

become the most populous social class: they are more numerous than unionized workers and the peasantry, and they far outstrip what by Latin American standards is a significant middle class" (p. 1). He profiles two urban movements: the Asamblea de Barrios in Mexico City and the Comité de Defensa Popular in the northern city of Durango. As such, Haber works in the tradition of Jonathan Fox, Jeff Rubin, Joe Foweraker, Robert Bedzek, Judith Adler Hellman, and Maria Lorena Cook among others, echoing their conclusions that workers, peasants, and the urban poor have played a significant role in Mexico's contemporary history, challenging powerful actors through petition, protest, and direct action in neighborhoods, municipal councils, and state agencies. Haber also heeds the lessons of Wayne Cornelius and Susan Eckstein, whose classic urban studies in Mexico of the 1970s showed how the then-ruling party used patronage and punishment to maintain control over the urban poor.

The purpose of this study, Haber states in his first chapter, is to consider what the transformation from urban low-income movement to party politics has meant for the country's democratic transition and its future consolidation. He draws the conclusion that party politics, for the most part, is bad for popular movement organizations: It tends to deplete them of key leaders when they run for public office and often reduces once-autonomous and democratic organizations to patronage instruments of political parties.

Haber's chronological account of the movement organizations in the period he covers is generally very good. He is correct in pointing out the paradox of popular movement decline at the very moment when political opening ought to have made organizing easier. Whereas many observers in the 1980s began to speak of the democratizing potential of "civil society," or of that collectivity of organized groups operating autonomously from the state and making regular demands of it, by the end of the 1990s, these groups seemed nearly irrelevant in politics. The citizens' organizations that had led the cleanup efforts after the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, when the government's emergency efforts foundered, were a shadow of their former selves a decade later. The popular organizations that had stood up for workers and city residents rendered unemployed and penniless by rough rounds of austerity, inflation, privatization, and government cutbacks in the early 1980s were all but defunct as well. No major organization or trade union or social institution beyond the Catholic Church was large enough to influence votes or the party platforms of the three major presidential candidates in the watershed 1997 and 2000 federal elections.

This study, while empirically rich, suffers from lack of current data and it does not advance social movement theory significantly. The author's principal focus is on the way movement organizations in Mexico City and Durango reacted to the welfare policies of the Salinas administra-

tion (1988–94), and his material all but stops in 1994 with only cursory narrative epilogues at the end of each case study history. Thus, with each of the movement organizations under study in decline by the end of this period, he can offer only two arguments about urban popular movements: first, that they are important to those who participate in and work with them, and second, that they change the culture and political economy in which they exist. These conclusions, which are neither predictive nor empirically disconfirmable, offer the reader no way of understanding what forces overtook the urban popular movement in the post-PRI era, or if in fact urban popular movements were likely to surge again under specified conditions. They also offer no framework for understanding some of the most consequential urban protest events in Mexico's history between 1995 and 1998, primarily focused on the government's human rights record in the southern state of Chiapas, and around the dislocations caused by Mexico's devaluation crisis in 1995 and 1996.

This study will be of use to historians of contemporary urban Mexican politics. However, with regard to the author's own question of how movements and parties interact, new scholarship on urban Mexico would do well to theorize this relationship by synthesizing social movement theory with emerging work on political parties, collective action, and institutional outcomes.

**Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America.** Edited by Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. 368p. \$65.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

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— Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, *University of Pittsburgh*

It is not very often that an edited book has the potential to carve a new niche in the field. This may be one of those rare volumes. The collection of essays edited by Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky lays out a promising research agenda, not only for Latin Americanists but for students of democratization in general.

In the 1990s, the new institutionalism emerged as the dominant perspective for understanding the workings of democracy in Latin America. The analysis of electoral systems, parties, legislatures, presidential powers, and—more recently—judicial institutions yielded a vibrant intellectual production that had its most visible constituency in the Political Institutions Section of the Latin American Studies Association. At the same time, colleagues trained in the tradition of political sociology recurrently wondered: how could we *assume* that formal rules are the main explanatory variable in a region where the law is often ignored, distorted, or subverted by powerful political actors?

*Informal Institutions and Democracy* addresses this challenge by introducing a theoretical framework that bridges

the study of formal and informal rules. The editors define informal institutions as “shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels” (p. 5). The unofficial, unwritten character of those norms determines their informality, but enforcement defines their “institutional” nature—in contrast to a vast array of other patterns of behavior that may have typified social meanings but are excluded from the definition. This element seems to distinguish Helmke and Levitsky’s definition from the broader understanding of institutions advanced by the sociological school of symbolic interactionism (e.g., Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality*, 1966).

The contributions to the volume dispel common misconceptions, for instance, that informal institutions are intrinsically detrimental to democracy, or that they only change very slowly. The introduction presents a typology based on whether existing formal institutions are strong or weak, and whether informal rules are consistent or inconsistent with the spirit of the law. The resulting four types (complementary, accommodating, substitutive, and competing informal institutions) provide a common framework that holds the book together. (Readers interested in a preview should check the piece published in *Perspectives on Politics* 2 [December 2004]: 725–40).

More challenging is the issue of how to identify informal institutions in empirical research. The editors offer valuable—but unfortunately brief—advice towards the end of the introduction (although the topic is also explored by Daniel Brinks in Chapter 10). Informal institutions can be documented through ethnographic research, or by predicting patterns of behavior consistent with hypothesized informal rules (including punishment for deviations) that can be established through comparative case studies or through the analysis of large-n samples.

Unfortunately, this brief review cannot do justice to the quality of the essays. The book is organized in four sections. The essays by Peter Siavelis (on power sharing in Chile), by Scott Desposato (on electoral markets and legislative behavior in two Brazilian states), and by Andrés Mejía Acosta (an insightful piece on ghost coalitions in Ecuador) reflect on executive–legislative relations. The essays by David Samuels (on campaign finance in Brazil), Michelle Taylor-Robinson (on clientelism and constituency service in Honduras), and Susan Stokes (on vertical accountability in four Argentine regions) depict the operation of informal institutions in the electoral arena. A set of chapters by Joy Langston (on the Mexican *dedazo*), John Carey and Siavelis (on electoral insurance in Chile), and Flavia Freidenberg and Levitsky (comparing informal party organization in Argentina and Ecuador) address the issue in relation to political parties. The fourth section features essays on informal institutions and the rule of law by Daniel Brinks (on the prosecution of police abuses in Argentina and Brazil), Todd Eisenstadt (on the use of infor-

mal agreements to solve electoral disputes in Mexico), and Donna Lee Van Cott (about community justice in the Andes). It is worth noting that the contributors are not mainstream dissidents but some of the best scholars among the institutionalist school of the last decade and a half. A brief but insightful essay by Guillermo O’Donnell (whose work in the mid-1990s ignited the debate on this subject) crowns the compilation.

This volume opens the road for a new political sociology, “a broad and pluralistic research agenda that encourages fertilization across disciplines” (p. 284). However, two challenges lie ahead. The first one is a better delimitation of the object of study. Central to the definition presented in the book is the idea that certain norms are “enforced outside officially sanctioned channels.” However, enforcement is broadly understood to include “hostile remarks, gossip, [and] ostracism” (p. 26), which makes the denotation of the concept of informal institutions quite broad. And the reference to nonofficial channels seems to recode one key word (*informal*) into another (*unofficial*), which leaves the connotation of the concept somewhat unresolved. (Stokes’s suggestive distinction between *game* and *grammatical* rules in Chapter 6 further complicates the problem by extending the meaning of “rules”). A second challenge is the development of criteria to identify relevant instances of the phenomenon. Most institutional puzzles can be solved by invoking some “informal institution,” but this strategy would lead to a trivialization of the concept. Are informal institutions always to be evaluated with reference to a formal rule? It seems that every formal institution generates one or more related informal rules (an array of prescribed behaviors based on shared expectations about the interpretation of statutes, limits of enforcement, etc.), but not every informal rule has a formal counterpart. Thus, it is easy to find examples of weak formal institutions coexisting with strong informal ones, but I suspect that the opposite is not true (see pp. 274–81). In fact, this asymmetry may be critical for understanding issues of compliance and credible commitments because the development of “rational-legal” legitimacy at the formal level (to use Max Weber’s terminology) may also require some degree of “traditional” legitimacy for complementary or accommodating informal norms.

**Contested Citizenship: Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe.** By Ruud Koopmans, Paul Statham, Marco Giugni, and Florence Passy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. 376p. \$75.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.  
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This is a well-written, rigorous, empirical contribution to scholarship on immigration and ethnic relations in post-World War II Europe. The study adds particular value through its grounded evaluation of basic assumptions