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Reseña / Review

Goodale, Mark and Nancy Postero, eds. *Neoliberalism, Interrupted: Social Changeand Contested Governance in Contemporary Latin America*. Stanford:Stanford University Press, 2013.

A Politics Frozen in Time

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This edited collection organized by the anthropologists Mark Goodale and Nancy Postero contains ten chapters that analyze a contemporary political moment that is quickly fading into the past—the emergence of several Latin American governments that espouse an opposition to neoliberalism. Some observers term this perceived leftward drift in the late 1990s and early 2000s Latin America's "Pink Tide." Reviewing a book that explores recent political events involves a special difficulty. The reviewer has the benefit of greater hindsight, but how to employ that advantage while still being fair to authors whose studies are forever frozen in time? *Neoliberalism, Interrupted* was published in 2013, but the volume originates in a 2008 workshop at the University of California, San Diego titled "Revolution and New Social Imaginaries in

Post-Neoliberal Latin America." Most of the research in these articles pre-dates that 2008 workshop. This review is being written in early 2017, when one might ask, "What post-neoliberal Latin America?" But that is not the most useful approach to assessing the book's contributions.

The change in title from 2008 to 2013 is indicative of Goodale and Postero's cautious reassessment of political developments that continued to churn while the book was being put together. Bold assertions of a post-neoliberal Latin America had to be jettisoned, and instead, the "Pink Tide" became a temporary interruption. The editors recruited a diverse group of scholars from Latin America, the United States, and Canada. The contributors represent a number of academic disciplines and approaches. Most of the scholars have an activist edge, and the continued strength of neoliberalism has to be a bitter disappointment. However, these are sober researchers, and their work highlights both the tenacity of neoliberalism and the weaknesses of some of the oppositional programs. The book's articles fall into two categories. Some examine political tendencies in those countries where neoliberalism is strong and, in many ways, unchallenged. The other group examines events in nations where neoliberal policies have faced stiffer opposition. Even in these cases though, the authors identify numerous ways in which neoliberal ideals inflect programs conceived of as alternatives. Neoliberalism is insidiously flexible and adaptable.

Veronica Schild's article, "Care and Punishment in Latin America: The Gendered Neoliberalization of the Chilean State," does an excellent job of detecting shifts in neoliberal policy in response to popular criticism and discontent. Schild identifies two distinct stages of neoliberal policy in Chile. The first stage relied upon the coercive power of the government to impose privatization and austerity. The second stage is the current era of Chile's entrenched neoliberalism. Schild notes Latin American leaders met in Santiago, Chile in 1998 and crafted an updated successor plan to the so-called "Washington Consensus." This more modern "Santiago Consensus" counsels moderate levels of social welfare spending to undercut critics and opponents. This new incarnation of neoliberalism has surprisingly coopted some strains of contemporary feminist thought. Nonetheless, it is still a system that intervenes in every aspect of daily life to promote neoliberalism's emphasis on individual responsibility, with transgressors suffering significant penalties.

Another article that examines entrenched neoliberalism is Elana Zilberg's "'Yes, We Did!' '¡Sí Se Pudo!': Regime Change and the Transnational Politics of Hope Between the United States and El Salvador." This chapter illustrates the difficulties

small nations confront in attempting to swim against the current of contemporary neoliberalism. The article also illustrates how sudden and surprising political change can upend the work of a scholar examining contemporary issues. Zilberg admits the 2009 election of President Mauricio Funes, the candidate of the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (FMLN), caught her by surprise. Yet, the FMLN government has had little room to maneuver given the entanglement of Salvadoran and U.S. interests. While there have been minor reforms, President Funes has had to accept the bulk of neoliberalism. In El Salvador, this has meant the continued power of the military and a program of draconian policing to control the perceived transnational security threat of criminal gang activity.

Even in some Latin American countries where neoliberal policies hold sway; there are occasional movements that seek an alternative approach at the local level. It can be difficult to judge the success of these experiments given the national dominance of neoliberalism. David Gow's article, "'En Minga por el Cauca': Alternative Government in Colombia, 2001-2003," seeks to explain and judge one of these local experiments. In 2000, voters in the Colombian department of Cauca elected a governor, Taita Floro Tunubalá, who promised something different from the national politics aligned with the U.S.-backed Plan Colombia (the militarized war on drugs). Tunubalá also promised an alternative to neoliberalism. His personal story encouraged observers. An eclectic coalition of left and progressive organizations supported his candidacy, and turnout for the election was high. Tunubalá, a member of the Guambiano ethnic group, was Colombia's first elected indigenous governor, giving his experiment even greater symbolism. Meeting all of these heightened expectations proved impossible in a short, three-year governorship. State violence limited activists' ability to sustain alternatives to neoliberalism. Tunubalá and his supporters also confronted threats from still-active guerrilla organizations. Furthermore, Colombia's central government withheld resources from a political program that did not mesh with its neoliberal vision.

Mexico is another nation where neoliberal policies hold a powerful national sway. Analiese M. Richard's article, "'Taken into Account': Democratic Change and Contradictions in Mexico's Third Sector," looks at the history of NGOs operating in the Mexican state of Hidalgo and highlights the ties and contradictions that make it difficult for NGOs to challenge neoliberalism. The social-class affiliation of many NGO founders and the variety of political connections that NGOs are obliged to make limit their ability to promote substantial change. Richards provides a long-term

history of NGOs working in Hidalgo, beginning in the 1970s. In the 1990s, many newer NGOs emphasized professionalization and began to view themselves as consultants with superior knowledge and education when compared to the people they were working with. Arguments and theories that suggested economic liberalization would lead to greater democracy have not worked out.

Marcela Cerrutti and Alejandro Grimson's study, "Neoliberal Reforms and Protest in Buenos Aires," illustrates how contemporary research can become frozen in time as political events continue to develop while a book is in production. The Argentina of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner between 2003 and 2015 might have been included in *Neoliberalism, Interrupted* as a tepid departure from free-market ideas, but Cerrutti and Grimson's article focuses on the neoliberal period of the 1990s up to 2003. They examine the ways in which urban movements have modified their activism in the face of neoliberal restructuring. Prior to the 1990s, popular urban movements in Buenos Aires often focused on questions of land tenure and housing. In the 1990s, they began to focus on the unemployment caused by neoliberal reforms. These protests impelled President Carlos Menem to establish support programs for the unemployed: soup kitchens and community centers. Cerrutti and Grimson argue the government did not abolish the welfare state; instead, it ended up subsidizing unemployment. They also make note of a tendency that many authors in this collection detected: a supposedly shrunken state did not necessarily mean a reduction in the government's capacity for repression and violence.

The book's second constellation of articles focuses on nations where neoliberalism has faced declared challenges. But even in nations such as Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia, neoliberalism has patterned a new language of social change that even its opponents employ. Additionally, political and economic inequalities continue to persist in these resistant nations, even as a new political class replaces the old. The inevitability of international economic linkages continues to impose its own strictures on trade. Those movements that have succeeded in challenging neoliberalism at a national level are also very much tied to charismatic leaders—a very Latin American weakness

Sujatha Fernandes's article, "Cultural and Neoliberal Rationalities in Postneoliberal Venezuela," explores the persistence of neoliberalism in contemporary government practice. Fernandes examines popular cultural projects promoted by neighborhood and community organizations and the government intervention they sometimes experience—celebrations like Caracas's San Agustín parish's festivities in

honor of San Juan every June. Under Hugo Chávez, popular cultural projects received greater government support, but they maintained linkages to private capital. The Venezuelan government seeks to coopt cultural projects as a part of their political program, but state technocrats still view cultural products and events as potential commodities generating a financial return. Culture is seen as a resource that can promote tourism and develop social capital. The government uses market-based calculations to allocate resources to proposed endeavors. Fernandes concludes neoliberalism has persisted in Venezuela in non-economic matters.

Governments that claim to transcend neoliberalism sometimes rewrite the history of their predecessors in interesting ways. Christopher Krupa's article, "Neoliberal Reckoning: Ecuador's Truth Commission and the Mythopoetics of Political Violence," explores the history of a truth commission launched by President Rafael Correa in 2007 to look into incidents of state violence that occurred between 1984 and 1988. This nuanced article on Ecuador is one of the strongest in the collection. The truth commission investigated the presidency of León Esteban Febres-Cordero, Ecuador's original neoliberal architect. The truth commission uncovered human rights abuses committed during Febres-Cordero's presidency against a small guerrilla insurgency and other political opponents. This discovery of state violence at the moment of neoliberalism's birth in Ecuador has been used to justify Correa's supposed post-neoliberal politics.

Both Mark Goodale and Nancy Postero, the book's editors, specialize in the study of Bolivia. Postero's article, "Bolivia's Challenge to 'Colonial Neoliberalism,'" ably focuses on the contradictions of Bolivia's ongoing assault on neoliberal ideology. The country is simultaneously trying to implement both cultural and economic change. Postero provides a brief history of neoliberalism in Bolivia beginning in the 1980s and then describes the popular frustration that developed against those policies by 2000. The slimming of Bolivia's government under neoliberalism was highly selective: social welfare programs, education, and health care were all cut; but the coercive apparatus of the police and military remained untouched. Five years of protest led to the election of Evo Morales. He ran on an explicitly anti-neoliberal platform. Postero examines Evo Morales' presidency, focusing on the National Development Plan of 2006, and Bolivia's new constitution of 2009. Morales links his opposition to neoliberalism to the indigenous struggle for cultural recognition and an opposition to racism. Yet, a development model that continues to rely on natural-resource extraction threatens a number of indigenous groups, thereby weakening his

political appeal. His government faces opposition from both conservatives and some indigenous communities as it continues to struggle to implement the 2009 constitution.

Research for a number of the articles in this collection began in the late 1990s. As work on the book advanced, Latin America's political landscape continued to shift. The original project was conceived with hopefulness about a regional challenge to neoliberalism's hegemony. By the time *Neoliberalism, Interrupted* appeared in 2013, Goodale and Postero had begun to reassess the optimism that originally inspired the book. While recent political developments might have dimmed some of the hope for a post-neoliberal spring in Latin America, these articles do contribute to our understanding of neoliberalism as practiced and some of the difficulties that political movements seeking to overturn or confront it. While neoliberal rhetoric calls for a reduction in the size of government, in many nations this has not been applied to the police and military. Governments that espouse neoliberalism have jealously held on to the capacity for organized violence. A number of these articles also document neoliberalism's adaptability in the face of criticism. Governments have created moderate social welfare programs to undercut critics without sacrificing the core principle of an unfettered business environment. Finally, those movements that claim to oppose neoliberalism have to operate in a global environment that is so permeated by neoliberal philosophy that they often borrow from the system they are seeking to overthrow. Alternative programs end up being fleeting spaces of respite in a global maelstrom of neoliberalism.