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# Report on Recent Research Themes in Latin American Development Geography

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Latin American development geography is a diverse field of study concerned with both social and economic development issues in Latin America and the Caribbean. The field also extends beyond the social and the economic to include political concerns and environmental impacts. In this report on the field, I devote most of the space to brief annotations of recent works that serve to represent the range of perspectives, themes, and analysis now prominent in the field. As is typical in sub-fields of geography, many authors that are important to Latin American development geography are outside the discipline of geography. And as the descriptions of recent works will show, the major division in the field is between economists and broadly-defined political economists, including geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists. The work of most economists tends to focus mainly on modeling economic performance indicators as a way of judging development progress in the region. In contrast, the broadly-defined political economists use more qualitative methods and focus greater attention on social groups such as families, formal and informal workers, peasants, children, and women.

## Major themes of research

Much of the recent scholarship that is important to Latin American development geography, by both economists and non-economists, is concerned with the impacts of on-going foreign debt, structural adjustment programs, neoliberalism, and globalization. Many scholars in the political economy tradition trace these macro-scale processes down to the ground level and try to ascertain their impacts on peoples' lives. They also pay close attention to how people respond in myriad ways to the macro-level changes. This organizational framework is sometimes described as one of studying "the local in the global." At the local level, research often focuses on themes such as social movements, cultural identity, survival strategies, gender, and power.

## Major publications

The vitality and strength of Latin American development studies and related fields is evidenced by a sampling of some of the major works that are representative of what has become available in recent years. This list is reserved almost exclusively for books published since 2001, with a few exceptions made for some key works from previous years and for some very recent journal articles of particular note.

- Aguilar, Andrian G and Peter M. Ward. 2003. Globalization, regional development, and mega-city expansion in Latin America: Analyzing Mexico city's peri-urban hinterland. *Cities* 20 (1): 3-21 (The authors argue that the most dynamic portions of large cities in terms of demographics, labor, and economic sectoral change are now far from the urban core)

• Bulmer Thomas, Victor (ed.). 2001. *Regional Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Political Economy of Open Regionalism* London: Institute of Latin American Studies (Focusing on open regionalism, or economic integration combined with openness to external trade and investment, the authors examine intra-industry trade, the institutions, and the politics. The editor sees open regionalism as a worthwhile pursuit but offers a sober assessment owing to external shocks and to weak institutions and follow-through.)

• Chant, Sylvia and Nikki Craske. 2003. *Gender In Latin America* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press (An overview of the state of women and men in Latin America today in terms of health, sexuality, population, and employment)

• Chase, Jacquelyn (ed.). 2002. *The Spaces of Neoliberalism: Land, Place and Family in Latin America*. Bloomfield, Connecticut: Kumarian Press (Shows how “globalization” is contributing to changes that both homogenize and further differentiate Latin American places and peoples. Includes analysis by geographers, anthropologists, and political economists)

• Deere, Carmen Diana and Magdalena Leon. 2001. *Empowering Women: Land And Property Rights In Latin America* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press (An insightful gender-critical analysis of the cultural and institutional constraints operating in 12 countries that kept women, until recently, from owning property, and the broader dimensions of inequality associated with these restrictions)

• Desai, Vandana and R. Potter (eds.). 2002. *The Arnold Companion to Development Studies*. London: Edward Arnold Publishers, and New York: Oxford University Press. (Short, focused chapters present and critique a host of development concepts and problems)

• García Canclini, Héctor. 2002. *Latinoamericanos buscando lugar en este siglo* Buenos Aires: Paidós (Observations and reflections on the impacts of foreign debt, neoliberalism, globalization, and regional integration on people’s lives, cultural identity, and economic autonomy)

• Gilbert, Alan. 1998. *The Latin American City* (2nd ed.) London: Latin American Bureau (Overview of urban trends, conditions, and policies from one of the clearest writers on themes related to urbanization in Latin America)

• Gwynne, Robert, Thomas Klak and Denis Shaw. 2003. *Alternative Capitalisms: Geographies of “Emerging Regions.”* London: Edward Arnold Publishers, and New York: Oxford University Press (Examines the development trajectory of Latin America and the Caribbean as part of the world-system’s semiperiphery)

• Gwynne, Robert and Cristóbal Kay (eds.). 2004. *Latin America Transformed: Globalization and Modernity*. (2nd edition) London: Edward Arnold Publishers and NY: Ox-

ford University Press (Examines economic development paradigms and performance, livelihood transformations, and social movements)

- Hillman, Richard. (ed.). 2001. *Understanding Contemporary Latin America* (2nd ed) Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner (Introductory and accessible textbook with chapters arranged thematically, including history, politics, the military, race, and women)

- Hillman, Richard and Tom D'Agostino (eds.). 2003. *Understanding The Contemporary Caribbean* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner and Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle (Follows the format and style of Hillman (2001) for the Caribbean region)

- Hofman, Andre A. 2000. *The Economic Development Of Latin America In The Twentieth Century* Northhampton, MA: Edward Elgar (A comparative study of economic data trends for Latin America's six largest economies and populations by an ECLAC researcher)

- Jemio, Luis Carlos. 2001. *Debt, Crisis and Reform in Bolivia: Biting the Bullet*. New York: Palgrave (Economistic modeling and analysis of structural adjustment impacts on Bolivia's major economic sectors, including mining, manufacturing, construction, services, and coca)

- Kay, Cristobal. 2002. Why East Asia overtook Latin America: agrarian reform, industrialisation and development *Third World Quarterly* 23 (6): 1073-1102 (Clear and useful explanation of how Taiwan and South Korea out-developed Latin American countries, owing to superior state capacities and performance, agrarian reform, and development policies fostering agricultural-industrial complementarity)

- Klak, Thomas (ed.) 1998. *Globalization and Neoliberalism: The Caribbean Context*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield (Political economy approach to issues such as development policies, nontraditional exports, external relations, the environment, tourism, class and gender relations, and human migration)

- Kuczynski, Pedro-Pablo and John Williamson. 2003. *After the Washington Consensus: Restarting Growth and Reform in Latin America*, Washington, Institute for International Economics (The most recent assessment of the neoliberal policy impacts by the creators of the Washington Consensus)

- López, Ramón. 2003. The policy roots of socioeconomic stagnation and environmental implosion: Latin America 1950-2000 *World Development* 31 (2): 259-280 (Economist's critique of the principal trends in government development policies over the last half century, evaluated via concepts such as "market failures and imperfections" and "optimal public policies")

- Orozco, Manuel. 2002. Globalization and migration: The impact of family remittances in Latin America, *Latin American Politics and Society* 44 (2): 41-66 (Revealing discussion of social, familial, and financial linkages between and among labor migrants to the US and several Spanish-speaking Caribbean Basin countries)

• Phillips, Nicola. 2003. Hemispheric integration and subregionalism in the Americas *International Affairs* 79 (2): 327-49. (Sharp and sophisticated appraisal of negotiations toward, and likely impacts of, a Free Trade Association of the Americas (FTAA), with primary emphasis on the Mercosur countries)

• Potter, R., T. Binns, J. Elliott, and D. Smith. 2004. *Geographies of Development* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Essex, UK: Prentice Hall Pearson (wide-ranging overview of development theories, concepts, and policies, with many regional case studies of the trials and tribulations of development in practice)

• Potter, Robert, David Barker, Dennis Conway and Thomas Klak. 2004. *The Contemporary Caribbean*. Essex, UK: Prentice Hall Pearson (broad geographical treatment of current development concerns, including agriculture, housing, international services, tourism, the environment, race, gender, and politics)

• Prevost, Gary and Carlos Oliva Campos (eds.) 2002. *Neoliberalism and Neopanamericanism: The View from Latin America*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan. (Sixteen scholars, mostly from Latin America, describe the current state of hemispheric economic, political, and environmental relations in the context of the US neoliberal policy agenda. Other chapters assess the progress of regional trading blocs)

• Rapley, John. 2002. *Understanding Development: Theory and Practice in the Third World*, 2nd Edition, Boulder Colorado, Lynne Rienner (Examines the development policy paradigms and shifts since World War II, including recent emphases on globalization and trade liberalization. Draws examples from throughout the developing world)

• Stallings, Barbara and Wilson Peres. 2000. *Growth, employment, and equity: the impact of the economic reforms in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press (Seminal cross-national examination of the impacts of neoliberal policies on economic conditions and work opportunities)

• Weaver, Frederick Stirton. 2000. *Latin America In The World Economy: Mercantile Colonialism To Global Capitalism*. Boulder, CO: Westview (Written as a textbook, this is a very useful, condensed economic history of Latin America; chapters are organized into large time blocks and the interpretation is informed by dependency theory)

## Latin American Development Issues on the Web

Some of the most important web sites for research on Latin American development geography include:

The best Internet clearinghouse for Latin American data sources is LANIC (Latin American Network Information Center, University of Texas; <http://lanic.utexas.edu/>).

New Mexico State University's Internet Resources on Latin America is another rich and valuable site (<http://lib.nmsu.edu/subject/bord/laguia/>).

The ECLAC (the UN's Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean) site provides very useful economic data for the region (<http://eclac.org/default.asp?idioma=IN>).

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) also compiles useful information on development policies and targeted economic sectors (<http://www.acs-aec.org/>).

Foreign Policy in Focus, a project of Interhemispheric Resource Center (IRC) and the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), is an invaluable web site of articles from a range of authors providing clear and penetrating analysis of more explicitly Latin American issues (<http://fpif.org/indices/regions/latin.html>) and more hemisphere-wide development issues (<http://www.americaspolicy.org/index.html>).

### **Collaborative work with Latin Americans**

Here are but two examples of the many scholarly activities that are purposefully transcending traditional political boundaries in Latin America and across the American Hemisphere:

CLAES (Centro Latino Americano De Ecología Social or Latin American Center Social Ecology (<http://www.ambiental.net/claes/>)) is a non-governmental group of regional scholars devoted to the exchange of ideas among scholars and practitioners. CLAES is concerned with a wide range of social and economic development and environmental issues. The web site describes many written works on these subjects by CLAES participants.

Since 2001 the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede San Andrés (The National University of Colombia, San Andrés campus) has offered a Master's Degree in Caribbean Studies. This wide ranging degree program addresses the developmental, political, cultural, and environmental issues affecting the wider Caribbean region. Faculty and students from across the hemisphere participate (<http://www.unal.edu.co/caribe/>).

### **Note**

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