

center in the village, which was seemingly universally beneficial, turned out to be controversial, and brought out class and kinship fissures among MS women, and between MS and non-MS women.

In the end, the author argues, that although state-directed empowerment programs do create hierarchical structures, a target-driven approach, and impose limits on women's activism, the evidence from MS program also indicates that such programs do not simply fashion bureaucratized and passive state subjects but open the space for a politics of citizenship centered on demanding resources as rights from government bodies. "The state, in other words, is remade from 'above' (by neoliberal gurus and state managers) as well as 'below' (by subaltern struggles)" (pp. xxii).

While I agree with the main thrust of Sharma's arguments, the evidence on which much of it rests is sometimes weak. For example, the evidence which forms the basis for challenging neoliberal ideas or even the anti-development critics in chapter four rests on one encounter between the MS clients (the villagers), program functionaries, state officials, and World Bank experts in a village. In general, the power of her arguments would have been further enhanced if she had drawn on other research studies that have examined instances of state led activism from studies on MS program in other Indian states, to state programs for lower castes, to studies from other countries, wherever states have initiated policies on behalf of marginal groups, including women. The paradoxical effects of state directed activism is ever present in such empirical accounts and is not unique to her case study.

Although Sharma's research is designed to be a comparative study of the effects of the MS program on participating and nonparticipating villages, the author does not really present good evidence to show how women in the village of Gamiya, which lacked the benefit of the MS program, fared compared with the government-assisted village. In the end, the book is better at analyzing the discursive meanings of the state, development, empowerment, and subaltern subjects than in presenting evidence to support the analysis.

Despite these weaknesses, the book makes a powerful critique of the development and empowerment discourses and for this contribution alone is very useful. While the language and writing style may make it less acceptable to undergraduates, it is highly recommended for adoption in graduate courses not only on Indian politics but also on general courses on development, state, and women's political activism.

Xavier de Souza Briggs. *Democracy as Problem-Solving: Civic Capacity in Communities across the Globe*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2008. \$28.00 (paper).

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Can "bad" politics sometimes lead to good governance? That is the question Xavier de Souza Briggs raises in his ambitious new book about civic capacity. Using three pairs of comparative case studies of U.S. and global communities, Briggs argues that prior studies of urban decision making have focused on process or power to the exclusion of understanding democracy as forged in "problem solving." Civic capacity is not simply the accumulation of social capital. Assessments of capacity should involve not just the ability to network effectively or act as one, but actually to accomplish projects that advance shared goals in concrete ways. Not accidentally, there is much discussion of the accountability revolution—and Briggs's text reflects that movement's concern for demonstrable results.

Briggs's emphasis on problem solving leads him to focus his case descriptions on long-term studies of large-scale projects, an orientation that reveals alternating, often complementary phases of strategic bargaining and participatory deliberation as projects evolve. Briggs's long-term perspective also allows for a much deeper analysis than usual of the implementation phase of collaborative projects. In the first section on urban growth, Briggs compares a Utah anti-sprawl partnership to a Mumbai slum redevelopment alliance. In a section on economic restructuring, he compares Pittsburgh's experience to that of the Greater ABC Region in Brazil. Finally, he compares lessons from youth development efforts in San Francisco and Cape Town. What conclusions does Briggs make based on such widely scattered cases and diverse topics?

First, Briggs emphasizes the importance of local political cultures and the unique challenges presented by different issues, factors that necessitate adaptation of decision-making models to extant cultures and networks. The diversity of cases is a huge advantage here in revealing just how much political cultures can vary from region to region and over time. Second, in line with new research on shifts from state centered power to multi-institutional politics, Briggs emphasizes "multilateralism" and the critical roles played by elites and elite organizations in substantive change. Finally, Briggs emphasizes the importance of

informality to decision-making structures, the need to compromise inclusion and transparency on occasion in order to create functioning collaborations that are not gridlocked by grandstanding or obstructionism. All of these points echo those of an emerging body of research questioning the fetishization of accountability, participatory empowerment, and democratic process as singular ends in themselves. Briggs's syncretic, empirically rich work should be required reading for those tiring of the endless invocation of transparency as a cure all for the nation's ills.

Nevertheless, the scope of this project entails a mesolevel perspective that risks ignoring the larger consequences of the macrolevel processes with which the communities are coping. On the one hand, Briggs brings a particularly level-headed view to processes that are often written up as model cases before the ink is dry on collaborative agreements. But such a perspective may omit the darker motives and deeper social inequalities underlying the "coproduction" of change that Briggs observes. He frequently references the inevitability of devolution and state retrenchment, and points out that corporations have been among the most aggressive in encouraging workers to become coproducers, with little recognition of the accompanying insecurity forced on "flexible" and "entrepreneurial" workers. The World Bank and Citibank are touted as partners committed to the practical necessity of slum dweller empowerment, such that Mumbai can become a "world-class city." The publicization of risk and privatization of public services are celebrated as exciting and necessary steps for the expansion of affordable housing—claims that become harder to swallow when one considers the extent to which the current financial crisis has disproportionately affected the poor. Not accidentally, expanded enthusiasm for citizen centered political participation under neoliberalism has been accompanied by an accelerating decline in concern for the social equality that would make that participation meaningful.

For *Mobilization* readers, where do movement actors stand in this account? The answer may depress many, regardless of Briggs's claim that the grassroots is as important as "the grass-tops." Briggs asserts that the era of insurgency is largely over, replaced by a "politics of patience." Radical movement actors are depicted as ineffective, minimizing at the very least these groups' role in forcing elites to compromise with their less radical kin. Those grassroots organizations that are most powerful are also the most entrepreneurial and adaptive—willing to demonstrate their good faith through strategic concessions and to work as coproducers of change with government and private-sector allies. For

some readers, creative adaptations aimed at integration in elite networks may reek of cooptation. Briggs sometimes elides the grassroots with the public, a strategic move that participatory process facilitators often use to marginalize vocal movement actors as special interests.

Briggs too easily writes off debates over process as distractions, asserting that citizens are really concerned with getting things done. For good reason, process legitimacy is often the core of community disputes. Participatory projects that produce inequitable plans are often contested because they were not inclusive or were rigged for elite ends. Briggs's caveat that processes should be well-managed does not negate the fact that elites in the current era can pay big bucks to outsource facilitation to an army of full-service participation consultants; these processes are often better managed and more authentically deliberative than those run by public bureaucrats, making them even harder to contest.

These pitfalls may have been overcome in Briggs's cases, but distinguishing between public relations masquerading as public participation, or between genuine and trumped-up collaboration, is much harder in multi-institutional contexts than it has ever been before. The lesson that projects cannot be judged as good or bad simply based on an assessment of the players or processes involved is a critical one, especially for the deliberative democrats that Briggs challenges. I have found his book extremely useful for thinking about just how ambiguous the line between authentic empowerment and cooptation sometimes is.

Robin Dale Jacobson. *The New Nativism: Proposition 187 and the Debate Over Immigration*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. \$60.00 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper).

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In an era where political pundits would have us see the world in black and white, or rather in red and blue, Robin Dale Jacobson offers a compelling account of the complexity of American political attitudes. In *The New Nativism*, Jacobson challenges the notion that racism motivates contemporary political struggles over immigration by analyzing the cognitive frameworks of supporters of California State Proposition 187, a 1994 voter initiative designed to deny social services to illegal immigrants which was generally characterized as a racist attack on Latinos. Jacobson argues that both proponents and opponents of the initiative, *knew* that Prop.