
Jeffrey C. Alexander, Trevor Stack, and Farhad Khosrokhavar, eds. *Breaching the Civil Order: Radicalism and the Civil Sphere*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2019. \$99.99 (hardcover).

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The contributors to *Breaching the Civil Order: Radicalism and the Civil Sphere* argue that analysis of social movements and political radicalism aids in the elaboration of the civil sphere concept: institutions—not necessarily or only the state—that provide societal stability. The volume’s case examples include the Zapatistas, leftist Colombian college students, Black Lives Matter, the Arab Spring and European jihadists, French media after the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack, Germany’s far-right Pegida, Irish Republicanism, and the 2011 English riots. Some critics have interpreted civil sphere theory (CST) as pro-status quo, as if what presently exists should remain so in perpetuity. The contributors to *Breaching the Civil Order* instead point to the actively constructed nature of the civil sphere and suggest it may fall far short of its aspirational, ideological claims. Thus, movements often attempt to wedge open the civil sphere, fighting for greater inclusion of historically excluded groups (e.g., poor indigenous Mayans, Black Americans, Muslim refugees, Northern Ireland Catholics, or the British working class).

What constitutes the civil sphere? And where is it likely to be found? Arguably, it’s more likely to exist within constitutional democracies, embedded in regulatory institutions, parties, legal systems, voting, mass media, public opinion, and civic associations—intersecting with the state, but not necessarily the state in total. The book’s various contributors claim centrality for different institutional actors. According to Tognato, universities are formative institutions, while Luengo and Ihlebæk present the media as the “heart” of the civil sphere because it symbolically performs society’s “vital center” (p. 126). However, institutions are always in a process of change, rearticulation, and social construction. Thus, they react to radical challenges differently.

Radicalism is not necessarily violent or illegal (although it can sometimes be either or both). CST does not deem all radicalism illegal or illegitimate; in fact, some is necessary, while other radical challenges (e.g., civil disobedience) may fit within liberal democracy’s expectations (i.e., breaking laws that violate widely held societal values). Yet radicalism is often central to move-

ments and presumably exists in contradiction to civil order. Stack and Alexander argue radicalism rejects the civil sphere and can be understood as antinormative. Radical acts can be progressive (expanding the civil sphere) or regressive (not expanding it). Progressives seek to open the civil sphere to outsiders (e.g., Zapatistas, Black Lives Matter), while reactionaries seek to close or abolish it (e.g., jihadists or Pegida).

The principal methods of radicals illustrate the gap between an ideal and the actual civil sphere by attempting to “wedge open” its establishments. Breaches—like radical protest—serve as opportunities to understand its dynamics. One positive breach outcome is potential reconciliation or civil repair. Since the civil sphere is not guaranteed to be emancipatory, it may require wedging open from movements to live up to its professed values. According to Cooke, it’s important to accept that the civil sphere is often corrupt and nonemancipatory, despite being “civil.” Thus, radical challenges—even when very disruptive (e.g., the IRA or 2011’s UK urban uprising)—can be interpreted within the CST framework.

Perception is important for CST. Governments feel obliged to *appear* to consider those claiming civil sphere support; consequently, the Zapatistas attempted to stay in its favor. Social movements often make universalistic demands and communicate a broader vision. Most movements also orient themselves toward the state and the media, mobilizing persuasion rather than force. But some movements and radicals are uncivil in form. How does one interpret which fights are against the civil sphere? Such opponents are not permitted within it (e.g., fundamentalism is generally incompatible with the civil sphere). CST has thus mostly overlooked reactionary movements, such as Pegida or jihadism. The “uncivil sphere” may emerge as a response to structural inequality: the 2011 UK riots were a reaction against classism, racism, and police brutality. Rioters found solidarity during an uprising against a civil sphere offering empty democratic promises; they belonged to an underserved population desiring inclusion, but with few means to join the civil sphere.

A major strategy for disrupting systems of domination is civil disobedience. According to Cooke, such disobedience is the ethical assertion of values to intervene within or against the civil sphere. Civil disobedience discourse justifies otherwise uncivil acts as ultimately civil, and remains committed to democracy and norms of equality, inclusion, interconnectedness, and self-determining agency. Arguably, freedom develops best under these conditions. Civil disobedience aims to close the gap between these values of democracy and the civil sphere itself. Conse-

quently, it is a form of reconstitutive power that may contribute to remaking the civil sphere. Reaching agreement on what is ‘the good life’ is more an ethical problem than a political problem; thus, civil disobedience is a value-based practice to modify norms within the democratic project’s framework.

My limited criticisms stem from questions about CST itself. For example, the state’s role in the civil sphere is unclear. Is the state an actor *in* the civil sphere, since elections, political parties, and regulators are state based? Should we simply assume that radical movements either appeal to or join states? Relatedly, if, as Weber famously argued, the state holds a monopoly on violence, the treatment of radical violence appears somewhat underformulated. What exactly is violence—and why is “violence” against property considered equivalent to violence targeting people? The state’s violence is far greater than that of the movements, and it acts with the force of legality, if not legitimacy, even within the civil sphere. Similarly, what is deemed “radical” is slightly underconceptualized. Is “radicalism” only anti-normative, or is it based on fundamental values (i.e., to get to the root)? The chapters here seem to diverge significantly in how the word “radical” is used. The radicalism of fascists, indigenous autonomists, and cultural nationalists may certainly be more united by their ideological purism than anti-normativity.

Finally, what is the nature of the civil sphere, according to challenging movements: something to be resisted, joined and changed, or abolished? A potential test to further extend CST might be anarchist movements, which are antistate, revolutionary (but opposed to wanton violence), and based on progressive antiauthoritarian values of freedom and justice.

In sum, *Breaching the Civil Order* is a goldmine for social movement students seeking ways to theorize about institutions that movements oppose, as well as movements’ corresponding visions.

Thea Riofrancos. *Resource Radicals: From Petro-Nationalism to Post-Extractivism in Ecuador*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2020. \$99.95 (hardcover), \$26.95 (paper).

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By linking arms with an established cadre of activists and scholars inside and outside Ecuador, Thea Riofrancos’s *Resource Radicals: From Petro-Nationalism to Post Extractivism in Ecuador* cap-

tures a time when the leftist movement transitioned into positions of power, while fracturing into pro-extraction and anti-extraction camps. To analyze the intra-leftist conflicts over the extraction of petroleum and minerals, the author conducted participant observation and examined records on the very public and well-documented collision between Ecuador’s president and street-wise social movement over leftist-style practices and policies. Activists saw a post-neoliberal state as an end to extractive capitalism, but the leftist state interpreted extraction for export as a way to expand state power.

Both flanks, as well as their allied intellectuals, rejected rightwing ideologies and sought to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for the country’s poorest and most marginalized. However, they diverged strongly in how to achieve those ends. With a heavy hand guided by then-President Rafael Correa, the state chose a prolonged and expanded national dependency on large-scale, export-oriented extraction as a means to support community investments and social services, including healthcare, education, and monthly cash transfers to the lowest-income households. These benefits were meant to legitimize the continuation of extraction yet were provided without an exit or transition plan to an alternative economic model that would serve the nation’s poor, rural, and Indigenous people.

Outside the doors of government, activists, including Indigenous, rural, community, and environmental leaders, sought a truly transformative project with a “post-extractive vision” (p. 60). In contrast to the state, they rejected extractive activities as a means to achieve *sumak kawsay* and *buen vivir*—a good and full life for and by local communities through some version of collective and socio-ecological well-being. Their competing interpretations of a post-neoliberal transition led to struggles in the streets, within state agencies, and across universities, even though both needed the other to elevate and secure their ideals.

Resource Radicals is expansive in explaining the entanglements between leftist leaders, while also drilling down on two specific flashpoints: revising the constitution and defining public consent. Riofrancos provides a step-by-step account leading up to and after the rewriting of Ecuador’s Constitution in 2008, including how both sides competed in its interpretation, application, and legitimization, or what Riofrancos refers to as the “circulating discourse” (p. 91) for a “mobile document” (p. 113).

The second focus is on the meaning of public consent. To this point, Ecuadorians joined communities around the world affected by hydraulic fracturing or offshore oil exploration when they first attended a public consultation and discovered