

a fault. Given the tendency for members to be fairly well educated, food cooperatives tend to be located in white, middle-class, and often university neighborhoods, where idealism provides an organizational and driving force.

Although Knupfer writes as a historian, she occasionally becomes a social scientist by offering personal advice. This can be explained or excused, in part, because she has been a member of several food cooperatives across the United States. She identifies with the commitment of cooperative members to democratic decision making and supports their efforts to seek the proper labeling of foods by the federal government, which is in contrast to grocery stores and food companies that do not want this government regulation. Knupfer is supportive of food cooperatives yet she is able to see their problems and explain their failures.

Foods cooperatives will never replace grocery stores, but they are not intended to do so, except for their members. Food co-ops instead provide a way for members to save money, but not always, as well as assert moral authority to support specifically identified consumption policies, all within the context of the group. Overall, this is a good survey of the major food cooperatives in the Northeast, Midwest, and specifically in Northern California by someone who understands the purpose and inner workings of such organizations and who talks about the efforts of food co-ops to incorporate commitments to various political and social causes. It can be used as a ready reference for people, ideas, and operations, including explanations for success and failure. Knupfer has made a solid contribution to knowledge about the importance of food cooperatives in the United States, both past and present.

R. Douglas Hurt

Purdue University

E-mail: doughurt@purdue.edu

doi:10.1017/eso.2016.83

Published online December 12, 2016

Guillermo Guajardo and Alejandro Labrador, eds. *La empresa pública en México y en América Latina: Entre el mercado y el estado*. México DF, Mexico: UNAM/INAP, 2015. 372 pp. ISBN 978-607-02-5854-1, \$16 (Spanish, paper).

Business history is a growing discipline around the world, and an increasing number of scholars are researching Latin America.

Public firms have been one of the neglected topics, especially when a search is conducted for academic work with non-*ideologized* views. This anthology, coordinated by Guillermo Guajardo and Alejandro Labrador, is a good beginning to the debate on the roles and features of public firms in Latin America. It includes twenty-one chapters, the majority dealing with Mexico; the rest are dedicated to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Probably the best chapters in this book include interregional comparisons, such as the two dealing with the oil companies and their main features.

The first four chapters are categorizations and current debates on public firms' role and scope. From the beginning, it is clear that an implicit goal of this book is a defense of a state's role in its economy and, the same time, a repetitive critique of neoliberalism. Nearly all chapters start or contain the phrase "in the 1970s, with the arrival of neoliberalism ...". The problem with the majority of these criticisms is that more often than not they are sustained by opinions rather than economic or business facts; the chapters on Venezuela and Ecuador are the best examples of this lack of impartiality. Something similar occurs in the chapter analyzing the Argentinean firm Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales' performance after its re-nationalization. The author (Esteban Serrani) extracted conclusions mainly from the results of the last two years, ignoring the international contexts for oil and gas markets.

Deepening this handicap, the lack of criticism on public firms is surprising; in twenty of the chapters, there are only two or three criticisms of public firms' performance but uncountable opinions (the majority without any kind of evidence) on their key role in the region's economy and how Latin American countries have been developed by states' active participation in the economy. This is a major contradiction because Latin American countries were not fully developed when neoliberalism arrived in the region and GDP growth was not fast enough to affect Latin American underdevelopment of public firms' privatization. There is no doubt that the role of the state has been decisive in several developed economies. Nordic countries, Germany, and France are clear examples of how the state shaped private markets and helped businesses develop and increase national income. However, the confusion in the majority of the chapters is that the authors' simultaneously consider that the state role is intrinsically linked to public firms and look at the Latin American public firms' management as paradigmatic. Other noticeable weaknesses are that the quality of the chapters is uneven, there is a lack of international comparison (more examples are from developed countries and their influence

in the region), and the lack of dialogue among the different authors throughout the book is a major handicap. After reading the compilation, readers get the impression that Latin America is the only part of the world where privatizations and changing state's roles occurred in the 1970s and 1980s.

On the bright side, a chapter analyzing oil in Colombia as well as the aforementioned two chapters dedicated to interregional oil development across Latin America (Isabelle Rousseau, Guillermo Guajardo Soto and Claudia Pech, and Xavier Durán), and specifically the cases of Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela, are extremely interesting and open new research questions for further works in this field. One of the chapters on Chile (Diego Barría Traverso) includes well-documented work on public firms after the return to democracy (1990) and how economic policies implemented in the dictatorship have survived.

The chapters on Brazil do not make large contributions to the debate and are quite repetitive. This is a huge lost opportunity because Brazil's development is an excellent example of public firms' role in an underdeveloped country. The last three chapters are dedicated to Uruguay and Argentina; the chapter on Uruguay (Magdalena Bertino) is a good review and characterization of the different roles and particularities of public firms in this country, which has a longer state presence in its economy than does its neighbors. Of the two chapters on Argentina, the first (Marcelo Rougier) maps the military presence in industrial development and shows the interconnections between defense and industrial policies. The other chapter on this country, by Esteban Serrani, is described above.

As an introductory book on the role of public firms in Latin America, several chapters in *La empresa pública* present worthy reads, but, as I have mentioned, some chapters have no clear goals or lack academic impartiality. To conclude, a reader looking for an academic and objective book on the public firms' role will be disappointed with some of the chapters. Nevertheless, on the whole, this book could be important to understand state development and its role in Latin America over the last eighty years.

Cristián A. Ducoing Ruiz

Umeå University

E-mail: cristian.ducoing@umu.se

doi:10.1017/eso.2016.84

Published online February 21, 2017