feminists failed to connect with the domestic politics of these consumer activists, which "helped pave the way" for the growing appeal of the conservative women's movement symbolized by Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum and STOP ERA campaign of the 1970s and 1980s (p. 2). And so the domestic politics of the New Deal defined by state interventions designed to empower working-class communities became by the 1980s a conservative social agenda of discontented white housewives who felt that their lives and experiences were dismissed and disavowed by feminist and liberal elites.

This is an important story that makes a significant contribution to the history of women, labor, and social movements in the twentieth century. While many previous historians have demonstrated the ways in which women drew on their authority as mothers, homemakers, and consumers to demand rights of citizenship and social justice, they have tended to highlight the activism of (primarily) middle-class women within reform organizations or electoral politics. Instead, Twarog shifts attention to the home as a site of struggle from which working-class and middle-class housewives were able to create a distinctive form of grassroots politics that connected the public and private spheres, critiqued existing economic imbalances, and argued for a greater public role in human welfare. Twarog's book uncovers a previously "hidden history" of housewives who influenced national conversations about food justice, the rights of wage-earning women, and economic equality. And it provides important historical lessons—particularly in the context of today's troubled political environment—for how women can find sources of power within their current cultural and economic locations and reach across differences to form productive coalitions in the ongoing fight for gender, racial, and class equality.

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Wires That Bind: Nation, Region, and Technology in the Southwestern United States, 1854–1920. *By Torsten Kathke*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2017. 289 pp. Figures, bibliography, notes. Paperback, $50.00. ISBN: 978-3-8376-3790-8.

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Reviewed by Jeremy Vetter

From the title *Wires That Bind*, one might get the impression that American studies scholar Torsten Kathke's book—based on his 2012 doctoral

dissertation at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich—is mainly about the role of communications technology, especially the telegraph, in the development of the southwestern United States. From the cover image, which features a railroad crossing sign in a desert landscape of saguaro cacti, one might imagine that it is also about transportation technology, especially the railroad. While both of these technologies do play a significant causal role in the historical explanation that Kathke offers, the heart of the book is really more about the transformation of a regional and local elite, rooted in the business community of traders, ranchers, and entrepreneurs—an emphasis that should certainly interest business historians.

Within the southwestern United States, the book is focused on a much smaller but unusually significant area, which Kathke calls the "Mesilla" region—not to be confused with the much better known historic town of Mesilla near Las Cruces, New Mexico, or the Mesilla Valley of the Rio Grande extending north and south from there. The Mesilla region examined by Kathke is farther west. It is the territory incorporated into the United States through the Gadsden Purchase of 1854, encompassing the cities of Yuma and Tucson, Arizona, as well as Deming, New Mexico, all of which were situated along the Southern Pacific Railroad, completed from California to New Orleans in 1883. The economic and social development of these three places between the mid-nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, and specifically the formation of their business and political elite in relation to the wider national and international political economy, constitutes the core of the book. Kathke argues that the transformation that took place in the Mesilla region was really a double shift, including an earlier stage, whereby the local Hispano elite gave way to a mixed Hispano-Anglo elite, and a later stage, in which a more clearly Anglo elite with greater national connections took charge.

The source evidence to support this argument includes an impressive array of local archival and manuscript collections from Arizona and New Mexico, along with many published primary sources such as newspapers and government documents, as well as additional collections from the U.S. National Archives, Library of Congress, and the Huntington Library. Many of these personal papers, newspaper articles, and other documents are written by or about the very business and political elite that are so central to Kathke's historical argument, and it is his deep and wide-ranging interpretation of this evidence that is the most impressive contribution of the book. If one is seeking out a contextualized history of the early business elite in Yuma, Tucson, and Deming, whether for their own sake or as illustrative of larger patterns, this book easily provides that.

Wires That Bind is organized topically rather than chronologically. After an introduction and first chapter that are focused mainly on historiography and conceptual frameworks, and a second chapter about core-periphery relations that is also quite historiographical, the presentation of historical evidence really picks up in the third chapter, which is about communications, including not just the telegraph but also the postal service and newspapers. A fourth chapter looks squarely at the social and economic elite transformation that is central to the book's overall argument, while a fifth chapter considers the business elite in each city separately. The sixth and final chapter focuses on the corresponding legal transformation, especially in property law, including not just land law but also water and mining law. This structure directs the reader's attention more to argumentation and scholarly framing than to storytelling, which is largely confined to shorter vignettes.

As I have already noted, the historiographical framing is copious, taking up much of the introduction and first two chapters, with frequent engagement throughout the rest of the book too. Kathke's familiarity with a wide range of scholarship is noteworthy, as is his extensive analytical and conceptual discussion of how the book fits into scholarly debates, both within and beyond history. Since Kathke has exposed his interpretation of the scholarly debates so explicitly, readers are bound to find some quibbles. For example, his positioning of the book as part of the "next" or "new new" western history that, he claims, focuses more closely on race, class, and gender than the "new western history" of the 1990s did not quite ring true to me, given how much the new western history was already emphatically doing that (p. 24). Also, the omission of environmental historian Donald Worster as one of the well-known "gang of four" proponents of new western history seemed peculiar to me and perhaps points to how environmental factors are underplayed in this book (p. 26). Overall, however, I found the elaborate positioning of the book in scholarly debates helpful, even if it receives much more emphasis than in a typical history book. I especially appreciated Kathke's insistence on discussing the development of a regional and local elite in relation to the larger political economy, which constitutes the most significant contribution of *Wires That Bind*.

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