

**BOOK REVIEWS** Elizabeth Borland, editor

Carew Boulding and Claudio A. Holzner.  
*Voice and Inequality: Poverty and Political Participation in Latin American Democracies.*  
New York: Oxford University Press. 2021.  
\$74.00 (hardcover).

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Latin America is the most unequal place in the world, and many classic scholarly accounts of political participation in the region have treated the poor as passive victims, trapped in political machines that mostly ignore them until another election comes around. After all, in countries like the U.S., poor people are far less likely to participate in a range of political activities, or to have their interests represented by policymakers, so why would Latin America be any different?

Yet according to *Voice and Inequality: Poverty and Political Participation in Latin American Democracies* by Carew Boulding and Claudio Holzner, poor folks in Latin America participate in politics at impressive rates—in fact, on certain types of participation, poor people mobilize more than their affluent neighbors. In this theoretically compelling, lucidly written manuscript, the authors tackle an intriguing puzzle: why, in this historically unequal region with a spotty track record regarding democracy, do poor Latin Americans participate so much in politics? Further, what explains variation in terms of political equality within a region that is often treated as monolithic? The authors put forth an argument that focuses on mobilization: in contexts where community organizations and political parties endeavor to include the poor in politics, the wealth-based participation gaps observed in established democracies like the U.S. largely disappear.

The argument and evidence presented here are convincing, and the manuscript flows in an intuitive way from chapter to chapter, systematically building the case. The book draws on survey data from the AmericasBarometer project based out of Vanderbilt University, which includes several survey items that gauge participation in a variety of political activities in eighteen countries from 2006-2014.

*Voice and Inequality* makes a number of important contributions. First and foremost, the book provides abundant descriptive information regarding political participation among the poor and nonpoor in Latin America, placing the region in comparative perspective in ways that are often surprising. Most of the seminal work on political inequality comes from the U.S., which Boulding and Holzner convincingly argue is something of an outlier in the American continent. Whereas

socioeconomic class is one of the key drivers of political participation in the U.S., in Latin America the story is more nuanced, as poor citizens compensate for lower voter turnout through other modes of participation.

This brings me to another one of the book's strengths: it goes beyond voting to address a more encompassing array of political behaviors, including protest, contacting local officials, and civic activism. Multiple recent studies have documented the rise in protest activity in democracies worldwide, and the integrated approach that Boulding and Holzner employ provides a more holistic picture of political participation in Latin America than any recent book that comes to mind. This book has something for anyone who studies political participation, regardless of type.

The book also is a fine example of multilevel methods in political science research, incorporating contextual variables in what have often been characterized as individual-level processes. Parties seem to play an important role in mobilizing poor citizens, but governments led by famous populist "champions" of the poor like Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales do less to mobilize the impoverished, compared to mass parties in competitive party systems. The authors attribute this finding to a lack of political space in regimes where populists chip away at individual freedoms, and the grassroots operations possessed by mass parties.

*Voice and Inequality* is at its best when it provides evidence for the ways that parties and community organizations mobilize the poor to engage in several specific nonelectoral forms of participation. The aggregate participation index raises concerns in that it overweighs contact with local officials, which seems to be a participatory act that is particularly prevalent among the poor. One potential issue with the variables measuring contact is that these types of behaviors might be more common among the poor for reasons that have little to do with exercising political voice—for example, when impoverished people are required to interact with public officials to maintain access to social services or cash transfer programs.

The authors' argument rests on the notion that organization, rather than individual-level access to resources, explains why poor people participate more in politics in certain countries than in others. This makes sense. But it also begs the following question: how are countries able to forge participatory community organizations? Future studies should explicitly address microlevel mechanisms that might drive impoverished people to organize themselves. It seems to me that one underlying mechanism motivating poor people to participate in their communities is *need* in the absence of state penetration and high-quality public services—however, this is obviously a necessary but insuf-

ficient condition, and further qualitative work should endeavor to root out the circumstances under which vibrant civic organizations in poor communities emerge and thrive.

Another question that arises from this study regards the consequences of participation. While the authors demonstrate that the poor participate at high rates in many Latin American countries, the gains made during the inclusionary turn have been diminished in recent years, and several democracies in the region are teetering on the edge of erosion, if not outright reversal. Does participation by poor people produce policies that are responsive to them? And if political competition and mass parties are the main drivers of participation by the poor, what happens if they falter?

Alas, one book can only do so much, and the fact that *Voice and Inequality* sparks so many questions is a testament to its quality. Indeed, this study offers an exemplary lay of the land with respect to class and participation in Latin America, proposes an intriguing puzzle, and offers a compelling answer. One heartening takeaway from *Voice and Inequality* is that we are not doomed to live in unrepresentative systems that hear only the voices of the wealthy. When parties endeavor to mobilize the poor, the representation gaps that we in the U.S. often view as permanent can all but disappear. That, combined with its impressive theoretical and methodological rigor, make it a must-read for anyone interested in popular mobilization in Latin America.

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Danya Glabau. *Food Allergy Advocacy: Parenting and the Politics of Care*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2022. \$100.00 (hardcover), \$24.95 (paper).

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As someone who has been studying the social worlds of food allergy off and on for more than a decade, I think I can safely say that Danya Glabau likely knows more, and has thought more carefully, about the contemporary social science and cultural politics of food allergy advocacy than anyone else. This book is the product of years of multisource data collection and analysis of the social worlds, scenes, and institutions that inform the work and politics of food allergy advocacy and care. A cultural anthropologist and an ethnographer, Glabau deftly engages a feminist science and technology studies lens to analyze the multivalent dimensions of food allergy advocacy and patient activism—how knowledge and power move through networks of nonprofits, corporate medical research,

and law—while compelling the reader to ask if and how things could be different in the future. This is especially important considering the COVID pandemic and a broader recognition that good health or safety is not, and has never been, simply an individual achievement.

In a country such as ours, where health conditions are regularly treated as personal and not collective problems, the story of how different veins of advocacy politics and care for children with severe food allergies emerged and evolved as mutually reinforcing is what weaves together Glabau's different empirical foci. Her engaging writing style offers a richly analytic and theoretical, yet accessible, study. Glabau untangles the connections that are sometimes hidden among parental advocates, professional advocacy organizations, public schools, pharmaceutical companies, clinical researchers, opinion columnists, and policymakers. She examines the characteristics and public image of the "food allergy mom" across these different parties to explain how each deploys, and thus strengthens, culturally dominant discourse about the (middle-class, well-educated, white, heterosexual, and nice) mother as primarily responsible for her children's health and well-being.

Glabau argues that, as the public face of food allergy advocacy, allergy moms use their personal backgrounds, resources, and privileges to negotiate and further abet their ability to shape policy, as well as the broader cultural meanings of risk and safety that infuse other institutions in the world of allergy advocacy. The dominant notion of the mother-child bond and prevailing ideas about mothers as selfless caretakers buttress various arguments about control—normative responsibility and expert knowledge for protecting vulnerable children. From schools to clinical trials, to state and national legislation, "death talk" (p. 60—stories about kids lost to accidental allergen exposures) permeates the professed need for policymakers to ease heteronormative mothers' day-to-day, detailed, necessary, and highly gendered work of monitoring their allergic children's spaces and sociality in order to make their lives livable. Allergy moms, then, are both a means by which professional advocacy groups can claim credibility and a rhetorical device in pharmaceutical companies' corporate social responsibility initiatives. Framing allergy advocacy as child protection is seen as both politically expedient and grounded in existing relationships. At the same time, the potentially life-threatening nature of severe food allergies demands vigilance when institutionalized mechanisms for collective care are lacking. Glabau sees allergy moms as doing what they think they must do without extending their critiques to the social and political arrangements that make health harder for all.

Particularly compelling for scholars and students and of social movements, I think, are the book's chapters showing the symbiosis and porosity of the seams between different interests: legislative battles between parent advocacy groups and teachers' unions in the 1990s and 2000s over providing schools with epinephrine and training to use auto-injectors, and the sociofinancial entanglements between professionalized patient advocacy groups and the pharmaceutical companies that make and sell the medicine used to treat anaphylaxis. The last empirical chapter, especially (about the EpiPen pricing scandal of the mid-2010s), is theoretically generalizable to other health activism campaigns that involve prescription medications and what Glabau calls "nonprofit capture" (p. 177), a concept modeled after "regulatory capture." Industry sponsors are welcomed (and pay sponsorship fees, have exhibition booths, and give out swag) at advocacy-focused events. Nonprofits align with these companies to access funds that help them raise awareness and lobby for the adoption of safety legislation. Moreover, creating lists of willing participants for clinical trials for new treatment options serves the interests of both parties. What happens, then, when a pharmaceutical company does something like raise its prices well over what many affected people can easily pay? Glabau ascertains that, in the EpiPen case, little changed but optimistically suggests that a different configuration of circumstances (including universal health care coverage) might proffer more beneficial outcomes.

In sum, this book is an ambitious research project that offers smart insights and a welcome contribution at the intersection of multiple disciplines. I think its insights can be extended by the readers of *Mobilization* and other movement scholars in future work on collective action addressing health, disability, and parenting, as well as the cultural politics of responsibility and risk.

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Katherine Sobering. *The People's Hotel: Working for Justice in Argentina*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2022. \$99.95 (hardcover), \$26.95 (paper).

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What does equality look like? This is the novel question Katherine Sobering asks us to grapple with in her book, *The People's Hotel: Working for Justice in Argentina*, which provides the most in-depth analysis in the English language of Hotel Bauen, one of the most emblematic of Argentina's recuperated enterprises. Using a multiyear ethno-

graphic approach rich with detail and complexity, Sobering outlines its worker-run, cooperative structure: a challenge to the assumptions of mainstream business models and organizational practices that emphasize individualism, hierarchy, and profit maximization. Her case study shifts the analytical focus of critical social scientific work from explaining the causes of inequality to understanding how individuals can begin to construct new social relationships that articulate a more egalitarian future.

Inspired by the work of Erik Olin Wright (2010) on "real utopias" (a unique Marxist approach to understanding class structures and transformative social change), Sobering highlights key aspects of Hotel Bauen's organizational logic and internal social relations to build her central concept: "equality projects." These, she writes, are "an effort to promote more egalitarian relations between people by revaluing the categories that orient social practice" (p. 9). Sobering identifies several practices at Hotel Bauen that point in this direction. First is collective decision making, explored in chapter two. This occurs via multiple mechanisms, the most important of which are democratic assemblies where workers discuss and debate the running of their workplace and vote on specific proposals.

Importantly, Sobering uncovers not only how democracy at work is possible and can be a key mechanism for building equality, but also various barriers that emerge in the process. Although workers have developed formal mechanisms for participation, communication, and transparency, informal processes of friendship and favoritism can contribute to democratic breakdown and the emergence of rumors, mistrust, and clientelism. As workers navigate these social terrains, they collectively define the meaning of fairness and establish their workplace as an explicitly political space. This is further highlighted in chapter three by a comparison of Hotel Bauen's practices with those of luxury hotels in the U.S., which utilize "flexible informality," a human-resources approach promoting flexible division of labor, strong community, and weak authority structures (p. 75). Sobering powerfully argues that the difference between these two approaches is that flexible informality promotes individualism and market responsiveness, while Hotel Bauen promotes friendship (*compañerismo*) and self-management (*autogestión*): expressions of collective learning and engagement that prioritize the well-being of the whole.

In addition to democracy, another key mechanism to build equality at the Hotel Bauen cooperative is job rotation. This is a radical departure from traditional capitalist workplaces that deploy a strict division of labor, originally inspired

by Taylorist “scientific management” methods that rely on classic liberal assumptions. As Sobering details in chapter four, job rotation also rotates opportunity, allowing individuals to acquire skills while distributing unpleasant work. A good example is Cecilia, a Hotel Bauen worker who starts as a member of the cleaning crew but later advances to event planning and management. However, a lack of formalization of rotation sometimes prevents workers from taking full advantage, while at other times it is used as punishment. It is to Sobering’s great credit that she can uncover both the democratic potential and possible corrosive tendencies found within Hotel Bauen.

Perhaps the most eye-catching aspect of the cooperative, from the perspective of traditional business models, is its policy of equal pay, discussed in chapter five. As Sobering outlines, every member of the cooperative receives the exact same base pay, as decided by the members themselves. This arrangement disturbs every assumption behind neoliberal arguments that legitimize often extreme pay differentials based on educational merit, performance, and supply and demand. It is unusual, even by cooperative standards that allow for differential pay rates of up to 3:1 (based on recommendations by the International Cooperative Alliance, a body overseeing the sector since 1895). Hotel Bauen also offers members what Sobering calls “survival finance” (p. 121), including access to credit, bulk buying, and future time off.

Nevertheless, Sobering’s sharp ethnographic eye uncovers that several problems must be negotiated within this egalitarian pay system. First, base pay amounts are barely above minimum wage, a reality that pushes workers to look for tips and overtime work in a manner that is not necessarily equitable. Second, some workers feel that not everyone is contributing a fair share of labor, potentially triggering the so-called “free rider problem.” As I have found in my own research, this is indeed an ongoing problem, but one that finds at least partial resolution through the worker discussions and debates at the center of the cooperative model. In other words, despite a potential lack of motivation and resentment among workers because of the equal pay system, the cooperative continues to function well.

Naturally, Sobering’s work also leaves room for some critical reflection. First, I would contend with her understanding of “the political,” which appears almost exclusively at the informal level—related to specific social practices in the context of running a cooperative business. Although this is arguably a great strength of the book, the reluctance to engage with politics at the formal level (political parties, institutionalized democratic procedures, etc.) also becomes a weakness. In my

own 2022 work on the recuperated enterprise movement, including Hotel Bauen, I found it difficult not to see the web of Peronism running through the movement, sometimes indirectly, but other times quite directly. I suspect the reluctance to engage with the formal political level comes from Erik Olin Wright, who considered both Wikipedia (with right-wing libertarian connections) and the Argentinian recuperated enterprise movement (a left-wing movement) to be examples of real utopias. Although the deemphasis of traditional political categories (left, right, center, etc.) adds salutary complexity, the reality is that these traditional political categories still have meaning in people’s everyday lives.

In addition, the recuperated enterprise movement’s central demand—nationalization—and worker’s control, are tied to the state, whose laws place the movement under the permanent threat of eviction. Although Sobering does engage with this point in chapter six, arguing that the state ultimately chose not to enforce existing eviction laws, leaving the movement in a legal grey zone, it would be worth asking how the movement could effectively engage with the state so that its central demand could be met. Some within the movement are pursuing an explicit political strategy to transform the state (new left parties such as FIT-U). Given this, I would ask Sobering to consider whether her ethnographic approach could include a multilevel political analysis that gives equal weight to both formal and informal politics, making the connections between everyday transformative practices and the transformation of the state. In this regard, incorporating classic Marxian concepts such as hegemony, balance of class forces, and specific Argentinian working-class cultural notions such as the “value of work” and dignity would only strengthen what is already outstanding work.

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Eric Blanc. *Revolutionary Social Democracy: Working-Class Politics Across the Russian Empire (1882-1917)*. Chicago: Haymarket Books. 2021. \$229.00 (hardcover), \$36.00 (paper).

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Eric Blanc’s *Revolutionary Social Democracy: Working-Class Politics Across the Russian Empire (1882-1917)* is both a provocative and remarkably ambitious book. Blanc’s impressive ambitiousness, which he explicitly acknowledges in the introduction, manifests itself on multiple fronts. To begin, there is its staggering breadth of

research, including primary and secondary sources not only in Russian, French, German, and English, but also Finnish, Latvian, Polish, and Ukrainian. Then there is the (mostly accurate) claim to be the first full empire-wide study of revolutionary social democracy in the several decades leading up to the revolutions of 1917. And then there is the astonishing fact that the book was composed even as its author completed a dissertation on an entirely different topic (although connected by the common thread of his admirable synthesis of activism and scholarship).

But perhaps most daunting challenge that Blanc sets for himself is the high-wire act of addressing three only very partially overlapping readerships at once: historians, sociologists (more specifically sociologists of revolution), and fellow democratic socialists, for whom he aims to identify what lessons—or not—can be gleaned. To a certain extent, the latter is his primary audience, as evidenced in the lively debate in *Jacobin* magazine and elsewhere that preceded this volume's publication over some of its preliminary theses. One of Blanc's key takeaways for practical contemporary activism is that the differential development and potential success of the revolutionary social democrats' insurrectionary tactics in various regions of the Russian Empire were highly dependent on the political context. Finland's anomalous status (at least pre-1905, in otherwise absolutist Tsarist Russia) in having a parliament and greater political freedoms thus becomes a central focus. Finkel argues "the long-overlooked example of Finland's social democracy points to the potential viability of a noninsurrectionary strategy for building working-class power and moving towards anticapitalist rupture" (p. 407). This assertion has already proven provocative.

As the first comprehensive survey of the development of Marxism in all regions of the Russian Empire, this book is indeed invaluable for historians. While there have been other works with more complete, in-depth portraits of different national Marxist parties—some but not all of which are well integrated here—few if any have done this kind of comparative analysis. While the author is (extremely justifiably) proud of having "conducted research in twenty-five archives and academic libraries across Eastern Europe" (p. 18), including archives and libraries in Poland and Finland and libraries in Latvia, Ukraine, and Russia, this is not what empiricist historians would understand as an archival deep dive per se. (As far as I can determine, there are three citations to documents from the Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw and several more to items in the ephemera collection at the Biblioteka Narodowa, most of which are happily now available and scanned online.) Rather, Blanc's considerable achievement

is the remarkable synthesis of primary materials gathered from periodicals, ephemera, and published document collections, as well as the skillful use of a wide variety of secondary sources, in eight different languages.

The book is presented through an unapologetically orthodox Marxist lens; it builds on Lars Lih's provocative revisionist understanding of both Kautsky and Lenin, while simultaneously attempting to decenter the latter. The argument, as briefly put as possible, is that both thinkers have been wildly misunderstood. Kautsky was, in fact, a consistent advocate of uncompromising proletarian class struggle but recognized the need for different tactics in parliamentary Western Europe vs. absolutist Russia. Lenin, as Lih has insisted relentlessly, was hardly the elitist sectarian supposedly first revealed in *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) but, in fact, more committed to a true workers' party than his opponents. Blanc adds that the myth of Bolshevik exceptionalism is also predicated on the failure to account for the experiences and programs of borderland parties, many of which maintained the same outlook and similarly rebuffed all suggestions of forming coalitions with liberal parties in the effort to overthrow Tsarism.

The author's ambitious reach to multiple audiences with different expectations combined with his tendency to use polemics and dramatic claims does not always serve him well. The division between "radical" and "moderate" social democrats set out at the start leaves little doubt as to which group is to be preferred; it is certainly not the "class collaborationists," as the Mensheviks and other moderate groups willing to form coalitions with liberals are called throughout. If, as Lih and Blanc convincingly charge, Western scholarship has wrongly caricatured Lenin as a devious sectarian elitist, then this revisionist version too often appears as its mirror image. When the familiar dynamics of the Bolshevik-Menshevik split are discussed, there is no questioning whether the liquidators were basically what Lenin said they were, and recent work by Alice Pate and John Gonzalez that problematizes this is not cited. This teleological tendency is a shame, because at other points in its thick description of events, the book provides superbly nuanced accounts of the granular gradations on the ground.

On the other hand, this is not as novel an intervention in the historiography as is claimed, nor is it the only time when the author either misinterprets or misrepresents what he disparagingly calls the "liberal historiography" (p. 127), which, for all its undoubted faults, is neither as unitary nor as unchanging as it is made out to be. For one thing, Lih's interventions on Lenin, while certainly

controversial, have already made their mark and, at the least, changed how revolutionary factionalism is discussed. On other matters, what is presented as conventional wisdom is, at best, perplexing, although this may be because Blanc's division between "liberal" and "leftist" historians is unclear. Far from elided, the growing radicalism of the workers' movement on the eve of the World War I has received significant attention and its significance has been the subject of much debate. While there may still be some truth to the assertion that "most scholars see the Bolsheviks' supposedly novel party model as a key contributor to the creation of a totalitarian state" (p. 236), this is far from universal; indeed, the utility of the very concept of "totalitarianism" has been the subject of quite a bit of analysis.

Nevertheless, and despite its unfortunate tendencies to make some claims more demonstratively than necessary, this study is a valuable contribution to the literature and will likely leave its mark on all intended audiences.

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Annika Skoglund and Steffen Böhm. *Climate Activism: How Communities Take Renewable Energy Actions Across Business and Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2022. \$110.00 (hardcover).

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Annika Skoglund and Steffen Böhm's *Climate Activism: How Communities Take Renewable Energy Actions Across Business and Society* is not a book about climate activists as they are found in organizations like Extinction Rebellion. Instead, Skoglund and Böhm identify a different kind of climate activism that takes the form of epistemic communities. Extending the concept of climate activism toward distributed and horizontally organized everyday actions on climate change is intended to free our understanding of activism from special organizations. The book accordingly highlights actions that emerge alongside and within the complexities of everyday life, including small and large businesses, government organizations, and affluent communities. The authors move beyond the established focus on social movement theory to make sense of how people act on climate change.

The book's empirical anchor is renewable energy technology. Four case studies demonstrate how the development of renewable energy projects takes effect at the large European energy operator Vattenfall, among state authorities, through

small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and in the form of community initiatives. Skoglund and Böhm draw on a decade of research and a long-standing interest in climate change, organizations, and alternative communities.

What is new and exciting about *Climate Activism* is its attempts to bring together these partially divergent, partially overlapping case studies under a theory of epistemic communities that enables the inclusion of more silent voices and mundane acts into our understanding of climate activism. Instead of building social bonds by organizing protests in public or blocking infrastructure to demand political change from a position of externality, epistemic communities are constituted by small, incremental changes at energy corporations, collaboration between community energy organizations and state bureaucrats, or the creation of new businesses with innovative green missions.

Fascinating and important as this alternative conceptualization of climate activism is, the book's inclusion of empirical material limits its potential, especially when measured against the book's all-encompassing title: *Climate Activism*. The authors themselves admit being confronted with a highly academic and affluent group of people across their case studies, which raises the question, why did they not seek to diversify their empirical material for a book that begins with and constantly emphasizes the boundarylessness of climate activism as a crucial differentiator of epistemic communities? Due to this lack of diversity, on the flipside of the boundaryless epistemic communities described, one finds that a lot of people are excluded from the empirical view. There are also those who might, in fact, be in opposition to the climate activism the authors seek to define as internal and horizontal.

While climate movements regularly call out the business models of companies like Vattenfall which are positioned in a way that the authors describe as "external," they highlight the contrasting sensitivity of company employees in relation to climate change and their respective "internal" actions (p. 6). And yet, it is apparent from the book that there are still crucial boundaries at work in this case; they are now just situated inside the company itself.

Becoming more attentive to these fine differences in the case studies would have required empirical research at varying scales. For instance, this might have highlighted not only the privilege of the Vattenfall employees in relation to those most directly impacted by climate change—namely, people outside or in opposition to the company—but also the ways this climate activism builds upon more radical forms of collective action used in climate movements, a means of

legitimizing and maintaining a critical position within the company. Tracing such contradictions is, however, not what the authors set out to do in the first place—a fact that they acknowledge.

The book plays out its strengths in other ways. The recurring discussion of the terms “community” and “society” in relation to renewable energy projects recognizes the neoliberal context in which climate activism takes shape in a highly productive way. Originally theorized by Tönnies as contrasting configurations of social relations before and after industrialization, *Climate Activism's* examination of “community” and “society” shows that the versatile materiality of renewables invites the creation of hybrid community-society relationships that mix elements of community belonging and neoliberal marketization. Skoglund and Böhm identify community-society hybrids at the crossroads of SMEs, government authorities, and citizen groups.

In this context, they convincingly argue that the expert status of key boundaryless individuals drives the development of new ties among organizations, which makes a difference for the emergence of community-society hybrids. However, Skoglund and Böhm miss the opportunity to explain further the role of key actors—and personal passions—as an element of epistemic communities.

Overall, *Climate Activism* is a highly relevant addition to the literature on collective action about climate change. Focusing on the often overlooked, rather silent and mundane ways in which energy company and government employees, citizen groups, and SMEs find their own ways of making a difference for climate futures, Skoglund and Böhm make a case for the expanded analysis of climate activism beyond traditional social movements. At the same time, some of the key claims about this additional form of climate activism, like its boundarylessness or horizontality, create major questions that require further research and a refinement of the key concept of epistemic communities.

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LaGina Gause. *The Advantage of Disadvantage: Costly Protest and Political Representation for Marginalized Groups*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2022. \$99.99 (hardcover), \$34.99 (paper).

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In 1991, a coalition of activists and advocacy groups came together to oppose a proposal that would have eliminated critical medical services

from a neighborhood in New York City and disproportionately affected predominantly minority communities. A lawsuit followed, and the plan was ultimately dropped.

LaGina Gause opens a chapter of her provocative book, *The Advantage of Disadvantage: Costly Protest and Political Representation*, considering the fate of St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital, and more specifically, the response of one member of Congress. Gause notes, “When the lawsuit was filed, Republican Congresswoman Susan Molinari represented the New York City plaintiffs in the U.S. House of Representatives,” (p. 83).

Gause contrasts Molinari's response to the hospital fight with her reaction a year later, when a gay and lesbian Irish group attempted to enter New York City's St. Patrick's Day Parade. She asks: “Why did Congresswoman Molinari choose to legislatively support the protest claims of Black, Latino, and low-income protestors who filed the civil rights lawsuit in 1991 but not the Irish lesbian and gay protestors who filed a similar lawsuit in 1992?” (p. 84).

One obvious possibility is that a fight to keep a hospital operating was popular. Or, fighting to keep a hospital open was consistent with Molinari's longstanding political agenda, while fighting for gay and lesbian parade inclusion was not. Gause, however, raises neither possibility. Instead, she explains that the distinction between the groups lies in the constituents' resources.

And by that she means that the hospital was saved not despite, but *because* its protestors were poor. Gause asserts that individuals with lower incomes, as well as members of Black and Latino communities, tend to have less political, social, and economic resources in comparison to the LGBTQ community. Because they have fewer resources, Gause reasons that their protests are taken as politically meaningful; as indicators of true political commitment. By contrast, Gause classifies the LGBTQ community to be resource-rich, therefore allowing them the luxury of frivolous political activity; thus, “Congresswoman Molinari could not be confident that her vote concerning sexual orientation discrimination would determine whether the group would support her reelection efforts” (p. 86).

That the disadvantage of limited economic and political resources is a political *advantage* is the foundational premise of *The Advantage of Disadvantage*. It is, to be sure, a bold statement.

But there is no evidence to back up the claim that those protesting the hospital closure—backed by the NAACP, the Legal Aid Society, and others—had fewer resources than the Irish, gay, and lesbian activists.

There is no evidence to back up the claim that the resource-rich expend their political energies

frivolously and waste their efforts on issues about which they are indifferent.

At the heart of Gause's theory lie constituents. Under the heading, "Legislators' incentives to represent protest demands," she notes "reelection-minded legislators desire to support constituents with salient preferences who monitor and hold legislators accountable for their roll-call votes on issues important to them" (p. 22).

Despite Gause's claims to the contrary, Molinari never represented the hospital protestors. Representative Molinari's district included Staten Island and a small sliver of Brooklyn. The hospital—and the parade for that matter—was in Manhattan, some 20 physical miles and a cultural world away from Staten Island. If Molinari was inclined to be responsive to her constituents—as she surely was—she was responding not to their protest activity but to their response to the protest, or, more plainly, to public opinion.

The ill-chosen Molinari anecdote introduces a data chapter that aims to demonstrate a relationship between low-resource protestor activity and the subsequent roll call votes of members of the U.S. House. It may seem a tad harsh to dwell on the infirmities of the anecdote, but if a better example of the book's premise cannot be found in a U.S. House with 435 members casting thousands of votes per year, perhaps the premise is wobbly.

Gause's data—centered on protest activity that drew coverage in the *New York Times* between 1991-1995—finds a small positive relationship between low resource protest activity and U.S. House members' subsequent votes on related issues. But Gause employs no control for members' previous voting record and includes no public opinion variable for members facing nearby protest activity. In other words, if a member casts a roll call vote supporting a protest group's position that is wholly consistent with their career voting record, one popular with their constituents, Gause's analysis credits protestors with shaping the member's position.

According to Gause's own interviews with legislative staffers, however, she may have the relationship backwards. Gause quotes several staffers who state that collective action targeted their offices precisely because they were sympathetic. One staffer stated that "in most of these cases, the calls support a position our office was already taking, but the intensity of the action spurred us to be more visible/vocal in our work to make sure constituents were more aware" (p. 65). Another noted, "collective action was more influential when the member's views already aligned with that group" (p. 65).

It is hard to argue with the idea that officeholders respect effort over ease. But all political outreach—whether it be a phone call or a march in

the street—is indexed against the likelihood of voting, of being a constituent, and of holding any value to the officeholder, which Gause's own interviews show. As one staffer noted, their office discounted political activism that they could not tie to their own district: "I always found marches and acts of civil disobedience to be the least effective. First off, I have no idea if they're constituents or not" (p. 68).

This is a book that brings passion and optimism to core questions of collective action and political accountability. The idea that having less could ever be a political advantage is tantalizing, to be sure. Credit Gause with having produced an unquestionably imaginative and thought-provoking work of scholarship. However, this is not, a book that succeeds at proving its point.

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Cedric G. Johnson. *After Black Lives Matter: Policing and Anti-Capitalist Struggle*. New York: Verso Books. 2023. \$34.95 (hardcover).

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The Black Lives movement has been a mainstay in media coverage and contemporary popular discussions of racism in the United States since the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown in 2014. Social media commentary and journalistic treatments of Black Lives Matter protests have vastly outpaced scholarly analysis of the various ideologies, activist organizations, goals, and strategies. Thus, it is impossible to understate the importance of extended, rigorous analysis of the Black Lives movement. Cedric Johnson's book, *After Black Lives Matter: Policing and Anti-Capitalist Struggle*, is a critical retrospective analysis of how twentieth-century political and economic changes toward neoliberalism birthed the largest racial justice movement since the civil rights era.

In an ambitious and ultimately successful re-reading of post-war Black movements in the face of changing class dynamics spanning from Jim Crow to the war on drugs, Johnson provides a rich explanation of the ideological, class, and geographical bases of current crises in policing. In doing so, the author critiques contemporary activism around police reform and police abolition. Furthermore, Johnson leverages his political-economic analysis to attempt an intervention in contemporary academic and popular discussions around race and Black activism.

The first half of the book is focused on providing the reader with a comprehensive analysis of the changing structure of American capital-



ism. There, Johnson explains how the gains of the civil rights movement meant enfranchisement of a portion of the Black population into the economic system while post-civil rights era industrial decline and cuts to welfare and entitlements produced a surplus, precarious population. Johnson argues that these changes in structural conditions facilitated a steep increase in violent crime between 1960 and 1990, to which local and national politicians proposed the expansion of the carceral system.

In the book's second half, Johnson applies his historical analysis to recent police killings and Black Lives Matter protests in Baltimore and Chicago as a caveat against political solutions to policing issues, such as Barack Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative, which failed at reform but presented opportunities for private capital. In contrast, Johnson suggests that activists should build support for goals like public-works programs to address widespread unemployment. Johnson concludes his book with a warning against impending expansion of the carceral system through emerging technology, as well as a call for progressive activists to organize around ending class inequality.

Johnson's book effectively elucidates a history of racial capitalism in the United States for readers who may have little in-depth knowledge of the Black Lives movement. In many respects, his criticisms of how race can be deployed for ineffective solutions for policing issues are well-founded and leveled. In chapter four, Johnson offers his most sustained criticism of those within the movement who are guilty of what he might call a "representational, ethnic politics," which is either silent on the role that neoliberalism has played in producing violent policing or openly invested in capitalism as a solution (p. 176). By naming activists such as Tef Poe, Tamika Mallory, and even one of the cofounders of the Black Lives Matter network, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Johnson provides the names of individuals and organizations engaging in the form of activism that he criticizes. On this point, I concur with Johnson's analysis and find his text to be a useful—and even necessary—read for those who have not been deeply involved in the Black Lives Movement.

However, Johnson's site of intervention—the Black Lives Matter *movement*—is where the book could benefit from a finer analysis; the author's macrohistorical focus means that he overlooks important details and empirical differences within the Black Lives movement. Johnson positions his intervention as if his criticism of the groups or strategies with whom he disagrees applies to the protest wave writ large. Contrasting the fourth chapter with the fifth outlines the thrust of what I believe is an unfair application of his analysis that undercuts the effectiveness of his intervention.

The framework that Johnson established in the first half of his book can, and does, clearly serve as a launching point to criticize how some Black activists may use local and national crises to either implicitly or explicitly foreclose class-based reform under the guise of racial justice. On the other hand, in chapter five Johnson connects his historical analysis to firsthand accounts of the current struggle to reform policing in Chicago. He concludes that aspects of Black Lives Matter's platform to "Fund Black Futures" could be one type of broad, redistributive political-economic remedy to the problem of racialized policing. This is why it is strange that, in the book's conclusion, he alleges that the issue is a "dogged focus on antiblack racism" (p. 335) which, given the example of Black redistributive politics from chapter 5, does not appear to be a *categorical* problem for race, or antiblackness, as a diagnostic framework.

Johnson then attempts to configure a strategic dispute within Black Lives Matter into a disagreement with the movement itself. Despite starting from the premise of ideological and strategic diversity within the Black Lives movement, it remains unclear by the end of his book who in the movement, beyond academic authors and movement celebrities, are the recipients of his criticism. Johnson's attempts to apply his critique broadly to the Black Lives movement struggle to convey a concrete landing site, seeking evidence of offense in the "liberal valence" of the slogan "Black Lives Matter" (p. 13) or "The fundamental BLM demand, that Black lives equally deserve protections under the Constitution" (p. 333). For a reader who has closely followed, or even participated in, Black activism and organizing in the 2010s, it is easier to read the text as an economic history of the present moment, or a warning against strategic traps, rather than as a potent criticism of the movement itself.

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Dana M. Moss. *The Arab Spring Abroad: Diaspora Activism against Authoritarian Regimes*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2021  
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Dana Moss's excellent book, *The Arab Spring Abroad: Diaspora Activism against Authoritarian Regimes* seeks to explain patterns of "voice after exit" (p. 3) among exiled and diasporic communities of Yemenis, Syrians, and Libyans during the 2011 Arab uprisings. As diasporic communities in democratic countries grow larger and sometimes more economically powerful, and as communication technologies bridging long distances

at low costs improve, Moss observes that understanding diasporic participation in antiregime movements has become more important than ever. How and when do diaspora members mobilize against authoritarian regimes “back home”? What are the consequences of these efforts for revolutionary efforts on the ground?

Leveraging a trove of interview data and ethnographic observation, Moss debuts an intricate multi-part argument, with chapters oriented towards explaining: (1) patterns of relative demobilization in the years leading up to the 2011 uprisings; (2) “disruptions” to state authority (e.g., the outbreak of domestic mass protests in 2011) that prompted a flurry of diasporic organizational activity; and (3) effects on revolutionary dynamics back home, as antiregime movements became protracted, and as conflicts with proregime forces turned bloody.

The book makes the first two explanations most convincingly. The Gaddafi and Assad regimes’ far-reaching efforts to silence enemies in exile (which Moss terms “transnational repression” on p. 23) and intracommunal mistrust stemming from political rifts among diaspora members (“conflict transmission” on p. 22) dampened prospects for impactful diasporic mobilization during the pre-2011 period. When revolutionary movements broke out against all odds back home, diaspora members watched their in-country counterparts overcome social and political divides to form mass antiregime movements—the vaunted “negative coalition” reported as so critical to revolutionary change in landmark works such as Dix’s “Why Revolutions Succeed and Fail” (1984) and Beissinger’s *The Revolutionary City* (2022). Images of bravery and sacrifice in the face of repression pushed diasporic forces into action, although some stepped tentatively into their new activist roles. Moss gives the example of the Syrian American Council, who began their first statement on the uprisings with “Dear President Assad.” As the revolutions continued, diaspora members engaged in a wide array of repertoires—some organized street protests and lobbying campaigns in foreign capitals, others set off for the home country, committing their bodies as foot soldiers or volunteering as medics in conflict-adjacent zones. Members of the diaspora were transformed, in Moss’s words, into a “collective international auxiliary force against authoritarian regimes in 2011 and beyond” (p.14).

The evidence for the third explanation is harder to parse. Moss argues that diasporic contributions to domestic antiregime movements depended on their ability to channel resources and to marshal geopolitical (world and regional) support for their cause. In both arenas, Libyans emerge as most successful—diasporic networks proved sufficient to channel cash and equipment

to domestic fighters, and NATO intervention tipped the balance of power against Ghaddafi. However, it remains unclear whether diasporic activists were instrumental in catalyzing international action, or if the existing geostrategic environment simply favored certain interventions over others. As Moss writes, international responses to these uprisings were highly dependent on the “long-standing geopolitical orientation of outside actors to the home country” (p. 205). I found myself wondering about the counterfactual case of limited Libyan mobilization in the U.S. and Britain: would we have seen external military intervention in the Libyan conflict, or not? Importantly, Moss traces the recursive impacts of geopolitical support back to the vitality of diasporic organizing. In the case of Libyans, foreign powers’ openness to intervention bolstered the position of diasporic antiregime figures, while tepid international support for the Syrian rebellion demoralized activists and undermined trust between diasporic and domestic revolutionaries.

From my perspective, this highly original and deeply researched book offers several key contributions to the literature on social movements and revolutions in an authoritarian setting. First, Moss convincingly demonstrates that diasporic communities possess unique capacities as social movement actors. They blend emotional attachment to the home country (and, in many cases, antipathy towards incumbents born of repression or exile) with networks and resources drawn from their social, economic, and political ties to host democracies. Second-generation migrants possess code-switching abilities that make them uniquely situated for transnational brokerage. How and why diasporic communities become able to mobilize these capacities in service of movements back home, as Moss argues, forms a vital question that should be posed in every case of contemporary revolution.

Second—and relatedly—Moss successfully problematizes the territorial bias in social movements studies. Our field often places great emphasis on the question of where protests and other contentious activities take place—a tendency apparent in spatial analyses of protest frequency, or “methodological nationalism” (p. 21) (as Moss writes) that tends to define comparative studies of revolution.

Third, Moss demonstrates the methodological power of comparative ethnography—a strategy recently explored by Simmons and Smith in *Rethinking Comparison* (2021)—analyzed within a positivist explanatory framework. While she ultimately organizes her material to answer a series of variable-oriented questions, her immersion with interlocutors and the liberal use of long-form quotations and ethnographic observations in

the text serve up a nuanced set of collective action frames and evolving ethical and political convictions; for example, the ways in which some Syrians abroad began to support the arming of domestic revolutionaries, or the terse negotiations among Yemeni organizations over the use of the secessionist South Yemen flags at protests. This mapping of contestation among diasporic activists and organizations, even amid cooperative mobilization, forms one of the most interesting insights of Moss's book.

Like many theory-building projects, Moss's book brings up almost as many questions as it resolves. In brief, I wondered about the potential for (mis)perception of revolutionary opportunities, as expressed in Kurzban's (1996) classic study of the 1979 Iranian revolution. Given their removal from events on the ground, are diasporic individuals more likely to "misperceive" the strength of political opportunities—by either overestimating

or underestimating state strength? And what might be the implications, if so? Second, contemporary diasporic engagement with domestic movements seems to hinge (understandably) on connective technology. Zeynep Tufekci's *Twitter and Tear Gas* (2017) makes the case that the particularities of certain technologies, platforms, and algorithms can strongly shape mobilizing potential, particularly within a repressive context. How might the evolution of certain technologies discussed in the book (as well as adaptive state responses) shape the potential for diasporic involvement in home country movements moving forward? Finally, in the aftermath of conflict and revolution, how do diasporic individuals, particularly those in political exile, navigate the decision to return for good? In this way, *The Arab Spring Abroad* opens a rich and vitally important arena for future research in the Middle East/North Africa region and beyond.

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