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Review of: Pamela Beth Radcliff, *Making Democratic Citizens in Spain: Civil Society and the Popular Origins of the Transition, 1960-1978*

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Pamela Beth Radcliff, *Making Democratic Citizens in Spain: Civil Society and the Popular Origins of the Transition, 1960-1978*. Houndsmills (UK) and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 416 pp.

This is an impressive book that superbly combines theory and archival research, resulting in a monograph that not only reveals new information about civil society in Spain in the last days of the Franco dictatorship but also seeks to put popular participation and mobilization in Spain within a broader framework of democratic development. Radcliff chooses to focus on civil society through two primary movements, the family associations of the *Movimiento* that were prevalent in the 1960s, and the Neighborhood Associations, or *Asociaciones de Vecinos*, that were more independent from the state and emerged in the 1970s. Her goal is to assess, as best possible, how such groups in their activities came to resemble an active, independent and pluralistic civil society, which she defines here as a dynamic between state and citizens that produces social and political change (p. 2). In telling the story of these associations, she also focuses on the issue of gender and gendered participation in civil society as well as the civic discourses that were adopted by each group in their efforts to produce change. The result is a detailed, analytical and extremely readable re-thinking of civil society and the transition in Spain.

Radcliff begins by outlining the economic and social transformation that occurred in Spain following the cabinet change of 1957 and the abandonment of the effort to create a fascist-like single party totalitarian state. The rise of the technocrats included legislation in 1963 to encourage the *Movimiento* to create family associations, and the broader 1964 legislation that encouraged the formation of community associations on a broader scale. The family associations—divided between Head of Household, Homemaker, and School Parent groups—were initially created by the state, in top down fashion, and thus never challenged the state as opposition groups like the *Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO) did. However, Radcliff argues that many of these groups did develop relative autonomy even if their efforts were ultimately aimed at making the relationship between citizen and state a collaborative one. In examining the discourse of these associations, she emphasizes the idea that these groups were meant to bring to the state the “public representations of the family” (p. 162) and in order to do so, they first encouraged the development of horizontal relations between family and community that promoted sociability and pluralistic views.

By the 1970s, such groups had been surpassed by the neighborhood associations, independent from the state, and numbering some 30 000 by 1979 (p. 91). While such groups did face more repression and discouragement from the state- requiring extensive documentation in order to hold meetings, for example- they developed a strong emphasis on the “common good” carried out at the neighborhood level, often focused on improving urban conditions related to health, education and infrastructure (p. 241). The emphasis here shifted from the private well-being of the family as part of the community to the well-being of the community, and the effort of the community to represent itself to the state, in a more confrontational manner than the family associations had done. As Radcliff argues, the work of these associations helped “define a new autonomous space from which to make claims to or on the state” (p. 257).

In addition to seeing both types of organizations on a continuum that resulted in civil society, Radcliff also emphasizes the element of gender in the development of civic discourse and civil society. Women joined these organizations, although in the family associations they were separated into the Homemakers association, which doubly marginalized them, first as regime supporters connected to the *Movimiento* and secondly as women as their organization was subordinate to the Head of Household association within the family association structure (pp. 110-111). Nonetheless, within the homemakers association women debated the role of women as citizens, as consumers, as well as debating legal status and domestic responsibilities. Radcliff finds that in debating consumerism, women in the homemaker associations linked domestic responsibility with broader social issues such as consumer education, affordable housing and public health, issues that all had to be taken up by the state (p. 203). Moreover, these associations fought not only externally for policy changes but also developed a program of internal civic education, including lessons on self-government of the associations and in broader citizen participation. Eventually there was a split between more conservative, pro-regime groups and more dissident, oppositional ones, which mirrored the cleavages within civil society generally. By 1973, the Barcelona group walked out of the national congress over the issue of local autonomy, demonstrating that women in these organizations came to see themselves as part of a broader, more independent society than what the regime may have desired from these groups. By 1975, dissent was more open as the dissident associations organized the consumer goods boycott and emerged as more open advocates of democratization (p. 226). While the gendered norms of 1960s and 1970s Spain still perceived women’s activism as secondary or divisive, there was nonetheless an active and important debate about women, citizenship and social issues that emerged within the homemaker associations which resulted in a belief that women could be active citizens, whether they were pro-regime or not (p. 234).

In addressing both types of organizations, their structure and their activism, Pamela Radcliff argues for a reinterpretation of the last years of the Franco dictatorship and thus a re-thinking of the transition that followed. The space needed for a new form of associational life emerged by the mid-1960s due to a variety of factors, including economic and social change, the social capital of potential activists and legislations such as the 1964 law on associations. The multiplicity of factors created a situation that promoted and fostered civil society under dictatorship. That civil society was pluralistic and diverse and gave citizens a discourse as well as practices that would prove significant afterwards. Radcliff thus argues that the family associations of the *Movimiento* and the more independent neighborhood associations that followed are best seen along a continuum of civil society development, rather than as pro-regime and oppositional stages of democraticization. While not downplaying their differences, one favoring collaboration with the state and one more confrontational, Radcliff nonetheless is convincing in putting forth the argument that both fostered ideas and practices that became important to the citizen movement that emerged in the transition and in debates over the Constitution. She thus answers the question of how and why a citizen movement emerged in the mid-1970s, and concludes with a challenge to future researchers to ask why it disappeared so quickly after democratization (p. 329).

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