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Tore C. Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings: Reformers and the Remaking of the US and Mexican Countryside*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017, 277 pp. ISBN: 9780691165202.

In Agrarian Crossings: Reformers and the Remaking of the US and Mexican Countryside, Tore C. Olsson adeptly traces the ways that Mexican and US actors developed parallel and mutually influenced projects aimed to restructure the countryside during the 1930s and 1940s. In a fascinating account of individuals committed to transforming their societies, Olsson makes a powerful and convincing case that agrarian reforms, though situated in a specific geographic place, were not isolated occurrences but rather formed within a cauldron of exchange not bound to national borders. Moreover, this entangled history underscores how political decisions eroded small-scale agriculture in favor of large-scale production, a shift with continued profound environmental and social effects into the present.

To craft this narrative, Olsson analyzes the interactions of social reformers, politicians, agronomists, mid-level bureaucrats, diplomats, philanthropists, and farmers. The book's source base reflects Olsson's commitment to treat the US South and Mexico together, not separately, as he skillfully analyzes both Spanish and English sources from governmental and personal archives in both Mexico and the United States. As Olsson argues, Agrarian Crossings "is not a comparative history but rather a history of comparisons, a study of interactions and exchanges," and he traces how reformers from both countries studied and communicated with the other, as they saw their counterparts tackling parallel issues like land tenure patterns, production capacity, and rural development (p. 4). As scholars like Tania Murray Li and Eve Buckley have shown for Indonesia and Brazil, respectively, Olsson essentially traces how problems once considered to be political became reframed as technical so as to require solutions that prioritized expert knowledge and the transformation of individual practices rather than solutions that would reshape structural conditions (Murray, 2007). By situating this important transformation within domestic and international political shifts, Olsson makes the important intervention that developmentalist politics did not begin with the Cold War but rather were part of this longer history of efforts to transform the countryside. The conversations surrounding the creation of these early initiatives and their outcomes and unintended consequences directly influenced the turn toward technical solutions based on profitability and efficiency rather than ones prioritizing equality and sustainability.

Chapter One, "Parallel Agrarian Societies," sets the historical context in the US South and in Mexico, exploring how both systems benefitted the economic elite and emphasized commercial agriculture. Both regions experienced war and invasion during the 19th Century, and both exploited the non-white population. Using the 1911 Plan de Ayala from Emilio Zapata that called for redistribution of land and the 1890 Ocala Demands, in which the southern Farmers' Alliance and Colored Farmers' Alliance demanded reform of the plantation economy, Olsson argues that farmers in both locations voiced similar demands that captured the attention of social reformers. While the chapter nicely sets up the rest of the book, one shortcoming of this ambitious project becomes evident here, as Olsson glosses critical differences in the construction of race and its effects upon agrarian policies and realities. While he does analyze how Jim Crow segregation laws undermined the populist project in the US, more discussion about the turn to mestizaje as a national identity in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution would aid in understanding why the government began to emphasize the possibility of the ejido as a key form of social and land organization, even if still highly contested.

Chapter Two, "Sharecroppers and Campesinos," focuses on the rural reform projects of the Franklin D. Roosevelt and Lázaro Cárdenas administrations, respectively. As both leaders sought innovative ways to help farmers cope with the effects of global economic depression, those tasked with reforming the countryside participated in meetings and information-gathering trips, exchanged research, and formed institutions based on these experiences. For example, Olsson convincingly shows how US scholar Frank Tannenbaum's dissertation on the Mexican Revolution's agrarian program directly shaped the Farm Security Administration (FSA), a New Deal program that Olsson categorizes as an "(openly redistributive agenc[y]" (p. 43). Olsson's focus on the programs developed in both locations does diminish his discussion of how these projects effectively sought to socially engineer their intended recipients; a bit more critical discussion of this aspect of rural reform would help acknowledge the effects ordinary people experienced. Despite this critique, Olsson's main purpose of tracing the exchanges of people and ideas that shaped rural reform brilliantly showcases the ways in which historical actors compared themselves to their counterparts abroad and allowed these experiences to shape the development of their own ideas and policies.

Like the agrarian projects in the New Deal, rural programs during the Cárdenas presidency also formed in relation to those in the US South. In Chapter Three, "Haciendas and Plantations," Olsson argues that despite growing Mexican nationalism, rural reform remained internationalist. He carefully analyzes the controversial and complicated person of Ambassador Josephus Daniels, showing how Daniels surprisingly developed an acute sense of the similarities between the New Deal and the Mexican Revolution. Ultimately, these connections caused Daniels to sympathize with Cárdenas' expropriation of US property, seeing it as a necessary step toward achieving a stronger and more stable national economy. Ironically, as Olsson argues, it was these international exchanges that facilitated Cárdenas' most daring nationalist project.

Chapter Four, "Rockefeller Rural Development," explores how experts in both countries shifted from advocating for a change in land tenure patterns to focusing on modernizing cultivation practices and thus increasing profitability. Olsson traces the partnership between the

Rockefeller Foundation and the Mexican Agricultural Program (MAP). As early as 1914, the Rockefeller Foundation began exporting public health campaigns that they had developed in the US South; agricultural programs soon followed. This argument challenges historiography of the Green Revolution that marks its beginning in Mexico with the rise of the Cold War. By no means is Olsson arguing that the Cold War is insignificant to this history; rather, he instead is emphasizing the global interconnections of the US South prior to the Cold War.

Chapter Five, "Green Revolutions," makes the book's most important revisionist argument, namely that what came to be called the Green Revolution actually began as a low-modernist project that emphasized local conditions, subsistence economies, and cultural contexts (p. 130). However, by the end of the 1940s, both the changing geopolitical context of the expanding Cold War and the Mexican state's prioritization of industrialization and urban growth caused agricultural programs to shift toward introducing new technologies into the countryside, like hybrid seeds, fertilizers, and fungicides. Instead of the Green Revolution being an imposition from the US upon Mexico, Olsson argues that Mexicans had a critical role in shaping the direction that agricultural programs took toward emphasizing production at the expense of campesino wellbeing.

Chapter Six, "Transplanting 'El Tenesí'," showcases one project that epitomized this process of rendering technical what were essentially political problems. Olsson traces how Mexican leaders studied the US Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and applied it to Mexico's rivers, making possible the relocation of campesinos to previously unproductive lands. Instead of pursuing land redistribution policies, Mexican leaders now turned to colonization and relocation schemes as a way to release rural pressures while keeping existing power relations intact. Through this case study, Olsson examines slowing of multidirectional exchanges between the US and Mexico as both began emphasizing only economic growth and profitability, what Olsson refers to in the epilogue as a "march toward a productivist versus redistributionist ethos" (p. 193).

In what is a thoroughly researched and well-written account of agrarian history, the following critiques are few and do not diminish from the book's overarching arguments. Particularly in the early chapters, Olsson could have better established the geopolitical context, namely US concerns over the radicalism of the Mexican Revolution amidst the Red Scare of the 1920s, or growing pan-Americanism in the face of Nazi aggression and the fear that Mexico might align with Germany. In chapters that center the Rockefeller Foundation, more discussion of the linkages between philanthropy and diplomacy would aid the reader in understanding their overlap. Finally, Olsson seems to conflate the concept of "development" with that of "modernization," and while certainly related and at times overlapping, these are not one and the same. Modernization advocated a unilinear path toward progress, with the idea that the US could use socioeconomic aid and experts to bring nonaligned countries into its sphere of influence during the Cold War. Yet as Daniel Immerwahr recently argued, some experts during this time period advocated for "development without modernization," a development that emphasized local cultures and alternative routes to ending pressing socioeconomic problems (Immerwah, 2015). Clarification on these concepts would strengthen Olsson's historiographical contribution

to this literature. Nevertheless, his point is well taken that developmentalist efforts to transform the US and Mexican countryside, respectively, predate the Cold War.

Agrarian Crossings captures the reader's attention from the beginning, and its accessibility makes it useful for students and scholars alike. Those interested in agrarian history, international development, and the US in the world will find this book particularly useful for a critical reflection on the periodization and significance of the Cold War and the Green Revolution. Moreover, the book's methodology is a model to aspire to, as it brilliantly traces networks and people to better frame these cross-border connections and shows the importance of breaking down disciplinary divisions that prove to be quite artificial historically. Finally, the book forces readers to grapple with the history of some of the most serious problems facing our contemporary society, namely environmental destruction, urban poverty and overpopulation, and climate change.

Sarah Foss
Oklahoma State University
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0892-7313

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