

Unfortunately, the conclusions to this volume do not pick up some of the interesting threads underlying the various case studies: the importance of the local context and the history of regional and local agriculture, particularly the relationships between farmers and agro-industry; the importance of farmers being able to organise; and the construction of social capital that often evolved in the decades before NAFTA. Finally, the question of 'governance' is raised in several chapters, as Mexico has moved away from a one-party government and is now experiencing the second term of the conservative PAN administration. Attending to the rules of free trade under NAFTA and to the rural constituency, as well as the powerful interests of agro-industry and the welfare of consumers, is not a new challenge for Mexican governments, but the balancing act is constantly being modified by new rules of governance under PAN leadership. In this book, however, this is not addressed as a problem of governance. Instead, policy issues are phrased in neutral development discourse with respect to lessons learned, shortcomings and proposals for more appropriate policies in the NAFTA context.

Finally, the editing of this volume could have been more careful, avoiding the reader having to undertake a disconcerting search for references and, in one case, a missing concluding paragraph.

*El Colegio de México*

KIRSTEN APPENDINI

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Alberto Arce, Gustavo Blanco and Margarita Hurtado (eds.), *Políticas públicas como objeto social: imaginando el bien público en el desarrollo rural latinoamericano* (Guatemala City: FLACSO; Wageningen: Wageningen University; Valdivia: Universidad Austral de Chile, 2008), pp. 293, pb.

This book has its origins in papers presented at the Seventh Congress of the Latin American Association of Rural Sociology (*Associação Latinoamericana de Sociologia Rural*, ALASRU) in 2006 in Quito. It is divided into three sections. The first is the most ambitious as it deals with some theoretical elements for reconceptualising public policies. The second section is on territory and political decentralisation, and the last section discusses aspects of the new public-private configurations in the rural world. With the exception of the first chapter by Alberto Arce, each chapter refers to a particular country. There are three chapters on Brazil, two each on Chile and Guatemala, and one each on Argentina, Mexico and Peru. While it may be difficult and perhaps not even desirable to have a chapter on every Latin American country, it is regrettable that there is no chapter on Bolivia, which has a rich experience of decentralisation, struggles for territorial autonomy and public-private practices in the countryside.

The book aims to question reductionist visions of public policies in two ways: firstly, by highlighting the need to move away from traditional views, with their almost exclusive focus on land, capital and labour, towards a vision which incorporates intangible factors like knowledge, innovation and new forms of interaction mediated by the new information and communication technologies; and secondly, by no longer regarding the state as the only source of public policy design. This critique of traditional analyses of public policies derives from the editors' actor-oriented theoretical perspective in which rural people, commonly seen as the target or victim of public policies, are regarded as actors who intervene in a variety of ways

in the formulation and implementation of public policies through their ability to negotiate, resist and modify state-derived public policies as well as to propose their own. Social actors are seen as being able to engage politically and to form their own organisations so as to exercise their rights as citizens and to develop new livelihood strategies. Hence, they are not passive victims of neoliberal or other types of state-designed public policies. It comes as no surprise that the editors adopt such a perspective, as all three are, or have been, associated with the University of Wageningen, where, under the leadership of Norman Long and Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, an actor-oriented theoretical approach was developed that has made a major contribution to rural studies.

This new interpretation and analysis of public policies is also derived from the authors' awareness of the recent transformations of rural Latin America in which new social processes, institutions, organisations and political interventions such as decentralisation, reterritorialisation, multifunctionality and novel public-private configurations have emerged, and which some observers, including this reviewer, have characterised as constituting a new rurality. The book aims to open a debate which envisages a richer analysis of public policies designed to develop the rural sector in Latin America. Hence the editors, in their Introduction, formulate a series of questions, including: what is the importance of civil society in the design of public policies for the rural development of Latin America? What degree of autonomy do actors have in imagining the public in a different manner from the state and the market? And what are the theoretical and methodological challenges of these transformations for Latin American rural sociology?

These aims and questions are certainly crucial and most relevant, and to answer them is indeed a tall order. It is not surprising, then, that most chapters only address some of them. The chapter which comes closest to fulfilling the goals of the editors is that of Alberto Arce. This is a path-breaking, complex and sophisticated analysis, but what I missed was an examination of what José Bengoa has conceptualised as *la emergencia indígena*, understood both as the rise of the indigenous peoples and their acquisition of new rights and as the critical emergency they are facing as neoliberal globalisation threatens their livelihood.

Two further chapters stand out in this collection. Sergio Schneider's chapter on the contribution of pluriactivity to public policies on rural development in Brazil is a delight to read. It is well structured, coherently argued, evidence-based and clearly written. In discussing Latin America's new rurality he correctly argues that the new pluriactivity and multifunctionality in the countryside should not be seen as a panacea for the problems of rural development, as some authors and policymakers maintain. I also greatly enjoyed reading the chapter by Gustavo Blanco Wells. It is a most imaginative and refined analysis of the public-private alliances and new forms of intervention in Chile's rural development. One of his arguments is that the concept of public-private alliances, which were much encouraged by the *Concertación* governments in Chile, is insufficient for explaining the various emergent situations and new social dynamics they generate. In his view it is necessary to rethink the role of the state, civil society and the market, as they are not necessarily causal agents but are the outcome of social relations.

While the ambitious agenda of the editors is only fulfilled in part and the chapters are uneven, I strongly recommend this book as it opens up new ways of thinking about public goods, interests and welfare as well as of discussing public policies. The book could not be more opportune as the current world economic crisis has given

new relevance to public policies in view of the failures of the private market. New policies are required as well, however, as the crisis has also revealed the limitations of current public policies. Indeed, those social actors who have suffered the consequences of this crisis are the ones that most need to gain a greater voice in redefining the meaning of what is public and in formulating public policies.

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Bettina Ng'weno, *Turf Wars: Territory and Citizenship in the Contemporary State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. x + 299, \$50.00, hb.

The 1990s presented new historic opportunities for Afro-Colombian communities seeking economic, social and cultural rights. The Colombian Constitution of 1991 introduced a new set of rights which called for the recognition of blacks as well as providing provisions for them to seek titles to territories on the Pacific Coast. Law 70, or the Black Rights Law, officially recognised Afro-Colombians as an ethnic group and established a framework for territorial, cultural and citizenship rights. Such rights, which had been previously accorded only to indigenous communities, represented a significant shift in black rights legislation in Colombia and throughout Latin America. The recognition of black communities in the 1991 Constitution is based on Article 55, which reads:

The government will create a law that recognises, for black communities that have come to be occupying public land (*tierras baldías*) in the rural riparian zones of the rivers of the Pacific basin, in accordance with their traditional practices of production, the right to collective property over the areas that will be demarcated by the same law (p. 43).

Since 1995 Afro-Colombians have been making collective territorial claims and defending their territory based on these new rights. In Colombia, Afro claims to territory pose some vexing questions since it has been indigenous peoples who have been historically and politically constructed as the bearers of land rights. While Afro groups in Latin America have been accorded basic rights as citizens, the provisions in the new Colombian Constitution provided Afro-Colombian communities with a legal tool to make claims to lands specifically demarcated on the Pacific Coast. How was this possible, and what are the social and political implications? These questions and more are dealt with in Bettina Ng'weno's book.

Ng'weno's research focuses specifically on the claims to territory being made by two distinct Afro communities located in the south-western part of Colombia in the Cauca Valley. She is interested in the differences and similarities of the claimants as well as in the complicated connections, politics and strategies employed by these communities. It is argued that these claims represent, on the one hand, a more general and unified attempt at self-definition as communities (ethnically, ideologically and territorially) and, on the other, a political opening (as citizens and constituencies).

One of the central arguments of the book is that the relationship between third-world states and citizens is being structured around territory through efforts to reincorporate people and territory within national boundaries in the face of demographic sub- and supra-governmental structures, namely armed groups and economic structuring that questions the relevance of the state. Citizens and states are