

It goes without saying that U.S. white supremacist immigration patterns and systems prior to 1965 offer many other parallels. However, as serial immigrants ourselves whose families (Icelandic immigrants in the U.S., Jamaican immigrants in Costa Rica) have repeatedly experienced these processes at home and abroad, we have come to see their intended success as most visible in their failures to either require or to allow status changes. The institutional nesting of immigration and citizenship processes in bureaucracies directly responsive to partisan political intervention was no accident in either nation. Even restricting the comparison to the late Cold-War era, similarities abound. Without well-placed immigration lawyers or, eventually, high-level political allies, in both nations, routine documents were momentarily lost, and then only rediscovered as having been misplaced in response to a politically powerful figure making the inquiry. “Weak Stateness” can be found not just in neocolonial contexts, but in many a nook and cranny of powerful, imperial sites, where ambiguity and arbitrary decision-making serve a whole variety of ever-changing State interests.

Readers of this study will learn a great deal about how U.S. Americans in Costa Rica adapted to a State-sponsored succession of tolerant grey areas regarding their status. However, their own thoughts and feelings can never fully reveal its underlying logic or causes. Readers might be left to think that their reluctance to seek green card status or citizenship simply reflected their own privileged decisions or imperial preferences. On the contrary, the Costa Rican state has a centuries-long history of highly successful failures to regulate immigrants and their status, rivaling that of the U.S. itself.

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MARA POLGOVSKY EZCURRA. *The New Public Art: Collectivity and Activism in Mexico since the 1980s*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2023.

This well-conceived edited volume uses the narrative arc of developments in art, activism, and politics in Mexico, bookended by two devastating earthquakes (1985 and 2017), to explore the changing nature of public art in Mexico and challenge broader perceptions of public art and the public sphere more generally. It is organized around four sections, “New Muralisms,” “Feminist Publics,” “Antimonuments and the Undercommons,” and, finally, “Migrant Poetics and Capitalist Landscapes.” Each section contains contributions by academics in various fields, primarily art history but also anthropology, literature, and architecture. Some of the participating academics are also practitioners, curators, architects, and novelists. In addition to these—often quite theory-based—aca-

demographic essays there are some very engaging interventions from activist artists, architects, filmmakers, curators, and artists' collectives dedicated to conceptual art, dance, and participatory performance.

The volume will be of interest to scholars of Latin America in a range of fields and subfields including Art History, History, International Relations, Anthropology, Architecture, Literature, Gender Studies, Memory Studies, Transitional Justice, and Borderland Studies. The artists' interventions are valuable sources for historians of contemporary Mexico and the volume in general is useful for students of Mexican and Latin American culture more broadly. The introduction and most chapters outline thoroughly their theoretical frameworks drawing on the work of thinkers from Latin America and beyond. *The New Public Art* may perhaps appeal to academics and students who are not Latin Americanists or experts on Mexico if they are prepared to do a little extra reading.

There were some engaging academic essays in this volume. Anna Torres's chapter looks at the role of artists' collectives in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero in shaping public space from below in the face of official silence and cover up regarding the murder of 43 students in Iguala, Guerrero in 2014. She analyses the murals painted on the local *escuela normal* (teacher-training college) in Ayotzinapa in the wake of the killings and how, in the intervening period, they became the focus of diverse critical voices that reconstituted the public space. Torres provides some clear context on the history of the teacher-training colleges and post-revolutionary education policy more broadly. Her piece effectively demonstrates the role of the collectives' work in remembering the disappeared, thus opposing the official media narrative of forgetting. Karen Cordero Reiman's piece looks at the ways in which the works produced by the feminist conceptual artist Mónica Meyer and the feminist collective *Pinto Mi Raya* blur the boundaries between aesthetics and activism. She provides an engaging insight into the trajectories of these two artists and a fascinating analysis of their participatory pieces *El Tendedero* (Meyer) and *Abrazos* (Pinto Mi Raya). Adriana Ortega Orozco's analysis of two examples of grassroots memorialization, *Menos días aquí* and *Bordamos por la paz* explores the reasons why civil society groups refuse to accept government-led projects to create memorials in public spaces. Michael R. Orwicz and Robin Adèle Greeley discuss the impact of the 2009 Inter-American Court ruling in a 2001 case of femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua which made the Mexican state responsible for "transformative" symbolic reparations. Their focus is on the monument commissioned in response to the ruling, Verónica Leiton's *Flor de Arena*, 2021 and the exclusion of the victims' families from the process of commissioning, inaugurating, and accessing the monument. Popular performative acts, art works, and monuments, Orwicz and Greeley argue, have concentrated more on remembering whereas the narrative

expressed in the state's monument is all about forgetting and moving on. The public acts of memorialization, the authors say, democratize the public space. Arturo Ortiz Struck's contribution is about affordable housing projects built in Mexico between 2000 and 2018. He develops an interesting argument about the ways in which the architecture and street plans of these new developments, through limiting access to the public space and therefore inhibiting the development of community, indirectly excluded the inhabitants from citizenship.

The practitioner contributions are fascinating. Those that stand out are Luna Maran's explanation of the work of the *Campamento Audiovisual Itinerante*, the community cinema project drawing on the ideas of *comunalidad* and Diego Flores Magón's discussion of his approach to democratizing the archive of his grandfather's writings in the *Casa de El Hijo de Ahuizote*. Grupo Germen, Brigada por la Memoria, and Brigada Tlayacapan's contributions provided a fascinating insight into the motivations and challenges of their work. Grupo Germen discussed residents' reservations regarding the Painting Pachuca project commissioned by the municipal government of Pachuca de Soto. Brigada por la Memoria discuss their motivations for establishing anti-monuments in Mexico City to Mexicans who died as a result of state violence, oppression, and negligence. Brigada Tlayacapan are a group of students, construction workers, architects from the Mexican National University (UNAM) and a family from Tlayacapan, Morelos who aimed to explore sustainable and effective ways to rebuild the historic town that had been devastated by the 2017 earthquake. Brigada Tlayacapan discussed the reasons why residents of Tlayacapan chose not to use the Brigada's designs to rebuild their houses.

For the reader who is not an expert on Mexico, what is lacking in the introduction and many of the chapters is an explanation of the historical and political context, the nature of opposition to the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) one-party state or the *dictablanda*, neoliberal reform, democratisation, and "violent democracy" (as developed by Arias and Goldstein in *Violent Democracies in Latin America* [2010]). While some contributions do this better than others, many assume quite a lot of knowledge on the part of the reader. Even for more expert readers, a clearer grounding of the theory and case studies in the historical and political context would have allowed the authors to make a stronger and better evidenced case. A bibliography for the whole volume would also have been useful, although the index is thorough and there are full notes at the end of each chapter. Despite these issues, *The New Public Art*, as a volume of essays and practitioner reflections, was particularly coherent. The introduction did a good job of setting up the research questions, theoretical framework, and narrative. Each contributor spoke to the themes in a thorough

and engaging way. The arguments about the construction of public space from below and collective and participatory approaches to public art are compelling.

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YANNA YANNAKAKIS. *Since Time Immemorial: Native Custom & Law in Colonial Mexico*. Durham, NC: *Duke University Press*, 2023.

So much of historians' understanding about the colonial world hinges on how they portray the effects of the encounter and conquest of AmerIndian societies. For centuries historians have discounted the impact of Indigenous politics and culture, painting colonial society as largely the creation of Spanish conquistadors. More recently scholars have gone full circle and questioned the very notion of conquest, portraying conquistadors as deeply integrated into and dependent upon Native political circles. In her book *Since Time Immemorial*, Yanna Yannakakis enters this debate in a sophisticated fashion, exploring the evolution of Native custom and law during the three centuries of colonial rule in Mexico and arguing that we must resist overly simple depictions of rupture or continuity between the precolonial and postcolonial worlds.

How did Mexico's early colonial laws and legal practices evolve? Yannakakis begins with an examination of "the idea of custom as a source of law and social convention" in medieval Europe (p.23), culminating in the publication of the *Siete partidas*, the basis for much of the Spanish world's legal tradition. According to the *Siete partidas*, the laws of a land should be deeply shaped by its inhabitants' customary practices. The extant customs of people should be primary in the shaping of laws. In America this meant that early colonial intellectuals, especially clerics, scrutinized Indigenous customs (as presented in Indigenous codices or Spanish-produced *relaciones geográficas*) for their moral compatibility with Catholicism, tolerating non-heretical customs as the basis for local laws. Already we see the centrality of the Indigenous world on the legal practices that evolved. Some Indigenous customs, polygamy for example, failed the "repugnancy test" (p. 69) and were theoretically suppressed by Spanish officials, though polygamy survived in more remote colonial regions like Oaxaca, the main focus of this work. Importantly, as Yannakakis argues, Indigenous custom was critical in shaping broad categories of colonial law, from land tenure to labor obligations to the Indigenous village elections and exercise of politics. Colonial law was not merely imposed from above; it was adapted from Native customs and practices while being molded by Spanish filters. Colonial law was shaped by both preconquest customs and postconquest frameworks.