

Albrecht, Eduardo Zachary. 2017. *Alter-globalization in Southern Europe. The anatomy of a social movement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 166 pp. Hb.: US\$155.00. ISBN: 9781137599049.

Can we underline the similarities between social phenomena worldwide without losing sight of the local specificities involved? Can we resist the tendency of reverting to regional stereotypes by demonstrating the diversity of cultural forms through comparative analysis? Can we develop a gaze into the ethnographic details in the minutiae of everyday life without disregarding the larger global political structures in place?

With his *Alter-globalization in Southern Europe*, Eduardo Zachary Albrecht gives an affirmative answer to the likes of such questions and provides us with a good case showing how this can be achieved. Originally a PhD dissertation for an anthropology degree at SOAS, *Alter-globalization in Southern Europe* has been effectively revised to offer an analytical understanding of contemporary social movements that also speaks to a broader interest in performance studies, qualitative methods, alterity and identity, among other things. While working within interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological debates in these fields, Albrecht manages to combine scholarly jargon with a more accessible multitextual style that makes use of song lyrics, interviews and visuals that help the book appeal to a larger non-academic readership.

Alter-globalization in Southern Europe claims, as its subtitle suggests, to provide the readers with an anatomy of a social movement. This is done through a multi-sited study taking place in Italy, Greece and Spain among the participants of the alter-globalisation movements, with a close examination of their

counterculture. This extended fieldsite does not get in the way of ethnographic richness: Albrecht presents us with vivid details of the experiences, discourses, practices and performances of the activists, which form the basis of his theoretical claims that follow.

Perhaps the most controversial claim made in this book is the most central one: Albrecht argues that anti-global movements in Southern Europe are anti-political and that they operate in a non-political milieu. In a book that primarily focuses on discussions of power, agency, resistance, gender and performance, this argument may well seem to be contradictory; but this is the very contradiction that Albrecht addresses by restating what ‘political’ means. To do that, he investigates alternative meanings of the concept based on how his informants – activists in Southern Europe – conceptualise politics in their own terms.

One realm where this is best observed is that of music. In the cases he studies, Albrecht observes that although music engages with power, such engagement stays outside the workings of power. He reaches this conclusion through following the statements of his informants, including one who says that music has no politics; in fact, music is the exact opposite of politics.

This attempt at an emically inspired retheorisation of existing etic categories is not confined to the term political. Albrecht makes a case for redrawing cultural boundaries both within societies and across national borders based on different parameters of social categorisation held by his informants. He introduces local cultural typologies to identify the divisions within each group he studies, and finds that these are similar to the other two cases, such that a commonality of a three-fold reordering becomes

possible among social movements in Southern Europe. In this way, he poses the question of whether such cultural typologies have become replacements for more classical affiliations based on class or ideology. Both class and party identities, he indicates, are reduced to lifestyle choices, which in turn is the very cultural stuff that constitutes these typologies. This invites the problem of how much this kind of analytical typologising differs from practices that stereotype at more popular levels. The answer lies, again, with the primacy of the emic: rather than conventional primordial levels of nation, ethnicity, religion or gender at which stereotypes operate, Albrecht highlights the importance of local and culture-specific notions of social status on the basis of lifestyles, consumption habits, residence and levels of civic participation.

In *Alter-globalization in Southern Europe*, then, Albrecht offers a study of counterculture and political empowerment by polemically interrogating the meaning of the political, and shows that upon closer examination, at least in Southern Europe, urban resistance and anti-austerity activism – in short, what we would consider political movements – are in fact non-political. In the end, he merges social theory and ethnographic analysis in what he calls a tripartite model of subject–action–object, which neatly corresponds to the three-fold typology in each of the three cases he studies. This makes it a good book to read for those who are expecting to enrich their perspective on urban movements and Southern European societies, and who are prepared to have their cultural assumptions shaken and their mental categories reshuffled.

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Alvarez, Sonia E., Jeffrey W. Rubin, Millie Thayer, Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Agustín Laó-Montes (eds.) 2017. *Beyond civil society: activism, participation, and protest in Latin America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 408 pp. Pb.: US\$28.95. ISBN: 9780822363255.

Beyond civil society is an anthology on participation, activism and protest in Latin America, edited by Sonia Alvarez, Jeffrey Rubin, Millie Thayer, Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Agustín Laó-Montes. The book is the result of a research network made up of researchers from the (global) North and South. Two broad, well-articulated themes structure the debate: the deployment of the hegemonic ‘civil society agenda’ and the development of forms of contestation to liberal politics grouped under the label of uncivic activism. The set of 16 chapters is situated in the political panorama of the 21st century, highlighted by the influence of ‘progressive’ governments after Hugo Chávez’s election in 1998. The editors point to the construction of democratic spaces that struggle to surpass the margins of the status quo, proposing an analysis of the continuum between uncivic activism and institutional participation. However, as pointed out in the introduction, there was already a withdrawal of the Pink Tide, with the installation of right-wing governments in the region, by electoral means in Argentina (2015) or by means of coups to democracy in Honduras (2009), Paraguay (2012) and Brazil (2016).

Within the framework of the neo-liberalisation of civil society, the editors go beyond the formal criteria of participation that would fit into the ‘civic’/‘uncivic’ dichotomy. Taking this into account, they look to outline the ways in which *lo permitido* and *lo no permitido* are defined with respect to the prescriptions of the civil society agenda. The previous