muddled when translated into the electrical diagram style. Furthermore, Claire Dobbin explains that Beck was especially skilled at this type of diagram, as others failed to provide a useful transport map through the schematic style alone, offering neither clarity nor usefulness. Beck’s story of the diagram for the London tube explains just how difficult it is to design a simple yet useful map. The map’s adaptability, versatility, and its appropriateness for the London Underground endure as a testament to Harry Beck’s skill.

In the final chapter of her book, Dobbin comments on the legacy of the long tradition of high-style design for the London Underground Maps. This chapter explains how the London Underground has become a brand, marketable through clothes, pocket guides, postcards, and publications. Unfortunately, this short and final chapter lacks the coherence and nostalgic punch that the preceding Beck chapter had and dithers across a survey of the various art and maps of recent years produced by London Transport, and the current agency Transport for London. However, overall Dobbin’s book smartly focuses on a presentation of the beautiful maps, artworks, and posters themselves, and this chapter is no exception.

The stories that Dobbin presents in London Underground Maps provide a resource for public transport systems all over the world. Los Angeles’ fairly new system uses similar marketing and graphic identity methods, including buses painted in bright colours, diagrammatic maps, and cartoon advertisements. Similar campaigns can be seen in growing public transport systems all over the world, including those of Hong Kong and Japan, which are highly successful. London Underground Maps shows that in London, city with the oldest and one of the busiest underground system in the world, the map itself became an iconic symbol of its citizens’ ownership of and pride in their city.

Brian Garcia  
University College London  
brian.garcia.09@ucl.ac.uk  
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La modernización entre cafetales. San José, Costa Rica, 1880–1930, by Florencia Quesada Avendaño, San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2011, 273 pp., US$20 (paperback)

How and why did the modernization process of San José start? This is the main issue dealt with by historian Florencia Quesada in this persuasive study that examines the material and cultural transformations of the city as well as the ideological context of urban representations and modern aesthetics. It is a critical interpretation of the process of change and renewal that this small, peripheral Central American city experienced at the turn of the twentieth century.

Quesada’s book is a convincing contribution to Latin American history. As she points out, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are a key period for the political centralization of Costa Rica in which the San José bourgeoisie expressed moral and social values through the renewal and control of urban spaces. Quesada’s study outlines some of the processes involved
in the urban agendas taken from neighbouring cities, such as Guatemala City or Havanna, and even more distant places such as Lima, Montevideo and Buenos Aires, and puts them in the context of the formation of the nation-state.

A second contribution is related to the particular focus of the work. Quesada references Henri Lefebvre, who conceives the city as a space that is produced by relations between people and not objects. Against this background, Quesada’s study portrays the capital as the scenario for the development of the nation-state and as a civilizing project, both phenomena that are well known in the context of Latin America. In this way, her work also contributes to an understanding of the ways how local and national governments actively participated in the transition from a colonial to a republican city.

Quesada’s study is based on a variety of sources. These include printed material, official documents from local and foreign archives, and visual and literary records from locals and travellers. The author subjects these materials to a rigorous analysis, which results in a critical interpretation of the processes under review.

The first chapter, *Background*, is a rigorous historical review of the origins in San José, and its transition from a colonial village to the republican capital. Quesada shows the development under the Bourbon Reforms in the late eighteenth century, and how during the nineteenth century San José took the first steps towards modernization. Public buildings and infrastructure were constructed at a time when coffee still constituted the basis of the local economy.

Sanitation played a central role in driving urban transformations. This is analysed in the third chapter, titled *Sanitation*, which focuses on this dimension of urban modernization. Just as in other Latin American cities, the networking of sanitation professionals led to regulations, institutions and ways of organization that aimed at controlling the urban space in the name of sanitation and public health.

In the fourth chapter, *Transformations*, the author analyses the creation of parks, boulevards and public monuments, not only as responses to the demands for sanitation, but also as social spaces that express local power relations. The location of such spaces within the city relates them to a certain hierarchy. Quesada understands these spaces as parts of a discursive debate that evidences the tensions between modernity and tradition, elites and lower classes, and centre and periphery.

While the first four chapters refer to the significance of urban transformations, the last two chapters focus on the representation and imaginaries of the city in the context of these changes. Chapter five, *Foreign and Local Imaginaries*, concentrates on the reading of the city by European and North American travellers. The chapter is on the one hand based on travellers’ descriptions and on the other hand on official guides, directories and other local sources. Both highlight the value of the landscape in which the Costa Rican capital is located. The narratives also point to the city’s colonial aspect that is mixed with modern buildings, new public services, eclectic architecture, green spaces and highly vital commerce.

The sixth chapter is titled *Photographic Imaginaries* and utilizes photography as an instrument that feeds into the discourse on urban progress and civilization. Photos are examined as construing a national urban imaginary that promotes values such as order and progress. The images tend to focus on the bourgeois city and conspicuously leave out the poor neighbourhoods. Thus, they strengthen the liberal, modernizing discourse of the late nineteenth century.

To sum up, this is a rigorous study, situated within a framework of contemporary historiography, which presents the city as a subject that can only be understood in its specific material, spatial and temporal context. It shows how the physical, social and symbolic
implications of San José’s modernization among coffee plantations came to define form and challenges of the contemporary city.

Macarena Ibarra

Pontificia Universidad Católica, Santiago de Chile

mibarraa@uc.cl

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Poverty in common: the politics of community action during the American century, by Alyosha Goldstein, Durham, Duke University Press, 2012, 392 pp., US$26.95 (paperback)

Alyosha Goldstein’s Poverty in Common examines the layers of ideology surrounding poverty in the mid- to late twentieth century US by addressing the interactions between the deployment of liberal policy and community action. Goldstein argues that doctrines for international development in the 30 years following World War II were based on both a faith in the transformative power of economic growth and democracy, as well as anxieties about anti-colonial insurrections and socialist revolutions abroad. Furthermore, domestic policy was intrinsically tied to these Cold War ideologies. Just as the US attempted to ‘win the hearts and minds’ of the third world, it implemented War on Poverty programmes to ‘make less volatile the world of the domestic poor’ (5). War on Poverty programmes and policies ultimately aimed to imbue poor communities with the values of democracy and capitalism using an ideology of ‘self-help’ which normalized and encouraged qualities of ‘possessive individualism’. Essentially, policymakers hoped to encourage a drive for change to come from within poor communities themselves. Great Society programmes made use of the concepts of ‘poverty’ and ‘community’ in order to advance larger goals of liberal hegemony by making these terms arenas for state intervention.

Critical to Goldstein’s study is the tension between the trope of ‘self-help’ and the more slippery concept of ‘self-determination’. Self-determination, like self-help, was characterized by notions of independence, but also served as an ‘acknowledgement of the broader field of relations of power’ (22). In addition, self-determination carried more far-reaching implications when it was used by groups purposefully intervening in the continuation of larger colonial projects, such as American Indian nations, Puerto Rican nationalists, and social movements concerned with recognizing histories of oppression and subjugation. Throughout Poverty in Common, Goldstein examines how particular groups of poor people utilized and responded to liberal policy strategies designed to incorporate their communities into a normative framework, framing poverty as a problem the US government could solve. While the aim was to build a sense of dignity through engagement with federal policies, understandably, poor peoples’ expectations, political goals, and community needs did not always produce a ‘constituency’ designed to participate in the existing economic and political system. However, self-determination, a concept at odds with the sentiment behind War on Poverty programmes, was potentially advanced by activists who capitalized on the rhetoric and resources of federal programmes.