PART IV
Conclusions

15

Goodbye to the Caciques? Definition, the State and the Dynamics of *Caciquismo* in Twentieth-century Mexico

Wil Pansters[1]

> 'Pues mire nomás: calladitos, calladitos, los huecos
> de poder en todo el país se han ido llenando con los
> caciques locales, que estaban allí nomás como tigres
> al acecho'
>
> Carlos Fuentes, *La Silla del Águila,* 2003, p. 154

The concept of *caciquismo* has become part of the Mexican scholarly and popular vernacular. This has inspired continued scholarly attention to the phenomenon and strengthened the need for analytical and definitional rigour and innovation. Since scholars like Wolf and Friedrich put forward definitions – still influential today – of *caciquismo* a few decades ago the economic and political systems that gave rise to the *cacicazgos* they analyzed have profoundly changed.[2] Questions about the delineation and validity of the concept therefore seem justified. Also, current theoretical developments shed new light on these phenomena and inspire new ways of conceptualizing them. Can or should certain definitional prerequisites from classic *caciquismo* studies be upheld in changing socio-political conditions? What are the effects of contemporary theoretical debates about power and the state for the analytical value of the concept of *caciquismo*? What conceptual insights and empirical data about new and not so new *cacicazgos* can be gained from the work of a new generation of scholars? What can be said about the historical transformation of *caciquismo*? These are all questions that have been raised in this collection of articles and to answer them is one of the objectives of this volume.

In this concluding chapter I attempt to pull together a few general thoughts from the contributions in this volume and the discussions held during the conference meetings themselves, and link them to more general debates about power,

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2 Paul Friedrich, 'A Mexican *cacicazgo*', in *Ethnology*, 4:2, 1965, pp. 190–209; 'The Legitimacy of a Cacique', in M. J. Schwartz (ed.), *Local Level Politics. Social and Cultural Perspectives* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 243–69; Eric Wolf, 'Aspects of Groups Relations in a Complex Society', in E. Wolf, *Pathways of Power. Building an Anthropology of the Modern World* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 2001), pp. 124–38 (originally published in *American Anthropologist*, 58, 1956, pp. 1065–78).

politics and the state. In the first part I will deal with the conceptual demarcation of *caciquismo*, since a variety of societal and theoretical developments have urged different scholars to re-examine key features of *caciquismo*. I will pay particular attention to the conceptual links between *caciquismo* on the one hand and inter-mediation, discourse and territory on the other. In the second part, I will concentrate on the complex issues surrounding the relationship between *caciquismo* and the state. I will critically assess the common interpretation of this relationship as a zero-sum game and stress the diverse modes of articulation between state formation and the (changing) phenomenon of *caciquismo*. I will also reflect on the meaning of recent theorizing on the (postcolonial) state for understanding *caciquismo*. In the final part, I will focus on the historical transformation and changing forms of *caciquismo*. Here I will question some common views on the dynamics of *caciquismo* in the twentieth century and put forward an alternative interpretation. In general, this review of the major findings of this volume, leads me to reflect on their most important theoretical implications. This will hopefully result in pushing the debate about *caciquismo* in novel directions.

Conceptual boundaries

The concept of *caciquismo* occupies the centre of a semantic cluster that incorporates a number of other notions such as patronage, (inter)mediation, hierarchy, informality, violence, territory, authoritarianism, but also leadership, consent, paternalism and corruption. Some contributions to this volume approach the topic of *caciquismo* by investigating the association between particular concepts and notions within this semantic cluster without explicitly addressing the issue of definition. Instead, they concentrate on the interpretation of particular historical figures or processes against the background of other scholarly debates, for example about *serrano* movements, the revisionism debate in Mexican historiography, the gendered dimension of politics, or the discursive construction of the state. In comparison, other contributions focus more explicitly on the conceptual demarcation of the term. Taken as a whole, and without wanting to iron out the differences and tensions that may exist between some of the previous chapters, this collection puts forward a number of ideas that attempt to go beyond previous work in a number of ways.

In 1956 Eric Wolf published an article about the broad historical evolution of the bonds that connect groups on different levels in complex societies. In it he argued in favor of moving beyond the study of communities in complex societies as self-contained and integrated systems and, instead, suggested seeing them as the 'local termini of a web of group relations that extended through intermediate levels from the level of the community to that of the nation'.[3] He illustrated his approach by looking at the chief ways in which so-called community-oriented and nation-oriented groups arranged and re-arranged themselves in the course of Mexico's

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3 Wolf, 'Aspects of Group Relations', p. 125.

political and economic history. Despite the fact that Wolf did not use the concept of *caciquismo*, this is a text much quoted by anthropologists interested in *caciquismo*, because it opened up a field of study that shifted anthropological attention towards the articulating mechanisms and groups between localities and national institutions. In particular, the study of the political and cultural role of brokers helped to shift attention 'from the internal organization of communities to the manner of their integration into larger systems'.[4] The structural role and function of intermediation became closely associated with the concept of *caciquismo*. Recently, some authors have even argued that *caciquismo* should be regarded first and foremost as a problem of political intermediation and articulation, while others have suggested that this role has been exaggerated.[5] In any case, *caciquismo* is mostly located at a level between local/regional social domains and the central state.[6] Wolf's influence on the study of *caciquismo* is, however, not limited to this seminal article. His work on the 'older brother' of the cacique – the caudillo – written together with Edward Hansen, constitutes another, almost obligatory, reference point for many later studies about *caciquismo* and, of course, *caudillismo*.[7] Here the focus is on how structural conditions and systemic forces in post-independence Latin America explain the emergence, characteristics and demise of the system of caudillo politics. In addition, questions of strategy, agency and behavioural features receive attention, such as the personal skills, organizational qualities and, above all, the political use of masculinity and sexual prowess by (would-be) caudillos. Some of the key characteristics of *caudillismo*, such as armed patron–client networks and the use of violence, have also become associated with *caciquismo*.

One of the first to draw systematic scholarly attention to the concept of *caciquismo* was Paul Friedrich, who organized his original 1965 article around two broad perspectives.[8] The first referred to the political functions of the social structures of rural Mexico that are essentially defined by natural and ceremonial kinship relations and land tenure. The second perspective pointed to the 'more purely political organization' of *caciquismo*, which is elaborated with the help of concepts as factionalism, competition, intermediation between community and higher levels, and the strategies that (potential) leaders use to succeed in politics,

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4 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

5 Fernando I. Salmerón Castro, 'Caciques. Una revisión teórica sobre el control político local', in *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*, Año XXX, 1984, pp. 107–41. See also Rogelio Hernández in this volume. For a critical view on the role of caciques as efficient intermediaries, see M. Nuijten, *Power, Community and the State. The Political Anthropology of Organisation in Mexico* (London, 2003).

6 This is also the sense in which Matsuzato has used the term 'post-communist caciquismo' to talk about meso-elites and regional chiefs in contemporary Russia, see 'From Communist Boss Politics to Post-communist Caciquismo – the Meso-elite and Meso-governments in Post-communist Countries', in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 34, 2001, pp. 175–201.

7 'Caudillo Politics: A Structural Analysis', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1967, pp. 168–79.

8 Friedrich, 'A Mexican Cacicazgo', in *Ethnology*, 4:2, 1965, pp. 190–209.

such as verbal persuasion, intrigue, organizational capabilities and violence.[9] What is clear from Friedrich's early analysis was his deliberate attempt to develop a non-reductionist perspective on *caciquismo* that encompassed 'far more than the political functions of social structures'.[10] While this was helpful in accounting for the complexity of the phenomenon, the downside was that the research focus was primarily oriented at the local level. Certainly compared to Wolf's proposition, Friedrich paid modest attention to the question of intermediation, and, as a consequence, the meaning and function of local *caciquismo* for the broader political and economic systems was hardly explored.[11]

It is precisely towards this point that later studies of *caciquismo* have gravitated. In the early 1970s, Luisa Paré developed her own theoretical framework for the study of *caciquismo* and criticized Friedrich for claiming a meaning for *caciquismo* beyond 'the political functions of social structures'.[12] For Paré, *caciquismo* is a phenomenon that results from of Mexico's particular socioeconomic and political structure. It should be studied against the background of Mexico's rural class structure and as an expression of global processes of dependency and forms of internal colonialism.[13] In this sense Paré's work is an explicitly Marxist elaboration of Wolf's call for the study of articulating mechanisms. Paré relates *caciquismo* to the articulation of capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production in rural areas, since such situations represent a 'historical necessity' for political brokers between the dominant class of the capitalist mode of the production and the groups associated with the dominated mode of production.[14] Factional disputes are understood as fractured class conflicts. Moreover, cacical brokerage acquires an economic role as caciques play a pivotal role in the circulation of commodities from the communities towards outside markets, and of outside capitalist commodities into the community, 'leaving the cacique with the surplus value extracted from local peasants'.[15] Whereas Paré's view has the benefit of structurally placing *caciquismo* in a wider socio-political framework, her approach can hardly give due attention to agency and performance. A cacique is not chosen for his virtues or popular authority, but 'his power is supported by economic influence and is therefore coercive'.[16] In Paré's work there is little room for a cacique who commands a degree of legitimacy, which, as Friedrich demonstrated, derives from the 'normative power of

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9 *Ibid.*, pp. 198–206

10 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

11 In his later work the intermediary functions of caciques received more attention. See, for example, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1970), pp. 65, 71.

12 Luisa Paré, 'Diseño teórico para el estudio del caciquismo actual en México', in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, Año XXXIV, nr. 2, 1972: p. 338.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 340.

14 Luisa Paré, 'Caciquismo y estructura de poder en la Sierra Norte de Puebla', in R. Bartra et al., *Caciquismo y poder político en el México Rural* (Mexico, 1985 [1975]), p. 34.

15 *Ibid.*, 'Caciquismo y estructura de poder', p. 37.

16 Paré, 'Diseño teórico', p. 340.

the factual' or efficient brokerage.[17] Viewing *caciquismo* as coercive power also stands in stark contrast with the idea that the activities of a cacique can be justified by a form of 'authority' related to shared values, beliefs and customs between cacique and the governed.[18] From a Marxist structural perspective that underlines economic power and coercion, and not political maneuvering and consensus building, Primo Tapia, Gabriel Barrios and Saturnino Cedillo could perhaps not be seen as caciques at all.[19]

The strong emphasis on the structural functions of *caciquismo* in the broader social and political system is not the result of a Marxist approach *per se*. Using the Weberian language of status and roles, Sabloff likewise stressed that the reproduction of *caciquismo*, which she defined as the concentration of the roles of broker, patron and leader of a political faction in one individual, should be seen as a function of a particular postrevolutionary legal regime in agrarian matters, in combination with an oligarchic political structure.[20] The legal regime that regulates the *ejido* system demands a sole representation of the community to the state, whereas the oligarchic one-party system tends to concentrate access to power and resources in a limited number of 'entry' points and enhances the situation that local leaders depend more on higher levels than on local support. These conditions 'increase the possibility that an individual may and can play three roles (broker, patron and leader) … and become the cacique of the community'.[21]

This brief review of key contributions to the early debates about *caciquismo* brings out at least two things. First, the emphasis on the structural determinants and functions of the *caudillaje* system in terms of political-economic and social organization (hacienda, kinship) was taken up by scholars of *caciquismo* (social structure, political economy). At the same time, the first generation of *caciquismo* studies, exemplified by Friedrich's early work, combined structural analysis with attention to agency, practices and psychology.[22] Secondly, the 1970s witnessed a gradual shift towards approaches that more and more focussed on the structural

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17 Friedrich, 'The Legitimacy of a Cacique', in M. J. Swartz (ed.), *Local Level Politics. Social and Cultural Perspectives*, (Chicago, 1968), pp. 260–3.

18 Friedrich, 'The Legitimacy'; In *Agrarian Revolt* Friedrich stresses how local peasants considered Primo Tapia as 'one of us', despite his long-term experiences outside Naranja and the state and despite the fact that he possessed a relatively high level of education, pp. 61, 71–73. Also Salmerón, 'Caciques', pp. 126–9.

19 This obviously does not mean that these caciques eschewed coercive methods of control.

20 Paula Sabloff, 'El caciquismo en el ejido post revolucionario', in *América Indígena*, Vol. XXXVII, nr. 4, 1977, pp. 851–81.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 865. In contrast, Nuijten has recently criticized the centrality and effectiveness of brokerage and intermediation by local caciques. Her analysis suggests that 'the relations of the *ejidatarios* to the state cannot be reduced to a general vertical intermediation model with the cacique occupying a nodal point within the system'. See *Power, Community and the State*, p. 194.

22 See for example, Friedrich's extensive treatment of Primo Tapia's upbringing and intellectual and emotional socialization in *Agrarian Revolt*, pp. 58–77.

aspects and functions of *caciquismo* and analyzed *caciquismo* in its wider societal context, as Wolf had already suggested in the 1950s. The most important concept in relation to this is that of (inter)mediation. It is therefore not surprising that several of the contributions to this volume explicitly dwell on it. It will, however, also become clear that there is much more to *caciquismo* than its structural function of intermediation.

Rogelio Hernández (this volume) maintains that the concept of *caciquismo* has gradually lost explanatory power and come to be employed mostly for descriptive purposes. In an effort to explore the limits of the concept in the context of complex politics, he puts forward the crucial distinction between two key aspects generally associated with *caciquismo*: the first refers to a set of practices and ideas related to 'traditional' political leadership and the second refers to a set of structural or systemic conditions or functions. For Hernández, the analytical value of the concept of *caciquismo* lies in the systemic role of intermediation. Therefore, informal and autocratic political practices of a particular leadership in the absence of intermediation does not warrant the application of the term *caciquismo*. Thus, *caciquismo* refers to the political domination by an individual or a small clique over a certain community and the control of (economic and political) resources to which the community does not have free access. Through the control of the flow of resources, the cacique then becomes an intermediary between community and society. This control stands at the basis of the cacique's capacity to impose his will and power. With changing societal conditions, such as the emergence of more open markets where political and economic resources can be obtained, the need for intermediation, and thus for the reproduction of *caciquismo*, can in principle vanish. Here the discussion about the conceptual delineation of *caciquismo* borders on the question of its historical transformation, which I will explore in the final section.

Practices of personalized intermediation are indeed recognized in many contributions to this volume as a, if not the, key characteristic of *caciquismo*. The context and the type of resources vary enormously, but the generic function is widely underscored. Brewster argues that the *cacicazgo* of Gabriel Barrios in the Sierra Norte de Puebla of the 1920s was instrumental in the construction of relations between (new) external actors and institutions and local indigenous communities, especially in the context of turbulent change. Barrios was an intermediary in the true sense: both the Sierra and the federal state sought solutions to their problems (military control, access to resources) through what they viewed as the most effective channel, the Barrios *cacicazgo*. Boyer suggests that the caciques of the Zacapu area in Michoacán functioned as pivotal cultural brokers insofar as they mediated between village political cultures and the revolutionary ideologies espoused by postrevolutionary state-makers such as Cárdenas and Múgica. Maldonado presents ample evidence of the forms of intermediation in the urban-industrial space of the Valley of Mexico City and the ways in which they construct union or urban *cacicazgos*, while Pansters documents how the university cacique controls access to crucial financial resources from the federal government.

These examples of *caciquista* intermediation bring me to a discussion of an influential typology of cacique regimes that comes under criticism in this volume, that of 'traditional' and 'modern' *caciquismo*. With the proliferation of the regional historiography of the Mexican revolution, which was well underway in the late 1970s and was consolidated during the 1980s, it became increasingly clear that the period following the armed phase of the revolution witnessed a profound transformation of the nature of both *caudillismo* and *caciquismo*. The work of Ankerson, Jacobs, Buve, Fowler Salamini, Joseph and Falcón, but also later work such as that of Alvarado and Martínez Assad made important progress in differentiating between different types of *caciquismo* and trying to understand the underlying logic.[23] The period of the armed struggle of the revolution and the virtual absence of an effective central government gave, according to Buve, rise to the temporary re-emergence of mid-nineteenth century classic *caudillaje*, which Ankerson described as traditional *caudillismo*.[24] This variant was thought to be personalistic, of rural origin, localized, informal (kinship networks) and heavily dependent on military force. The 1920s and 1930s saw political and economic reconstruction and institutionalization, thereby creating the conditions for the emergence of modern or revolutionary caciques, who operated from within the new political and bureaucratic institutions and managed to construct a more impersonal power base, more closely integrated in the state.[25]

While these distinctions proved to be very useful, they were, inevitably, also liable to be caught in a dichotomy. A recent spate of studies, some results of which are published in this volume, have taken up this point and developed a more sophisticated approach. In his analysis of the history of a *cacicazgo* that emerged during the *Cristero* revolt in the western part of Michoacán, Butler shows its ambiguous

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23 Arturo Alvarado, *El portesgilismo en Tamaulipas. Estudio sobre la constitución de la autoridad pública en el México posrevolucionario* (Mexico, 1992); Dudley Ankerson, *Agrarian Warlord. Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí* (Chicago, 1984); Raymond Buve, 'Peasant Movements, Caudillos and Land reform during the Revolution (1910–1917) in Tlaxcala, Mexico', in *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, no. 18, June 1975, pp. 112–52. Raymond Buve and Romana Falcón, 'Tlaxcala and San Luis Potosí under the Sonorenses (1920–1930): Regional Revolutionary Power Groups and the National State', in W. Pansters and A. Ouweneel, *Region, State and Capitalism in Mexico. Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* (Amsterdam, 1989), pp. 110–33; Romana Falcón, *Revolución y caciquismo en San Luis Potosí, 1910–1938* (Mexico, 1984); Ian Jacobs, *Ranchero Revolt. The Mexican Revolution in Guerrero* (Austin, 1982); Carlos Martínez Assad, *Los rebeldes vencidos. Cedillo contra el estado cardenista* (México, 1990); Gilbert M. Joseph, *Revolution from Without. Yucatán, Mexico, and the United States, 1880–1924* (Durham, NC, 1988 [1982]). See also the contributions of most of these authors to David Brading (ed.), *Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge, 1980).

24 Buve, 'Peasant movements', p. 118; Dudley Ankerson, 'Saturnino Cedillo, a Traditional Caudillo in San Luis Potosí, 1890–1938', in Brading, *Caudillo and Peasant*, pp. 140–1.

25 Heather Fowler Salamini, 'Revolutionary Caudillos in the 1920s: Francisco Múgica and Adalberto Tejeda', in Brading, *Caudillo and Peasant*, pp. 169–92.

nature. *Cristero* caciques with conservative views on property and religion, a defensive attitude towards outside intervention in local affairs, a rural power base and an anti-*agrarista* ideology could easily be classified as 'traditional'. However, when the caciques survived the *Cristero* rebellion itself, their military power was recognized by the regime in the interest of establishing public order. Henceforth, the caciques started to work with and through state-controlled institutions. Therefore Butler suggests that what developed in Coalcomán is best viewed as a 'constantly evolving, hybrid *caciquismo* containing a mixture of traditional and modern elements'. Moreover, this ambiguity is not considered to be something that is structurally given, but much more the outcome of strategic interventions and negotiations. The importance of subaltern agency for deconstructing the traditional/modern dichotomy is also underscored by Brewster. On the basis of his own case study and other recent work about rural leadership and power relations he calls for an interpretation that can account for complexity and diversity. The hybrid character of Gabriel Barrios' *cacicazgo* is substantiated by the fact that he appeared as a traditional and charismatic patriarch in the small indigenous communities, but simultaneously as a bureaucratic broker linked to government institutions. The differentiation between different roles and practices is also noted by Purnell, who writes about how Che Gómez combined more 'traditional' personalistic relations with his constituency in the Juchitán area with a pragmatic and more 'modern' engagement with state institutions. The studies in this volume thus make a clear case for an approach that leaves behind the traditional/modern dichotomy and accounts for the complexity, contingency and hybridity of *caciquismo*, without losing sight of its changing forms.

More than two decades ago, Joseph argued that an artificial dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' *caciquismo* should be avoided. Agrarian caciques, for example, might work in one instance to further the aspirations of *campesino* supporters, but in another they are primarily engaged in serving themselves and their closest followers.[26] In this volume, Zárate confirms how difficult it is to reach a convincing normative judgement about caciques: 'for governments, popular leaders constitute 'troublemaking caciques', while those whom the government considers 'exemplary leaders' … are, from the perspective of popular groups, 'self-serving caciques'. This ambiguity can be explained by regarding caciques above all as *Realpolitiker*, who are not hampered by any particular moral or ideological commitment. It would not be hard to find ethnographic and historiographic evidence that corroborates this. Yet it is also true that caciques have at all times been active in tapping into particular discourses or systems of meaning that frame their political and social strategies and provide them with a sense of orientation and legitimacy. The point to make here is that recent scholarly work has advanced considerably in the elaboration of what could be called the discursive dimension of *caciquismo*. To examine the discursive

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26 Gilbert M. Joseph, 'Caciquismo and the Revolution: Carrillo Puerto in Yucatán', in Brading, *Caudillo and Peasant*, p. 201.

construction of *caciquismo* clearly goes beyond taking notice of the 'skilful manipulation of ritual and symbol by the cacique for the purpose of legitimising his political power'.[27]

The *agrarista* discourse that flourished in the 1920s formed the basis for the construction of the campesino identity and had a pronounced influence on the political discourse of the well-researched Zacapu caciques in Michoacán. In fact, these caciques were at the same time instrumental in bringing this new language of collective political action and identity into the villages and able to appropriate the discourse of campesino struggle in order to give meaning to what could be the highly autocratic leadership of their communities (Boyer, this volume). Whereas Boyer's contribution to this volume is very explicit about the need to broaden the scope of our study of *caciquismo* in twentieth-century Mexico, other chapters also take account of the constitutive role played by discourse in the history and workings of *cacicazgos*. The list of the discourses – always buttressed by practices and institutions – that are mobilized by leaders and caciques, is long: discourses of local and regional autonomy and identities (Purnell, Brewster, Butler), of law and order and security (Brewster, Pansters), of ethnic and communitarian solidarity (Calderón, Rus, Zárate), of labour rights and new unionism (Maldonado), of masculinity/feminity (Fernández, de Vries), of neoliberal reform and accountability (Pansters) and even democracy (Zárate). The mutually constitutive relationship of *caciquismo* and discourse is most systematically elaborated in the contribution by de Vries. It is his contention that the ubiquity and persistence of *caciquismo* can only be fully appreciated by moving beyond its strategic and structural dimensions and concentrating on the performative, discursive and imaginative aspects of politics and *caciquismo*. Taken together, these findings and proposals point to new directions in research about *caciquismo*.

Caciquismo has long been associated with particular territories, especially local or regional domains. The first element of Ugalde's definition of a cacique was that of a leader who 'has total or near total political, economic and social control of a geographic area'.[28] As many scholars worked on village politics and agrarian leadership, the territorial reference was mostly identified with rural areas. However, the first generation of scholars of urban *caciquismo* followed this line.[29] The question is whether the definitional element of (near) total territorial control can be upheld in the context of large-scale urban-industrial agglomerations, where *cacicazgos* seem to emerge in particular sectoral domains such as informal street vending. Moreover, as

27 Joseph, 'Caciquismo', p. 200.
28 Antonio Ugalde, 'Contemporary Mexico: from hacienda to PRI, political leadership in a Zapotec village', in R. Kern et al. (eds), *The Caciques. Oligarchical Politics and the System of Caciquismo in the Luso-Hispanic World* (Albuquerque, 1973), p. 124. Friedrich's seminal definition makes a reference to a strong and autocratic leader in local and regional politics, 'The Legitimacy', p. 247.
29 Wayne A. Cornelius, 'Contemporary Mexico: A Structural Analysis of Urban Caciquismo', in Kern, *The Caciques*, p. 138.

the phenomenon of *caciquismo* is also identified with complex institutions and organizations, the spatio-territorial element is likely to become less significant. In a way, this can be related to current discussions in the social sciences and geography about processes of social, economic, political and cultural de-territorialization. It could be argued that, in view of the increased mobility of people, goods and ideas and the density of communication networks in today's Mexico, the territorial dimension of *caciquismo* should be abandoned as a defining characteristic. Such an approach would, however, neglect *caciquismo*'s intimate connection with the crucial issue of intermediation. After all, the possibility to dominate the points of mediation and exchange between different (geographical) domains (Wolf's 'crucial junctures or synapses of relationships') has long depended on the fact that caciques were able to control particular spaces (militarily or otherwise), sometimes helped by physical geography. It is no coincidence that Brewster depicts Gabriel Barrios as the only leader able to 'unlock' the military potential of the indigenous communities in the Sierra Norte de Puebla and to 'access' the state machinery (this volume). Without Barrios 'opening up' these communities, they would have remained 'closed off' from all kinds of resources from the outside. If the Sierra communities had been able to access resources through alternative channels, the basis for the reproduction of the Barrios *cacicazgo* would gradually disappear. The existence of relatively closed social, economic and/or political spaces as opposed to open political and economic markets as a precondition for the reproduction of *caciquismo* constitutes the key argument of Hernández' contribution to this volume. The fact that territorial control, intermediation and *caciquismo* are thus intimately related is perceptively expressed in the classic cacique's maxim: '*aquí no hay más ley que yo*'. But what does the '*aquí*' mean when we are dealing with a union or a university *cacicazgo*? The contributions to this volume put forward at least two ideas that add up to an ambiguous conclusion and open up new pathways for research.

The first takes as a starting point the idea that the increasing complexity of economic systems and governance structures, social differentiation and mobility, and institutional density in highly urbanized societies make it unlikely that *cacicazgos* will construct a power monopoly over entire territories. These multifaceted dynamics continuously breed new actors, new demands, new conflicts, new institutions and rules, and new forms of mediation. The social basis of current urban-syndical or organizational *cacicazgos* is much more fluid (horizontal and vertical mobility) than that of their rural counterparts in the 1930s and perhaps even of their contemporary rural counterparts. Instead of (near) total control of a given geographic area, this situation can give rise to caciques who have a *compartmentalized* control over certain resources or institutional domains. As a consequence, the territorial dimension of such *cacicazgos* will have to be rephrased in the non-geographic terms of institutional or sectoral spaces.[30] Put more strongly,

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30 I am indebted to Raymond Buve for making this point very clear during the conference meetings in Oxford.

this line of reasoning would point to the de-territorialization of *caciquismo*. The university *cacicazgo* I analyzed in this volume does not possess an immediate geographical reference point, but pertains basically to an organizational entity and professional identity. These are in fact made up of complex networks of relations that stretch well beyond certain territorial boundaries. Nevertheless, because of a whole series of legal, administrative and political arrangements, a modern Mexican university has to be regarded as a relatively closed institutional space that (potentially) confers immense power on the chief executive. Similarly, particular legal and administrative characteristics of unionism allow leaders to exercise power in a personalistic, arbitrary and often violent way and convert these organizations into massive platforms for *cacicazgos* (see Maldonado in this volume).

The second idea starts out from the existence of compartmentalized *cacicazgos* but goes on to signal tendencies of re-territorialization, that is, the geographic projection and expansion of a compartmentalized *cacicazgo* onto a certain territory. The analysis of Maldonado is highly significant in this respect, as he demonstrates how union leaders stretch out from their 'compartment' into the politico-administrative domain and other domains of the reproduction of the urban-industrial working classes. The organization of a proletarian *barrio* sponsored by a labour union, the distribution of housing based on union membership, access to public services, and the protection of sources of employment make up the spectrum of activities through which a union cacique turns urban space into a resource of power. It is then only a small step towards the conquest of political, administrative and bureaucratic power. The cacique of the street vendors in Morelia, examined by Zárate, understood this very well: he managed to obtain control of key posts in the municipal government that gained him influence in the administration of markets and shopping centres and all that comes with it (such as permits, tax collection, conflict resolution). The incursion into municipal or regional government structures by these new types of caciques has profound influence on the organization of local and regional power structures, and will further shore up the process of territorialization.

A final dimension of territorialization that emerges from several of the contributions to this book refers to the remarkable desire of present day urban or institutional caciques to build (symbolic) centres of their often compartmentalized power domains. These symbolic centres of authority regularly take the form of a *rancho* situated just outside major urban-industrial centres, complete with thoroughbred horses and the paraphernalia of the *charrería*. In the Mexican political imaginary such symbolism is reminiscent of the El Gargaleote ranch, 'the mysterious sanctuary' of one of country's most notorious postrevolutionary regional caciques, Gonzalo N. Santos.[31] The issue of the imagery and performance of *caciquismo* is further explored in the next section. The investigation of the complex and ambiguous relation-

31 Fuentes, *La Silla*, p. 252. Santos' El Gargaleote ranch was situated in Tamuín, a small cattle-raising town at the entrance of the Huasteca that was under his absolute control.

ships between the non-territorial and compartmentalized sources of modern cacical power and its coincident tendencies of political and symbolic re-territorialization seems an important task for future research on modern *caciquismo*.

Caciquismo and the state

The Mexican state has long been looked upon as a colossus that casts a long and dark shadow over its citizens, economy and culture. The state has always invested much in its political, administrative and economic strength, but also in its imaginary and ideological powers. Like its Venezuelan counterpart, the Mexican state has 'been constituted as a unifying force by producing fantasies of collective integration into centralized political institutions'.[32] One can think of the pomp and grandeur of public rituals, symbols and buildings, perhaps best expressed in the fantastic magnificence of the place that everybody knows of, but almost nobody really knows, Los Pinos, where, according to one author, the only 'real cacique' of Mexico lives![33] But one should also think of the powers invested in the imagination of the past in schoolbooks, the electronic and printed media and art, and in the struggles with the Church and the private sector about education, religion and morality. In recent years, the view of the Mexican state as the sole 'independent' actor of postrevolutionary modernity that maintains relations with other, 'subsidiary' actors and social groups (business, political parties, peasants, unions, students, the Church, etc.) has been seriously reconsidered. Through a new lens 'dependent' actors have become more discernible in the dim shadow of the state. More importantly perhaps, the persona of the state itself as a giant has been laid low by the slingshots of Gramscian and Foucauldian notions of power, politics and the state.

In the light of these shifting views of the state, it seems worth reflecting on the complex relations between *caciquismo* and the state. The standard account has it that cacical rule will flourish particularly in the context of a weak state (whether as an inherent and permanent quality or as a result of a temporary decline of effective state power, for example, during revolutionary upheavals and their aftermath). The strengthening of the postrevolutionary Mexican state, particularly since the 1930s, the argument goes, undermined the (political and economic) spaces in which *caciquismo* could reproduce. This has generated a kind of teleological reasoning or zero-sum-game argument, in which the centralization of political power and the territorial and functional expansion of state institutions positively correspond with the decline of *caciquismo*. Writing about the decay of the Cedillo *cacicazgo* in the late 1930s, Martínez Assad states that the strengthening of political centralization

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32 Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago and London, 1997), p. 4.

33 Carlos Loret de Mola, *Los Caciques* (Mexico City, 1979), p. 52. In this sense the hidden (physical) reality of Los Pinos stands in stark contrast to the 'nakedness' of the residence of the US president.

was possible *because of* the elimination of regional caciques.[34] The relation between *caciquismo* and state formation was basically seen as one of 'adapt or perish' for the former, as the Figueroa caciques in Guerrero had already found out in the 1920s.[35] I would like to call this interpretation of the relationship between state (growth) and *caciquismo* the 'elimination' argument. Recent scholarly work has raised doubts about the general claims of this view and several of the chapters in this volume provide evidence for a more differentiated view. The question is not if the institutional and economic muscle of the state grew after 1930, but how this played out through time, in particular domains or localities, and in the interactions between different state and non-state actors. My intention is not to disprove that *cacicazgos* were demolished by a strengthening (central) state in the 1920s and 1930s – there is sufficient evidence for that – but whether this was the only game in town at the time and in the years to come. In order words, it is the generalization of the elimination argument that is questioned here, not its particular historical validity. So what else can be said about the nature and evolution of the relationship between *caciquismo* and the state?

In this volume Calderón argues that during the 1920s local elites resented state intervention as a form of interference in local affairs, but in the 1950s, intervention was actively sought by local caciques to maintain their power. A similar point is convincingly made by Butler who shows how Coalcomán *Cristero* caciques did everything in the 1920s to keep the state and its policies out, but later worked through state channels and profited from the resources that became available. At the same time, the regime itself recognized the (military) strength of these caciques and hence tempered its claims to control local society. These findings seem to substantiate the argument that *caciquismo* can facilitate or create the conditions for the state to penetrate into local and regional dominions, as opposed to be undermined by it.[36] I would like to call this the 'facilitation' argument. *Cacicazgos* then appear as what Butler calls 'a mediating barrier' or a 'semi-porous wall', capable of letting through some state initiatives while blocking others. In equal terms, Brewster demonstrates that Gabriel Barrios became part of the state machinery in facilitating resources for economic and social development, but never became a 'state-derived' authority or a tool in the hands of state managers. The 'facilitation' view on *caciquismo*–state relations does away with simple oppositions such as resistence vs. domination, autonomy vs. dependency, intervention vs. autonomy or

34 My emphasis. 'La relación cedillista o el ocaso del poder tradicional', in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, no. 3, 1979, p. 728.

35 In those years 'the central government had steadily regained full political control of the state, crushing any ambitions for regional domination which the local revolutionary elite might still harbor'. See Ian Jacobs, *Ranchero Revolt. The Mexican Revolution in Guerrero* (Austin, 1982), p. 135.

36 John Gledhill, 'La dialéctica región-centro-nación a fin de siglo: poderes regionales, poderes transnacionales y la transformación del estado', in S. Maldonado (ed.), *Dilemas del estado nacional. Una visión desde la cultura y el espacio regional* (Zamora, 2001), pp. 48–9.

good vs. bad *cacicazgos* (criticized by Purnell, Brewster, Maldonado and Zárate respectively in this volume). Instead, what becomes apparent in the relations of these types of *cacicazgos* with the (federal) state is their unfixed, variable and shifting nature, which is partly explained by the fact that they are shaped by local histories, memories, pressure groups and standards of behaviour. Here we must link the discussion about *caciquismo* with the more general debate about the 'negotiation of rule' in modern Mexico, in which state and society are no longer viewed as separate spheres, one colonized by the other, since this 'poorly represents the interpenetration of state and society'.[37]

While the concept of state intervention as being fundamentally shaped by *caciquismo* opens up pathways for a more differentiated and subtle theory, it does not exhaust the relationship between state and *caciquismo*. In what could be called the strongest or most 'productive' variant of this relationship, particular *cacicazgos* are directly triggered by state penetration and policy interventions. Institutional interventions, new resources or the introduction of new political and social organizations can function as platforms or sources of power for would-be caciques, that is, for those able to exercise control over a particularly crucial resource within a certain region or sector and, in addition, to expand their control to other institutions and domains. A powerful example of the so-called 'productive' argument can be found in the work of Rus which shows how during the *Cardenista* years the national government and party, operating through Erasto Urbina in highland Chiapas, were able to drastically reform political relations within the indigenous communities and between these communities, the ladino elites and the state. State and party interests did so by imposing a new generation of bilingual *escribanos-principales* to represent the community before the state (embodied in projects such as land reform and organization of labour), but who would gradually turn their recently acquired positions of influence into powerful *cacicazgos*.[38]

The coming to fruition of the developmental state in the 1940s and 1950s generated a whole range of possibilities, as did the expansion of state economic power from the late 1960s and 1970s. The foundation of the *Comisión del Tepalcatepec* in 1948, a regional development agency headed by former president Cárdenas, would form the platform for the rise of the Toledista *cacicazgo* in the Sierra P'urhépecha as it entrusted the channelling of resources from several branches of government to particular individuals (Calderón in this volume). Building a *cacicazgo* or a political group in post-*Cardenista* Mexico necessarily involved dealing with the country's increasingly complex institutional networks of bureaucracies, para-state companies,

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37 Arthur Schmidt, 'Making it Real Compared to What? Reconceptualizing Mexican History since 1940', in G. Joseph, A. Rubenstein and E. Zolov (eds.), *Fragments of a Golden Age. The Politics of Culture in Mexico since 1940* (Durham, NC, 2001), p. 37.

38 See Jan Rus, 'The "Comunidad Revolucionaria Institucional": The Subversion of Native Government in Highland Chiapas, 1936–1968', in G. Joseph and D. Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation. Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC, 1994, pp. 265–300; see also his contribution to this volume.

party branches, trade unions and peasant organizations. This argument ties into the idea put forward by de la Peña that the institutionalization and centralization of state power in postrevolutionary Mexico led to a fragmentation of local and regional power domains to a degree that each (institutional) actor can only control part of the strategic resources. Centralization and bureaucratization therefore re-establish the need for new forms of mediation that can serve as platforms of new *cacicazgos*.[39] The penetration of state institutions often provides incentives to 'caciquize' – if I may borrow Butler's original idea – different forms of leadership and authority.

A perusal of the relationship between *caciquismo* and the state produces a differentiated and ambiguous image. Forms of cacical power have succumbed to a strengthening central state, but at the same time *caciquismo* has facilitated and conditioned state intervention. *Caciquismo* can even be a direct product of state expansion and penetration in particular regional or sectoral domains. Moreover, relationships of elimination, facilitation and production do not correspond to particular historical phases, although perhaps certain patterns can be distinguished after more systematic study. The variability of the relationship between state and *caciquismo* is also, as I have already pointed out, conditioned by particular local political, economic, cultural, social and discursive mediations.

Shifting the contours of the debate about *caciquismo* and the state does, how-ever, not only feed on new historiographies and ethnographies. It is also the outcome of the emergence of a more sophisticated theory of the state. Such a theory conceives of the state not as a coherent, articulated actor, but rather as a fragmented ensemble of institutions, procedures, rules, techniques of governance as well as symbolic enactments of authority. Moreover, such a theory opens up and broadens our understanding of the state and politics to include diverse locations of meaning and practices, where power is enacted and resisted.[40] These theoretical orientations have made serious inroads into the study of the Mexican state, power and politics, hence their relevance for our study of *caciquismo*. Inspired by the Foucauldian notion of the state as an 'institutionalized crystallization' of things that occur else-where, the boundaries between what are explicitly states or political phenomena become vague and obscure. It is one of the central arguments of *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, the influential volume edited by Joseph and Nugent, when discus-sing the relationship between popular culture and state formation as 'each connected to, as well as expressed in, the other'.[41] In reviewing the literature and his own research in Oaxaca, Rubin concludes that cultural phenomena (religion, gender, kinship, ethnicity, violence, etc.) 'are as much the shapers of power in

39 'Poder local, poder regional: perspectivas socioantropológicas', in Jorge Padua and Alain Vanneph (eds.), *Poder local, poder regional* (Mexico, 1986).
40 J. W. Rubin, 'The State as Subject', in *Political Power and Social Theory*, Vol. 15, 2002, p. 110.
41 G. M. Joseph and D. Nugent, 'Popular Culture and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico', in G.M. Joseph and D. Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, p. 22.

Mexico as the central state'.[42] In this terrain where state and society are increasingly difficult to distinguish as separate actors and where the boundaries between state/politics and culture are fluid, local cultural forms act simultaneously to challenge the directives and project of the central Mexican state and to reproduce forms of local political and cultural sovereignty in areas as land distribution, language and justice.[43] Rubin's work on Juchitán and Friedrich's work on Naranja suggest that caciques play key roles in these processes as they preside over local politics and cultures that can be at odds with those promoted by the central state. However, they can, at the same time, be imagined as instruments in the hands of the central state. The fact is that regional cacical structures should not be seen as simple obstructions to central state arrangements but as active forces that shape local people's daily experiences, define the terms of central state action and thus generate direct impacts on national politics.[44] Understanding the complex articulation of state and popular culture, the balance of centralizing and localizing political forces at a given moment in time and the amalgamation of state, politics and culture, requires fine-tuned empirical research of phenomena as *caciquismo*.[45]

Recently, Hansen and Stepputat have put forward elements for a re-conceptualization of the state that combines Gramscian and Foucauldian positions of power, government, hegemony and authority with ethnographic and historiographic research. In methodological terms, this calls for a disaggregated and decentred 'study of the state that foregrounds the local, the emic and the vernacular notions of governance, state authority and resistance to state power'.[46] Seeing the state as a dispersed set of institutional practices, technologies of governance and symbolic enactments of authority, and as an object of local appropriation and contestation, opens up multiple ethnographic sites from where to study the workings and effects of the state.[47] For that purpose they explore three dimensions of the workings of the (post-colonial) state. They argue that modern forms of the state are in a constant process of construction that takes place through the mobilization of certain discourses of governance and authority, which they call languages of 'stateness'.[48] The discourses or technical languages of governance constitute the first dimension and refer to issues of practical governance and discipline, such as territorial sovereignty, monopolization of violence, the gathering of knowledge about the population and

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42 J. W. Rubin, *Decentering the Regime. Ethnicity, Radicalism and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1997, p. 261.

43 Rubin, *Decentering the Regime*, p. 256.

44 Rubin, *Decentering the Regime*, p. 258.

45 A recent and excellent example of fine-tuned ethnographic research that brings out the complexities of the relationship between local *ejidatarios* and the state bureaucracy is Nuijten, *Power, Community and the State*.

46 T. B. Hansen and F. Stepputat, 'Introduction: States of Imagination', in T. B. Hansen and and F. Stepputat (eds.), *States of Imagination. Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State* (Durham, NC, 2001), p. 9.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 14.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–10.

the generation of resources for development and the management of the economy. In this respect one can think of the meaning of road-building and economic development projects for the reproduction of *caciquismo*.[49]

The second dimension concerns the symbolic languages of authority that help imagine the state as the authoritative centre of society *par excellence*. These include the institutionalization of legal discourse that provides the state with the prestige of neutrality and distance and the materialization of symbols and rituals (buildings, uniforms, spectacle, but also documents) and narratives about nationhood and history (schoolbooks).[50] From this theoretical perspective the state involves not only administrative and geopolitical rationalities and institutional forms, but also the mythological dimensions that produce authority. The myth of the state, cultivated by crucial stakeholders, for example in the bureaucracy, centres on its supposed coherence, centrality and image as a source of order and rationality. One way of studying these processes is the analysis of the performative and narrative aspects of particular phenomena, incidents and actors. Hansen's original analysis of the workings and meanings of reconciliation between Muslims and Hindus in Mumbai after serious and violent riots had ocurred in the early 1990s shows that the meaning of reconciliation platforms goes beyond mere technical and legal aspects of governance. He looks at these platforms as 'state spectacles' or performances that aim to reassert the myth of the state as the locus of higher forms of rationality and justice.[51] A comparable perspective can be found in Nuijten's analysis of the culture of the Mexican state and the ways it is constituted in the interactions between local peasants and officials of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform. Her examination of the symbolism and imagination of the everyday interactions between *ejidatarios* and state bureaucracies shows that the culture of the Mexican state is characterized by an 'atmosphere of opacity, distrust, and conspiracy', which is related to the idea of the state as an effective centre of control and power.[52] In direct connection to *caciquismo*, Pieter de Vries demonstrates how particular forms of behaviour and talk continuously construct the myth of the state as the fundamental centre of power, that in its turn requires particular political operators who can unlock the 'magical state' (this volume). Further research in this direction promises to expand our understanding of the features of *caciquismo* and its relations to the state.

Hansen and Stepputat's third dimension of the working of the state highlights how languages and practices of stateness emerge from localized political struggles, contestation and resistance. It is here that the relationships between the state and its supposed opposites (such as community and society) are analyzed. Hansen and Stepputat explicitly understand these relationships as the outcome of specific

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49 See, for example, K. Brewster, *Militarism, Ethnicity, and Politics in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, 1917–1930* (Tucson, 2003), esp. pp. 141–51 on roads. See also Calderón this volume.

50 Hansen and Stepputat, *States of Imagination*, pp. 7–8.

51 T. Hansen, 'Governance and State Mythologies in Mumbai', in Hansen and Stepputat, *States of Imagination*, pp. 221–254.

52 Nuijten, *Power, Community and the State*, p. 17.

historical and discursive processes.[53] For that purpose they study how state-centred representations work to incorporate communities, such as the ones studied by Boyer, who shows how the state-sanctioned identity of *campesinos* tied a particular social group to the state through local *cacicazgos*. In her study of the politics of schooling in the 1930s, Vaughan has demonstrated that the social and cultural project of the postrevolutionary period should, above all, be seen as a process of negotiation between central state, regional and local actors about the meanings of nation and community, citizenship and modernity. In this manner a shared language for consent and dissent was forged, one that was not imposed by the central state elites, but 'mutually constructed through negotiation between a fledgling, fragmented state and a highly mobilized, fragmented society'.[54] By reworking and appropriating the technical languages and projects of governance and development as well as the symbolic languages of authority, popular demands and meanings became incorporated in Mexico's postrevolutionary language of stateness, making it 'more inclusive, more democratic, and more multicultural'.[55] The exploration of the institutional, political and cultural aspects of localizing and contesting the languages of stateness in Mexico and Latin America, will inevitably encounter the figure of the cacique. After all, he is a key figure in what Chatterjee has called 'political society', that is, the space of negotiations and mediations between the developmental state and the vast majority of the population'.[56]

In sum, a more sophisticated theory of the state and state–society relations, as well as a broader understanding of the state and politics has a number of consequences for future studies of *caciquismo*. First, the emphasis on the symbolic languages of authority and stateness opens up an area of research that looks at the 'styles' of *caciquismo* and the role of caciques in the imagination and symbolization of (state) power in Mexico. This line of research can build on existing work about the political meaning of cultural performances, such as that of Lomnitz who examined Gonzalo Santos's politics of self-representation and his mobilization of Huastecan regional culture as a way of confronting potosino highland and national

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53 Although he does not use the language of postcolonial studies, Jonathan Fox had focused on the diversity and contradictory relations between different actors within state institutions some time ago. His analysis of the relationships of poor indigenous groups to the state identified at least three *de facto* situations: authoritarian elites that hold on to traditional forms of clientelism, moderate state reformers who engage in semi-clientelist power relations with subordinate groups, and pluralistic or democratic enclaves with government officials who respect and promote grassroots autonomy and citizen rights. The outcomes of such conflictual interactions are socially, regionally and historically diverse. See 'The Difficult Transition from Clientelism to Citizenship. Lessons from Mexico', in *World Politics*, Vol. 46, no. 2, 1994, pp. 151–84.

54 M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution. Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (Tucson, 1997), p. 196.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

56 Quoted in Hansen and Stepputat, *States of Imagination*, p. 28.

elites.[57] In this volume, de Vries develops this line of research by focusing on the performance of a small-town cacique, his partying, story-telling, machismo and alcohol consumption. A performative aproach to the cacique reveals how he is implicated in the imagination and reproduction of a particular regime of power.

Second, the extension of our understanding of what constitutes the state and politics, much along the lines of Rubin's work, links *caciquismo* to a wide range of issues such as gender, religion, identity and morality. While Lomnitz notes the 'manipulative mix of intimate cultures for the construction of regional leadership', Rubin wants to understand the political function of cultural practices beyond direct and conscious instrumentality.[58] A post-structuralist extension of the notion of the state can gain a lot from Rubin's idea of 'seeing and not-seeing' the state: 'This means acknowledging the existence, force, and cohesiveness of states and subjects, while simultaneously recognizing something else at play in them as well, the mixture of fragments and pieces – with their own histories – out of which states or subjects are constituted … It enables us to examine how states or subjects are constructed out of other phenomena and therefore what multiple forces constitute and crosscut them'.[59] Similarly, if cacique politics is caught up in local conceptions of the world and plays a key role in reproducing community life and identities, its (hidden) meaning will reach beyond political brokerage and economic domination.[60] Moreover, if state formation, as Nugent and Alonso argue, refers to processes 'through which the identities of subjects of the state are constructed via media or moral regulation, quotidian administration, and ritual, as well as through manifest, concrete oppression', then the study of *caciquismo* needs to move beyond mechanisms of political intermediation and violence.[61]

Finally, this theoretical perspective leaves behind the idea of clear-cut encounters between 'the state' and (local) 'community' or 'society', either in the form of the state that steamrolls society, or in the form of community isolationism, or as rivalry between clearly identifiable actors. Instead, it permits the study of the ambiguities and multifacetedness characteristic of the interactions between state and non-state actors. Such a perspective can account more satisfactorily for several of the findings in this volume, namely that caciques continue to play key roles in this field and, more importantly, that their function and performance is deeply ambivalent and cannot be reduced to previously used models.[62]

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57 C. Lomnitz, *Exits from the Labyrinth. Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley, 1992), p. 302.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 303.

59 Rubin, 'The State as Subject', 109.

60 Rubin, *Decentering the Regime*, p. 256.

61 D. Nugent and A. M. Alonso, 'Multiple Selective Traditions in Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Struggle: Popular Culture and State Formation in the *Ejido* of Namiquipa, Chihuahua', in Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms*, pp. 210–11.

62 See, for example, Brewster who concludes his extensive study of the Barrios *cacicazgo* in Puebla by stating that he portrayed a cacique 'who was neither one thing nor another, a semi-

The dynamics of *caciquismo* and *cacicazgos*

Since the publication of *Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution* in 1982, which concentrated on the period from the late nineteenth century until the 1930s, there has been no systematic effort to examine comparatively the transformation of *caciquismo* over time. By widening the temporal scope to cover the entire twentieth century this volume has been able to raise key questions about the effects of social, economic, political and cultural transformation on the nature and role of *caciquismo*. By expanding the study beyond the rural sector this volume has also raised questions about the possibilities and limitations of the horizontal migration of the concept of *caciquismo* towards societal domains, actors, organizations and institutions that hitherto had rarely been investigated in these terms. Moreover, the analysis of the dynamics of *caciquismo* in recent years is necessarily framed by contemporary debates about democratization, citizenship and changing state–society relations. The great bulk of these debates has concentrated on 'formal' political processes, institutions and elections. Many studies fall short on the critical sociocultural and political rules and practices that inform behaviour and practices, epitomized by phenomena such as *caciquismo*, and, by extension, clientelism and patrimonialism. This generates a number of questions about the possible connections between *caciquismo*, changes in civil society, democratization, transition and alternation in government.

   The contributions to this volume deal with dissimilar time frames, social actors and societal sectors and they adopt a variety of conceptual perspectives. Nevertheless, taken together they produce sufficient insights into the wider dynamics of *caciquismo*. To organize them I suggest an initial and analytical distinction between *caciquismo* and *cacicazgos*. This distinction is a matter of scale but also of qualitatively different questions. Both dynamics frequently, though not necessarily, interlock, hence the distinction should not be reified. The focus on *cacicazgos* draws attention primarily to the *internal* dynamics of specific cacical power systems and asks if general points can be made about processes inside *cacicazgos*. In my own contribution to this volume about the contemporary Mexican university, I proposed the breakdown of the dynamics of *cacicazgos* in three ideal-typical phases. The key argument here is that the constitution of *cacicazgos* hinges on the capabilities of would-be caciques to extend the sphere of influence beyond their original domains, something that is confirmed by the findings of other contributions in this volume. Boyer speaks of the 'winner-takes-all' dynamic of agrarian *cacicazgos* and Maldonado uses the concept of territorialization to describe the processes by which union caciques penetrate new domains in urban Mexico. Fernández recounts the

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autonomous military leader who periodically lost political control of the area he commanded'. In similar terms he concludes that 'successive federal administrations were never quite sure how much they could control Barrios and were consistently hesitant in trying to establish a direct relationship with the region's indigenous communities', *Militarism, Ethnicity and Politics*, p. 165.

spectacular case of the transformation of Heliodoro Hernández Loza from a powerful leader of a union of taxi and bus drivers and mechanics into a leading businessman in urban transport and even into the Secretary of Transport of the state of Jalisco, a process in which different domains, interests and networks increasingly centred on the cacique.[63] The dynamics of particular *cacicazgos* are shaped to a large extent by *local* political disputes and negotiations, and economic changes, that are not duplicates of broader shifts in Mexican society. Nevertheless, the building and eventual demise of *cacicazgos* are also connected to wider processes of societal change.

This brings me to the transformation of *caciquismo* as a generic phenomenon and its *external* dynamics. A structural perspective on *caciquismo* raises questions about the functions of *caciquismo* and the prospects for the reproduction of personalized mediation and requires situating it in wider shifts in the economy, state, politics and communication. In his much-acclaimed study of class and ethnic conflict in the Huasteca of Hidalgo, Schryer analyzed the *ranchero cacicazgo* of Juvencio Nochebuena that lasted from the 1930s until the late 1950s.[64] Schryer's account of the history of Nochebuena's power can be seen as paradigmatic for the interpretation of *caciquismo* during that crucial period. With the Cardenista reforms, Nochebuena established himself as the chief intermediary between local *ranchero* elites, peasants and the federal state. With firm roots in regional *ranchero* society, Nochebuena also learned to operate in the newly emerging bureaucratic order of the postrevolutionary state. Before 1940 the strategic importance of this type of caciques lay especially in their ability to mobilize and control their armed retainers, but the centralization and consolidation of state power meant that their position came to depend more on connections with and knowledge of new state institutions and their local agents. Schryer concludes that Nochebuena's eventual downfall was the result of the profound structural transformation of the economy and the political system, the effects of which were strongly felt in the Huasteca because of Nochebuena's own efforts to integrate the region into the national economic system. Informed by a rather functionalist Marxist approach Schryer assumed that 'with the rapid expansion of modern capitalism, the Mexican state no longer needed to rely on regional caciques for its survival…'[65]

The theory of the exhaustion of the intermediary function and the values and practices associated with *ranchero* elites in the face of a strengthened state and a modernizing economic system has frequently led to the suggestion that *caciquismo* will eventually disappear from the Mexican political landscape. To a certain extent this theory is endorsed by several contributions to this volume. Keith Brewster states that Gabriel Barrios' *cacicazgo* came to end because the combined forces of

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63 See also Laura Patricia Romero, 'La conformación del caciquismo sindical en Jalisco. El caso de Heliodoro Hernández Loza', in Carlos Martínez Assad (ed.), *Estadistas, caciques y caudillos* Mexico, 1988), pp. 293–311.

64 Francis J. Schryer, *Ethnicity and Class Conflict in Rural Mexico* (Princeton, 1990).

65 *Ibid.*, p. 150.

the regional authorities in Puebla and those in Mexico City could establish a direct and organized presence in the Sierra. Again, Barrios himself had contributed to this by promoting the incorporation of his power domain into broader politico-economic systems. Rogelio Hernández also argues that when structural conditions change and the intermediary function vanishes, *caciquismo* will eventually disappear, but he does not relate this explicitly to the changing shape of Mexican capitalism. For him the crucial factor is the relative openness or closure of domains in which would-be caciques operate.

Although the relationship between the combined effects of political centralization and economic transformation on the one hand and the decline of *caciquismo* is valid for a number of historical cases, this volume has shown that despite the further reinforcement of the former, *caciquismo* has persisted. It has developed in the heart of urban-industrial capitalism and in universities, not so much in opposition to a relatively strong state, but rather in juxtaposition to it. The causality implicit in the modernization and centralization hypothesis is thus flawed. So what can we say about the dynamics and transformation of *caciquismo*? The studies in this volume suggest novel ways of looking at this intriguing question. Instead of linking the reproduction of *caciquismo* to a (relatively) weak or strong state per se, to the development of capitalism or, for that matter, to the institutional density of civil society, this volume contains arguments that explain the dynamics of *caciquismo* by looking at particular historical conjunctures in politics, economy and society.

It is my contention that the reproduction of *caciquismo* strongly relates to the (sudden) occurrence of different forms and conjunctures of disorder and insecurity. 'What do the caciques want?' a character in *La sSilla del Águila* rhetorically asks, and '*pescar en río revuelto*' is the answer.[66] I suggest that some combination of political and socio-economic disorder and conflict is very relevant in this context, but a crisis of cultural and moral repertoires or a confusion about cultural values and orientations is of equal importance and will often come together with the former. This should not be read in structural terms, since situations of disorder will not automatically produce *cacicazgos*. Such situations provide the raw material with which future *cacicazgos* can be put together. Only if particular actors are able to capitalize on them (think of Friedrich's *libido dominandi*), the raw material can be transformed into a full-blown *cacicazgo*, that is, the successful articulation of different power domains by a cacique. The association proposed here between disorder/insecurity and *caciquismo* should not be read in structural terms in another sense as well: *caciquismo* is not constantly related to disorder and insecurity. On the contrary, the emergence of a particular cacical power system results in the creation of new order and stability, at least during the first phases of a *cacicazgo*. In other words, *cacicazgos* will often persist when the original sources of disorder and insecurity have disappeared. In sum, broad conjunctures of disorder, instability, insecurity and conflict – some sources of which I will analyze below – provide the

66 Fuentes, *La Silla*, p. 148.

structural conditions for the reproduction of *caciquismo*, that can, but not necessarily will, be effectively exploited by agents with the purpose of laying the foundations for a *cacicazgo*, thereby setting off the specific dynamics of *cacicazgos* mentioned earlier (articulation, stabilization and disintegration). In this manner, the broad (external) dynamics of *caciquismo* tie into the particular (internal) dynamics of *cacicazgos*.

In the course of these processes (would-be) caciques act upon particular cultural repertoires and practices, styles, memories and histories, which provide their actions and ambitions with an amount of legitimacy. Gonzalo Santos' employment of the symbols and practices of aggressive *ranchero* leadership were effective because they were rooted in regional cultural and political memories of earlier cacical experiences. While ambitious political leaders or bosses struggle to make the most of the political spaces that open up in critical conjunctures of disorder and instability, their social and political environment will most likely endorse their efforts, especially if they provide some kind of 'solution' to the causes of disorder and instability.[67] *Cacicazgos* thus frequently emerge from conditions of disorder and insecurity, since the latter create the 'need' for the 'coordination' and the rearticulation/reordering of political and social spaces. This often takes the form of rallying behind a (new) strongman. The establishment of a new 'centre of gravity' able to regulate the political process in a more orderly manner and put an end to instability and perhaps violence (or at least the promise of doing so), is functional for the more mundane aspects of governance as well as for the symbolic dimensions of authority. The re-establishment of a symbolic centre of authority around an emerging strongman, who is able to re-imagine the state as a reliable and essential source of power and resources, is perhaps even a prerequisite for the construction of an institutional, political and economic centre of gravity.

In this volume Zárate explains the remarkable continuity of *caciquismo* by regarding it as a structuring power able to construct forms of social organization that provide solutions for these tasks. The García Barragán *cacicazgo* in coastal Jalisco clearly 'simplified politics'. These social forms may contradict certain aspects of the formal system of governance, but they also provide a foundation for it. *Caciquismo* and the practices of vertical reciprocity and intermediation continue to play a fundamental role in establishing and maintaining order and social cohesion, against the background of the de-structuring effects of the recent policies of the Mexican state and international agencies.

If rallying behind strong leaders has often laid the foundations for subsequent *cacicazgos*, questions surface about the forces that lay behind such conjunctures. The case studies in this volume suggest a few general sources of disorder and insecurity.

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67 A recent UNDP study of the state of democracy in present day Latin America seems relevant in this respect. It shows almost 55 per cent of Latin American citizens would support an authoritarian government if it would resolve economic crisis and disorder. The sample for the study consisted of almost 19,000 people in 18 countries. UNDP, *La democracia en América Latina. Hacia una democracia de ciudadanas y ciudadanos*, *www.undp.org*, 2004, p. 137.

The first, and in the Mexican case most most obvious (and most thoroughly researched), is that of (post)revolutionary disorder and instability. Brewster notes that the *serranos* did not rally behind Gabriel Barrios because of land, *serrano* desires for autonomy or political ideology. Their main source of anxiety was the disorder caused by bandits and rebels. They supported Barrios because he could stand up against the source of disorder and restore stability, law and order, so that the *serranos* could conduct their daily activities without fear of violence. During the same period, the violence and instability caused by the *Cristero* revolt were responsible for the emergence of God's caciques in Michoacán (Butler).

A second source of disorder and instability can be associated with the sweeping processes of urbanization and industrialization that turned rural Mexico upside down from the 1940s onwards. The intensity and speed with which this occurred created the fragmentation of previously existing power structures. Moreover, it generated new anxieties and insecurities and hence conflicts, especially among the urban poor as earlier social, cultural and political mechanisms of solidarity and contestation became less effective. This provided sufficient space for political entrepreneurs to re-articulate the shifting and unstable terrain around (prospective) caciques. The contributions from Maldonado, Fernández and Zárate to this volume contain examples of how successful political entrepreneurs were able to build long lasting *cacicazgos* on the basis of the insecurities of the urban (working) poor.

A third and more recent source of disorder relates to the complex whole of neo-liberal reforms of the economy, the state and state-society relations. On the one hand there is Mexico's extreme social polarization that has been the result of the economic policies from the last twenty years, and especially of the periodic crisis brought about by them. Increasing poverty, informality and polarization constitute a breeding ground for determined leaders to 'caciquize' the daily insecurities of the poor. Moreover, in these contexts governments are obliged to negotiate social order and public peace with local caciques. The case of informal street vending in Morelia provides a remarkably strong example of this kind of *politización caciquista* of urban hardship (Zárate in this volume).[68] On the other hand, the neo-liberal restructuring of the state has generated tremendous tensions on existing administrative and institutional arrangements. A case in point is that of higher education, where the adoption of neoliberal reforms drastically affected the financial and political situation of public universities. As my own contribution to this volume has demonstrated, this brought about a crisis in the model that governed state-university relations for decades. In one of the country's largest public universities, this crisis combined with fierce factional disputes and generated extreme administrative, political and financial disorder, that in its turn prompted the construction of a powerful institutional *cacicazgo* during the 1990s.

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68 In his study of street vendors in Mexico City, Cross is more reluctant to employ the concept of *caciquismo*, though he speaks of the authoritarian nature of street vendor organizations. See J. C. Cross, *Informal Politics. Street Vendors and the State in Mexico City* (Stanford, 1998).

In addition, the dismantling of the Mexican developmental state has created a vacuum in political and economic intermediation.[69] Deregulation, such as in the case of the dismantling of the massive purchasing and marketing network of the Mexican Coffee Institute (INMECAFE), vacates institutionalized policy domains and thus creates opportunities for ambitious political leaders and economic interest groups to reconstruct coffee-based *cacicazgos*. Deregulation ushers in new forms of insecurity and disorder as rivaling groups attempt to dominate the institutional, political and economic space left open by the withdrawal of the federal agency. Moreover, these reforms coincided with escalating political instability across Mexico.[70]

The key issue in what Snyder has called the 'politics of reregulation' involved whether oligarchic groups and local caciques or peasant-owned cooperatives emerged as the dominant actors in coffee production and distribution. In a fascinating comparative study of these processes in Mexico's four leading coffee producing states, Snyder demonstrates that the outcomes are the result of the complex interplay between initial reregulation projects put forward by state government elites, the response of small-producer organizations and their organizational strength. Whereas Oaxaca saw the emergence of a participatory policy framework that enhanced the efficiency and quality of smallholder production, Puebla's weak producer movement together with the attempt by regional authorities to politically exploit the federal policies of deregulation and decentralization set the stage for an exclusionary policy frame that strengthened 'local authoritarian elites' and *cacicazgos*.[71] The divergent pathways followed by Oaxaca and Puebla, as well as by Chiapas and Guerrero, underscore the argument made previously that the condition of disorder and insecurity itself is insufficient to account for the reproduction or resurgence of *caciquismo*. This will depend on a combination of factors of political economy, political relations, popular organizations, ideological orientations and political-cultural traditions. These arguments fit a more general argument in the study of Latin American politics in the sense that socio-economic polarization and institutional devastation brought about by neoliberal reform and the spread of new forms of violence have all led to widespread feelings of fragmentation and insecurity, that are increasingly mediated politically by national strongmen, or level-one caciques, to use Alan Knight's terminology.[72]

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69 Sergio Zermeño, 'Crisis, Neoliberalism and Disorder', in J. Foweraker and A. L. Craig (eds.), *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico* (Boulder/London, 1990), pp. 160–80, is highly relevant in this respect. In it Zermeño attempts to explain the emergence of neo-*cardenismo* from this perspective. In another study Zermeño links this interpretation to the Chiapas uprising, see his 'Society and Politics in Contemporary Mexico (Modernization and Modernityin Global Societies)' in W. G. Pansters (ed.), *Citizens of the Pyramid. Essays on Mexican Political Culture* (Amsterdam, 1997), pp. 183–208.

70 The case of the deregulation of Mexico's coffee sector is excellently analyzed by R. Snyder, *Politics after Neoliberalism. Reregulation in Mexico* (Cambridge, 2001).

71 Snyder, *Politics after Neoliberalism*, pp. 45, 191.

72 See also UNDP, *La democracia en América Latina*; and Knight, this volume.

The final source is perhaps the most controversial and undoubtedly the least researched. It refers to the difficult birth of multiparty democracy and government alternation. The process of democratization is often seen as antithetical to the reproduction of *caciquismo*. This is easy to understand since the cacique distorts the principle of political equality and stands in the way of publicly accountable, legally transparent, and formal forms of mediation between society and the government.[73] Some commentators argue that *caciquismo* in twentieth-century Mexico was intimately related to the near monopolistic power exercized by the PRI during its seventy years long reign. With the historic defeat of the PRI, Lorenzo Meyer writes, this 'fundamental base of political support' for the caciques has been lost and there is thus a huge opportunity for the 'definitive decadence' of the phenomenon.[74] But Meyer is also cautious and notes that in the short run the PRI might look for political shelter in union and regional *cacicazgos*. The reproduction of *caciquismo*, however, cannot be reduced to a question of strategy. The political fragmentation, polarization and confrontations that characterized the 1990s created a great deal of uncertainty and thus incentives for the transformation of certain organizational leaderships into *cacicazgos*. The generalization of 'democratic party pluralism' has provided a propitious terrain for local *cacicazgos* to accommodate themselves, e.g. after being ousted from the PRI.[75] The insecurities about electoral outcomes, shifting party alliances, the formation of new parties and an increasingly large floating electorate have fuelled the anxieties of political entrepreneurs and increased the political and economic risks of 'political investments'. At a more systemic level, it has been argued that an important recent source of instability and uncertainty is the fact that Mexico's electoral and party systems (still?) possess insufficient strength to replace the dysfunctional traditional representational and mediating mechanisms, such as those associated with corporatism. The electoral arena has become a channel of protest and a source of pressure and instability, as much as a platform for political and programmatic options.[76] In other parts of the world the introduction of democratic politics has generated new forms of ethnic and tribal conflict and instability as political leaders mobilize these identities for electoral purposes. Although it is much too early to make a conclusive assessment of the consequences of the current processes of democratization and alternation in Mexico, there are at least signs that some of them could be rather 'perverse'. The adjectives that have

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73 Although this is not the place to investigate theoretically the relationship between democracy and *caciquismo*, a quick glance at Robert Dahl's fundamental criteria for democracy and democratic institutions suggests that they would be incompatible. See *On democracy* (New Haven and London, 2000), pp. 37–8; 85–6.

74 'Los caciques: ayer, hoy ¿y mañana?', in *Letras Libres*, December 2000, p. 40.

75 Marco Calderón M. and Martín Sánchez R., 'Cambio social y transformaciones políticas en Jacona, Michoacán (una propuesta de esquema, 1920–1990)', in *Relaciones. Estudios de Historia y Sociedad*, no. 61/62, 1995, pp. 13–30.

76 Rogelio Hernández, 'La difícil transición política en México', in *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, Vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 237–57.

accompanied the notions of democracy and transition in Mexico have been so numerous, that the latter should perhaps be added.[77] In the mind of the fictitious future Secretary of the Interior in Carlos Fuentes's recent novel there is no doubt: '*… donde hemos dado democracia hemos perdido autoridad, hemos creado huecos de anarquía que llenan, propiciados, los eternos caciques y sus "fuerzas vivas" …*'[78]

Pathways for new research

In the preceding pages I have made an effort to draw some general conclusions from the contributions to this volume by looking at several critical debates that surround the concept of *caciquismo*. I identified several ideas and interpretations that go beyond previous work on the subject. I was also able to ascertain pathways that will push the debate about *caciquismo* in novel directions.

My brief analysis of the history of theorizing about *caciquismo* and several points put forward in this volume has suggested moving the terms of debate further than the dual track of *caciquismo* as a structural mechanism and/or a particular set of practices of leadership and concentrate also on the performative and discursive dimensions of the phenomenon. Contemporary theorizing on the state and power has argued for a notion of the state as a fragmented ensemble of institutions and practices, firmly rooted in and mediated by (civil) society and popular culture, and broadened the meaning of power and politics. This has opened up new territories for the study of *caciquismo*. How can the role of a cacique be theorized if the relations between state, society and popular groups is increasingly framed in terms of ambiguous, multifaceted and contested interactions? What are the consequences for our understanding of the nature and role and *caciquismo* if we link notions of power and the state to those of morality, gender and religion? What role do caciques play in the construction, reproduction and contestation of the symbolic languages of authority and stateness?

Previously common distinctions and oppositions, such as that between traditional and modern, or autonomous and integrated forms of *caciquismo* have been criticized and replaced by more sophisticated and differentiated interpretations of (hybrid) *caciquismo*. A rethinking of the classic notion of the territoriality of *caciquismo* has opened up pathways to explore the development of compartmentalized and de-territorialized control of institutional and bureaucratic spaces as a

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77 For an analysis of the nature and the qualifications of the Mexican transition see Wil Pansters, 'The Transition under Fire: Rethinking Contemporary Mexican Politics', in K. Koonings and D. Kruijt (eds.), *Societies of Fear. The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America* (London and New York, 1999), esp. pp. 242–55. The idea of the 'adjectives' of Mexican democracy was elaborated in Enrique Krauze's well-known essay, *Por una democracia sin adjetivos* (Mexico, 1986). For a recent return to this topic see Enrique Krauze, 'Por una democracia responsable', in *Letras Libres*, June 2003, pp. 12–15.

78 Fuentes, *La Silla del Águila* (Mexico, 2003), p. 43.

source of cacical power in highly complex social contexts, as well as the concomitant tendency of political and symbolic re-territorialization.

My analysis of the relationships between state and *caciquismo* in terms of the elimination, facilitation and production arguments creates possibilities for the development of a more differentiated and subtle theory and raises all kinds of new research questions. How can the relative importance of elimination, facilitation and production at a certain moment in time be assessed? Can certain patterns be distinguished and how can they be explained? If the causal relationship between a strengthening state and a declining *caciquismo* is justly questioned, how does the unquestionably increased muscle of the state then flex itself in different times and spaces? In similar terms, I demonstrated that the theory that claims a link between socio-economic modernization and the decline of the cacique cannot be maintained in general terms. This led me to explore novel ways of looking at the dynamics of *caciquismo* in terms of conjunctures and sources of disorder and insecurity. Again, this produces all kinds of fresh research questions. For example, the hypothesis of the relationship between *caciquismo* and disorder would greatly benefit from research that looks at a counter-factual process whereby a group or individual does not manage to build a *cacicazgo*, despite conscious efforts thereto and propitious original conditions of disorder and insecurity.

While the ethnographic cases in this volume imply that it would be premature to wave goodbye to caciques, the theoretical reflections that emerge from this volume leave no doubt that the study of *caciquismo* will be with us for some time yet.