ways of managing natural resources use (such as hunting or firewood cutting) into types of “criminality.” For Griffin et al., conservation language and legislation not only dispossess those communities but also predefine them as a threat to the environment because they resist and fight to preserve their way of life, even defying established laws and norms.

Although Bauer does not document the moral ecologies of Mapuche communities, she shows (in chapter 3) examples of conflicts between Mapuche communities (practicing subsistence and small-scale farming) and extractive forestry companies. This is the case of Juan Quintremil Community’s claims of territory held by the Masisa Forestry Company, which in 1999 reached a “peace agreement” with the community to extract pine and eucalyptus in exchange for access to a ceremonial site on company land. In August 2007 the company suddenly ended this agreement, reopening the clashes and conflicts.

Bowen (in chapter 4) extensively examines how quilombola livelihoods have changed in response to land use transformation, prohibition of traditional agricultural systems, restricted access to resources, and reduced wage employments in twenty-first-century Brazil. In the context of political claims over quilombola territories, racialized and conservation state narratives that disparage the quilombo economy (e.g., inefficient small black producers with ecologically destructive production systems) have altered the basis for their land rights and land reform (Bowen, 24).

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