

a sizable literature finds to be worse than the judgments of non-experts). This is important, because the key claim of the book that we are facing a “drama of representation” requires the observed inaccuracies to be substantial and meaningful.

Third, the normative argument that representative democracy suffers from the inaccuracy of politicians’ estimates of public opinion also depends on a valid measurement of public opinion. The authors carefully and convincingly address problems of survey design and question wording that are inevitable in any study of public opinion. However, there is an additional issue here that might deserve more attention, and this is the question of whether policy views really represent the kind of public opinion politicians are able to perceive. Is asking about views of specific policy proposals too demanding and an overly idealistic expectation of accuracy that exaggerates the size of the “drama of representation” highlighted in the book? The authors address the possibility that politicians might be better at other kinds of estimation tasks. Future studies could shed light on whether politicians would be better at judging the general policy mood or the abstract ideological leaning of their electorate than they are at estimating public support for specific policy proposals.

Land Politics: How Customary Institutions Shape State Building in Zambia and Senegal. By Lauren Honig. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 320p. \$120.00 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592723002414

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Lauren Honig has revived the debate on land titling with her new book, *Land Politics: How Customary Institutions Shape State Building in Zambia and Senegal*. The book draws heavily from the work of well-known analysts like Elinor Ostrom, Vincent Ostrom, and Daron Acemoglu, while also applying a wider array of scholarship, making it an interdisciplinary study.

The questions that *Land Politics* seeks to answer are: “Why do some chiefs encourage land titling in their domains and others thwart it? Why do some citizens with customary land rights in a community seek a state title while others do not? More generally, how do customary land regimes survive, despite powerful economic interests and state efforts to title land?” (p. 4). Using interviews, Afrobarometer surveys, and observations (pp. 38–82), *Land Politics* offers a rich tapestry of data, which are analyzed systematically, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The results show that customary institutions that are more strictly organized, with clearer structures of administration, are more effective in defending customary land rights against state encroachment. But whether tightly or loosely organized, what customary leaders do is based on what they think they can gain from titling. While Honig

claims that her book supports the case put forth by Michael Lipton, regarded by *The Economist* as the “big man of land reform” (“The Big Man of Land Reform,” 2023, p. 44), when she writes that “[t]hese findings from Zambia and Senegal ... reflect Michael Lipton’s observations of land politics” (p. 288), for this reviewer, Honig has clearly beaten her own path, too. For instance, the book shows that “the expansion of land titling is not an individual-level economic intervention alone” (p. 291). Again, the book contradicts orthodoxy by contending that customary land is not idle land. Rather, customary land relations generate an active force that is shaped by, but also shapes, the actions and inactions of agents (pp. 4–5).

To illustrate and add nuance to these arguments, the book is divided into eight chapters. Chapters 1 and 8, respectively, set the stage and close the arguments. In between them, Honig develops a rich variety of analyses. Chapter 2 builds the foundations of the study “plot by plot.” First the chapter provides a review of land titling research, and then it proceeds to develop a taxonomy of why land titling is adopted. With explanations ranging from an emphasis on the state to a focus on markets, the chapter makes a strong case for developing a customary-based account, justified further by the fact that a substantial number of Africans express more trust in customary governance than in governance by the state. Chapter 3 develops the author’s “theory of collective costs and customary constraints in land titling.” According to this theory, if the benefits (advantage to customary authorities) exceed the costs (e.g., losing the land to the current and future generations from the pool of customary lands, or losing customary power), then states are in a stronger position to expand titling programs without major push-back. To test this theory, Honig relies on case studies of Zambia and Senegal.

Chapters 5–8 are empirical. Zambia is the centrepiece of chapter 5, while chapter 6 focuses on Senegal. In both chapters, Honig uses fractional logistic regression models focused on the subnational levels. These quantitative analyses are complemented by careful qualitative examination of interviews and surveys. Chapter 7, “Exit or Engagement: How Status within Institutions Impacts Smallholder Titling,” shows that whether one receives security from the customary system depends on one’s relationship with its institutions (those with positive relationships do not seek titling, while those with fractious relationships with customary leaders tend to pursue state titling).

Honig seems to prefer customary land reforms. They provide stronger community-based land programs that are transparent and accountable. “In some circumstances, governments might also mitigate insecurity on customary land by providing citizens with well-funded forms of institutional resources ... for example, increasing the accessibility of statutory land tribunals for customary land

users to help protect them from unaccountable customary authorities” (p. 291). These recommendations are plausible, if a little expected, because some existing state–community practices, including the role played by tribunals in community dispute resolution, are analogous to Honig’s proposed measures.

More fundamentally, *Land Politics’s* approach to studying state–community relations sometimes limits its potential. Not only does it say little about the relevant tensions and contradictions between the executive arm of the state and its judicial arm in establishing “property,” “value,” “property value,” and “security of tenure,” for instance, but the book also shelves a detailed and systematic analysis of the major role of powerful transnational political-economic forces that are driving land title registration in Zambia and Senegal. The World Bank, USAID, UN-HABITAT, and a host of (global) NGOs and think tanks well known to be champions of land titling in Africa do not receive systematic or sustained attention. In Zambia, for instance, USAID itself has documented its land policy activities and those of other donor agencies (see, for example, “USAID Country Profile: Land Tenure and Property Rights: Zambia,” 2017). Yet, neither these donors nor Medici Land Governance, the private transnational group that is financing and leading the National Systematic Land Titling Programme in Zambia, is discussed comprehensively in the book. These interest groups differ, but they commonly support titling, including community-based forms of registration.

Therein lies an underrealized tension: land titling may be about national “state expansion,” as the book strenuously argues, but the transformation it envisions is, perhaps, even more centrally about expanding market-based property relations across the scale, as suggested in books such as Karl Polanyi’s ([1944] 2001) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* and Stefan Ouma’s (2020) *Farming as a Financial Asset: Global Finance and the Making of Institutional Landscapes*.

Despite these shortcomings, *Land Politics* offers a rich menu for everyone interested in land. To have the empirical details of two major cases in one book is a significant accomplishment, and so is the insight on the power of both formal (Zambia) and informal (Senegal) institutions. Analytically, too, this book makes important contributions. The “substitution effect” (pp. 283–86) or “the inverse relationship between trust in chiefs and engagement with the state” (p. 284) could be quite a helpful heuristic to examine (mis)trust in institutions and how it is sociospatially produced and maintained. The book’s institutional web that explains the vitality or fragility of the customary system is fruitful for addressing future research. Nuancing the prevailing narrative that the forces of supply and demand for land titles is all that explains the advance of titling is a welcome departure from orthodoxy; so is the

idea that the informal can be infinite (pp. 289–90) and resilient, not transient.

Bootstrap Justice: The Search for Mexico’s

Disappeared. By Janice K. Gallagher. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. 296p. \$110.00 cloth, \$32.99 paper.

doi:10.1017/S1537592723002505

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Janice Gallagher’s *Bootstrap Justice: The Search for Mexico’s Disappeared* takes place in the context of a violent confrontation between organized crime groups and between these and the state. In Mexico, experts estimate that more than one hundred thousand individuals are disappeared—that is, missing or imprisoned against their will. Most are presumed to have fallen prey to organized crime. Some may be forcibly detained by state security forces. Others are victims of collusion between state and criminal elements. While some are found alive, most are not. Since 2006, more than five thousand bodies have been discovered in unmarked graves across Mexico (*Al Jazeera*, “Bodies of Young People Found in Mass Grave in Mexico’s Guanajuato,” 2020). Mexico’s minister for human rights recently called the country “one enormous clandestine grave” (*Proceso*, “México, ‘una gran fosa clandestina’: Encinas; presentan plan de búsqueda de desaparecidos,” 2019).

Bootstrap Justice calls our attention to the backdrop of pervasive impunity against which these disappearances take place, as well as citizens’ pursuit of justice within it. Perpetrators of disappearances are rarely tried and convicted in Mexico, with impunity rates “approaching 100 percent” (p. 3). The herculean challenge of pursuing justice in this setting motivates the book’s puzzle: where rights abuses are the norm, how do individuals become rights-claiming and rights-bearing citizens?

Gallagher’s central claim focuses on the transformative nature of political mobilization that disappearances inspire. Her argument proceeds in four parts. She posits that disappearances constitute a unique form of trauma because they leave surviving family members with unrelenting (and thus particularly cruel) uncertainty about their loved ones’ fate. This suffering motivates long-term participation in justice activism as family members repeatedly seek answers about their loved ones’ whereabouts. Mobilization, in turn, transforms individuals’ ideas about their relationship with, and agency before, the law, or their legal consciousness. In this sense, mobilization pushes individuals to view themselves as agent-laden actors who can compel the law to work in their favor. These transformations in legal consciousness at the individual level work in tandem with changes in the dynamics of state–criminal collusion, which generate new political