

rights and in particular in the link between trade and labour standards. Unfortunately, the book is so long – over 380 pages, with small print and very narrow margins – and detailed that it is likely to attract only a very limited hard core of readers. Frundt would have better served the readers by concentrating on the case studies in order to make the volume more manageable. Firmer editing would also have improved the book: chapters two and three, which deal with the trade and labour standards linkage in general, do not cover new ground; chapter four appears to have missed proof reading and is riddled with typographical errors. Having said this, those sufficiently interested in the subject matter to plough through this long volume, will be rewarded with much information and analysis on labour in Central America and the Dominican Republic and how the GSP programme has made a positive contribution to labour standards in this region.

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John C. Cross, *Informal Politics: Street Vendors and the State in Mexico City* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. x + 272, £35.00, £11.95 pb; \$49.50, \$18.95 pb.

*Informal Politics* confronts a critical theme at an important scale for Latin Americanist scholars: urban politics, with attention to alternative political organisation among less advantaged populations. In Latin American academic circles there has been a tendency to overvalue political studies at the national level, and undervalue those at the regional and urban level. This imbalance now appears to be self-correcting, as more researchers and scholars realise that the future of Latin American politics lies in its heavily populated cities, where social movements form, strategies of decentralisation crystallise, and global investments and new power structures locate.

While this book appears at first to be merely another addition to the growing field of urban social movements in Latin America, the author's focus on Mexico City's street vendors offers something quite original. A critical trend in Latin America urbanisation is the increasing privatisation of space. From São Paulo and Buenos Aires to Lima, Bogotá or Mexico City, we are seeing the gradual eclipse of public plazas and streets by the ever-present shopping mall, the gated community, or the privatised high-rise luxury condominium. Gentrification of historic centres has led residents, merchant groups and local governments to increasingly find ways to jettison unwanted public space users (the poor) from the city centre. Global investment plans for inner cities further encourage governments to 'museumsize' urban space, another strategy for clearing out the masses. Meanwhile, the ranks of underemployed city dwellers continue to grow and seek alternative income sources through street vending. They need public spaces in heavily traveled pedestrian zones to capture potential informal consumers. A head-on collision between two disparate sets of urban interests appears unavoidable.

*Informal Politics* is thus an exceedingly timely book. Author John C. Cross, a sociologist, makes it clear that the book's main objective is to examine the informal economy as a political process in Mexico City by studying the socio-

political organisation of the street vendors and their relationship with various levels of government. The book is organised into seven main chapters and a conclusion. These begin with a set of background discussions: theories of political organisation of the poor (chapter one); social movements and integration with the state (chapter two); and the Mexican political system (chapter three). They are then followed by the four main narratives based on the author's research: a description of the street vendor economy in Mexico City (chapter four), four case studies of vendors' involvement in the political process (chapter five), an historical description of street vendor politics during the Uruchurtu mayoral administration in Mexico City, from 1952-1966; and an analysis of the politics of street vending in the Historic Centre of Mexico City during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Chapter one, 'Organizing the Poor' raises the question: why were street vendors able to reappear in Mexico City in the 1980s and 1990s after being severely repressed by the Uruchurtu regime? The answer, the author surmises, lies in the essential organisational and collective nature of street vending, even in the face of being an informal and often unrecognised part of the urban political process. This transcends existing political science theory about disadvantaged groups. Chapter two examines 'State Integration and "Informal" Social Movements', arguing that the literature has rarely looked at street vendors as serious political actors, which the author believes them to be. Chapter three, 'The Mexican State', offers the non-Mexicanist a useful review of the organisation and nature of the Mexican political system, with its traditional emphasis on one political party (the PRI), and on the patron-client, *camarilla* form of power-building. This intense culture of loyalty toward the *camarilla*, Cross argues, ends up giving the street vendors a crucial entrée into the political power structure.

Chapter four, 'The Commercial Role of Street Vending', is one of the most informative chapters in the book. It offers a breakdown and description of the categories of 'tolerated' and 'non tolerated' street vendors. Further, it attempts to estimate how many street vendors there are city wide (approximately 200,000), and in various sub-groupings. Chapter five, 'Street Vendors and the State', looks at four cases of political organisation among street vendors, and how they forged relationships with the government, particularly in the form of client-patron linkages with powerful leaders who began to view them as an asset. Chapter six summarises the historic period of Uruchurtu's market construction from 1953-1966, in which 174 public markets were built, while intense repression of vendors on public streets unfolded. Because street vendors were required to form associations, the author argues that this established a historic base for political organising. That base comes to life in chapter seven, 'The Historic Center', when the street vendors use their organising techniques to fight back against the Salinas administration's attempt to move them off the streets into sterile and badly located 'commercial plazas'.

Cross concludes the book by arguing that street vendors have grown as a political force in Mexico City, despite various attempts by the state to reduce their numbers or eliminate them. He believes they have taken advantage of structural weaknesses in the Mexican political system by using the *camarilla* culture to their advantage. He suggests that the lessons of this case must be examined by social movement theoreticians, as an example of the state being forced to negotiate with informal actors, and as a kind of participatory democracy work-in-progress.

I have only a few concerns about the book. First, while the author makes every attempt to tie it to the theoretical literature, I am reminded of the saying '*vence pero no me convence*'. A few social movement works are mentioned, but they are not extensively reviewed, and far too many are left out, including the work of Mexican writers like Ramírez Saiz, Pradilla Cobos and Sergio Tamayo. Further, little attention is given to the copious body of excellent case studies of urban social movements in Mexico, from Puebla, Monterrey, and Juchitán, to Mexico City itself. The author might have used these and other materials to answer a question that was not addressed: how does the street vendor case study compare with the findings about other social movements in Mexico and Latin America?

Second, the historic material in the book covers the periods 1952–66 and 1988–94. Little is written about the period 1966–88, and nothing is said about the late 1990s and the future. The latter seems particularly critical, since the political changes in Mexico today will significantly shake up the old system. I am sure the author knew this when he wrote the book; he might have added a short section speculating on future scenarios.

Finally, this book is about access to public space in Mexico City. I believe the discussion would have been greatly aided by a set of maps showing the key public spaces used in the historic centre, the geography of public markets from the 1950s and 1960s, and the location of the failed commercial plazas of the Salinas period.

Notwithstanding these points, this book is well organised, and will be a good read for scholars. Its ample, original field research and vital subject matter make it worth having on one's bookshelf.

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John F. Scott, *Latin American Art: Ancient to Modern* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999), pp. xxiv + 240, \$49.95.

Malcolm Quantrill (ed.), *Latin American Architecture: Six Voices* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2000), pp. xiii + 219, \$60.00 hb.

Lawrence A. Herzog, *From Aztec to High Tech: Architecture and Landscape across the Mexico–United States Border* (Baltimore, MD, and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. xiv + 241, £31.00 hb.

These three books demonstrate a renewal of interest in the art and architecture of Latin America last seen on this scale perhaps thirty years ago. Until now Leopoldo Castedo's brief, accessible *A History of Latin American Art and Architecture*, first published in 1969, was almost the only general survey of the field. It is of course far more difficult to write a short, accurate survey than a close-focus specialist study, but had the demand been there it would surely have been replaced before now. Castedo's book is still a valuable basic reference work and an authorial tour de force, but has long been out of print, and John F. Scott's *Latin American Art: Ancient to Modern* helps to fill the gap. In some ways it complements rather than supersedes Castedo. Scott covers the art and architecture of the whole region from earliest times to the present day but the balance is very different. Whereas Castedo divides the material into three roughly equal