

doing so ‘under conditions of their own choosing’, to quote Karl Marx. All of these governments operated within the constraints of a global order unfavourable to economic nationalism and social democracy, to say nothing of ‘socialism in one country’ or ‘Romantic Marxism’. While Webber argues that the Pink Tide governments and social movements lost sight of ‘... a revolutionary horizon of transforming capitalist society in its totality’ (p. 299), this naively frames political change in terms of voluntarism rather than structural and institutional constraints. With all the shortcomings, contradictions and disappointments of the Pink Tide, Latin America remains the only region in the world where leftist politics have had widespread success since the end of the Cold War. Future scholarship on the Pink Tide period needs to critically and ‘unromantically’ analyse the successes and failures of these governments, and the political parties and social movements that helped bring them to power, in order to keep building a better world.

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Susan Helen Ellison, *Domesticating Democracy: The Politics of Conflict Resolution in Bolivia*

(Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2018), pp. xiii + 281, \$99.00, \$25.95, hb and pb; £76.00, £19.99, hb and pb.

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My main thought after having read Susan Helen Ellison’s book is how well she narrates many Bolivians’ vulnerable condition and problems making ends meet, as well as the importance of personal relationships. She also explains why microcredit programmes, in this context, do not provide solutions to larger, structural problems. As the title suggests, Ellison has a further aim of showing how aid programmes, such as the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) programme under scrutiny, always come with an agenda. In this case, the agenda is to transform people’s minds and ‘domesticate’ democracy in order to create a more peaceful and manageable society.

Ellison recounts the way ADR programmes are implemented among impoverished citizens of the city of El Alto in Bolivia. The macropolitics of ADR is a tool for democracy promotion and good governance platforms. In Bolivia, a network of Integrated Justice Centres (IJC)s provides access to legal aid and conciliation services without costs, the goal being to resolve disputes with domestic partners and neighbours. The ADR programmes were originally funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to encourage the urban poor to circumvent the courts and avoid overburdened state institutions. In this way, impoverished individuals were expected to assume personal

responsibility for resolving their own problems rather than relying on strained state bureaucracies. Ellison places these programmes within broader conflict-resolution programmes targeting the confrontational practices of the city of El Alto's labour/trade unions and neighbourhood associations. These 'conflictual' movements and their street protests have been seen as a threat to Bolivian democracy and economic growth.

One might wonder whether these services were still running under the Morales administration in power between 2006 and 2019. According to Ellison, even though the United States suspended its democracy-assistance programmes and its agency was expelled from Bolivia in 2013, USAID had by then already transferred full control of its ADR programmes to the Bolivian Ministry of Justice, in addition to other European-funded conflict-resolution projects that operated through Bolivian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the government. The informal dispute-resolution techniques offered through the programme were embraced by the Bolivians, due to the widespread distrust in the state legal system as well as demands for legal pluralism promoted by NGOs and donors. Legal pluralism was also a theme included in the 2009 Bolivian Constitution.

Ellison analyses the ADR programmes in the context of democracy promotion and suggests that we see the ADR technique as a way of domesticating democracy. The term 'domestication' is used, according to Ellison, because 'it captures some of the operating logic behind democracy-assistance programmes, but also the way critics perceive them' (p. 15). Whichever position is taken, there is an agenda behind the programmes that seeks to shape a certain kind of citizen: a non-conflictual agent. This is the most important use of the term 'domestication', apart from other uses cited by the author. There is an effort to foster two kinds of citizenship, the 'entrepreneurial' and 'counter-insurgent', in the service of democratic governance and economic development.

'Entrepreneurial' citizenship is promoted through microfinance agencies that encourage women to pursue credit as a means of personal and family improvement. Ellison analyses the effects of neoliberal governmentality and microfinance programmes aimed at the poor in El Alto, looking at how they interact, and produce tension, with other kinds of interpersonal lending. The other aim of the programme is to transform Bolivians' disposition towards conflict, their interpersonal relationships and broader patterns of social conflict in the country. 'Counter-insurgent' citizens turn inward to resolve their problems rather than towards confrontation; they go to the negotiation table rather than to street protests.

This book is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the history, politics and practices of foreign aid programmes and the people who implement them. In the second part, the focus is on the everyday work of one centre in District Six of El Alto, its workers and beneficiaries. Despite Ellison's long sections of historical and contextualising narratives, she makes room for elaborate ethnographic accounts, allowing us to get to know and follow several of the main interlocutors of her fieldwork. In three ethnographic chapters, we learn how *alteños* (El Alto inhabitants) make use of and interpret the meaning of the IJCs and the offered conciliation processes in terms of their everyday problems and relations. Conflicts are negotiated in relation to the kin-based notions of expected reciprocal behaviour between kin,

friends and *compadres* (relations of ritual co-parenthood). Debts originating from microcredit programmes are important sources of conflict within and between households. *Alteños* adopt tools of negotiation to privately manage conflicts tied to indebtedness, allowing them to repay their institutional bank loans according to schedule. One chapter explains in detail the role of an industrial sewing machine, left in pledge for a loan between persons, which eventually becomes connected to domestic violence. In the last chapter, Ellison analyses the role of written documents for *alteños* seeking to mimic legal documentary processes in an attempt to solve interpersonal and domestic conflicts.

This book should be of interest to anthropologists and other professionals concerned with legal and political issues. For development anthropologists, it also provides important documentation of the way in which programmes promoted by international development cooperation play out in relation to the context in which they are implemented. Ellison uses insightful accounts to weave people's daily experiences of conflicts and vulnerability into the work of the ADR centres and the judicial structure of the country. Ellison's account is placed within the plurinational state of Bolivia, but I still wonder about the contradiction between the neoliberal self-sufficient subject the ADR programmes promote and the communitarian policies and aims of the former Morales administration. What is seen as the good citizen, and would that be the same no matter the governmental administration? Yet these processes are of course tied to different forces nationally and internationally, and the book is very valuable in helping us understand Bolivia's complex process of change, the structural impediments to peaceful progress and the vulnerabilities of large proportions of the populations – conditions that are not automatically helped by foreign funded programmes.

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**John Soluri, Claudia Leal and José Augusto Pádua
(eds.), *A Living Past: Environmental Histories of Modern
Latin America***

**(New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), pp. xi + 297,
\$120.00, hb; £85.00, hb.**

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In spite of a wonderful set of recent publications, the environmental history of Latin America remains largely an uncharted territory. *A Living Past* is both a much-needed realisation of what has already been achieved and an equally necessary agenda of what should be yet to come in terms of future research. In 11 substantial chapters, a distinguished array of scholars present a comprehensive panorama of