

According to Professor Vélez, the central animating principle of Mexicana/o ROSCAs is *confianza*, an ethic of mutual trust founded in co-presence. So important is *confianza* that participants are sometimes willing to participate in rotating credit associations at a small loss for its sake. ROSCAs are not incompatible with capitalism, as the automobile example and examples of associations organized in workplaces by supervisors illustrate. In Professor Vélez's opinion, however, they do represent a way of organizing economic life dominated not by individualism, competition, and the commodity but by an ethic of cooperation and reciprocity. Neither a full-fledged resistance movement nor a simple acquiescence to the dominant social orders of Mexico and the United States, ROSCAs represent, in the author's view, a "slantwise" practice that fits poorly into the domination/resistance opposition.

Mindful of the problems with development projects that seek to end poverty through microcredit, Professor Vélez is quick to dismiss speculation that rotating credit could be a panacea or a clear threat to the established economic order. He does, however, note examples in which ROSCA participants have enjoyed social mobility as a result of their financial dealings. In one particularly striking case, a woman he calls Paloma arouses the suspicions of U.S. authorities and ends up being accused of money laundering by a law enforcement system that simply does not understand how a poor Mexican immigrant could raise \$75,000 for a deposit on a trailer. It is clear from the range of associations surveyed, of course, that ROSCAs are important not only to the lives of the economically marginalized but also to professional and even elite sectors.

Overall, *An Impossible Living* is a solid empirical study that speaks to broader theoretical concerns in social anthropology without lapsing into pedantic jargon or confessional navel-gazing. It will likely replace Prof. Vélez's earlier study as a fixture of undergraduate and graduate syllabi in economic anthropology and the social study of migration and development. Furthermore, it will certainly maintain its author's prominence in an area of study that the first book helped to start.

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Environmental Social Sciences: Methods and Research Design. *Ismael Vaccaro, Eric Alden Smith, and Shankar Aswani*, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 382 pp. \$48.00, paper.

This volume "offer[s] researchers and students an array of analytical approaches and associated methods that are available to study different social dimensions of environmental issues" (p. 4). While the editors of this volume are anthropologists, the articles are written by a mixture of anthropologists, geographers, political scientists, and sociologists from a range of junior to senior scholars. The multiple perspectives provided through the use of an interdisciplinary and mixed-method approach to environmental research presented in this volume results in a collection that should be read by anyone working in the applied environmental sciences, especially if the person is an anthropologist, geographer, political scientist, or sociologist. Although the central theme of applying social sciences to environmental problems is apparent in each chapter of this text, the topics are not bound by a singular theoretical approach.

The following methods are summarized in this volume (in the order that they are presented): Oriol Beltran applies demographic analysis to landscape use and migration; Raymond Hames applies behavioral observation to household production decisions; Amy Poteete applies property theory and institutional analysis to natural and productive resource use; Eric C. Jones applies political economy to economic decision-making; Laura Zanotti, Denise Glover, and Jennifer Sepez apply ethnobiology to environmental knowledge; Veronica

Strang applies ethnohistory and ethnomapping to oral narratives; Candace Slater applies literary analysis to environmental discourses; Amber Wutich and Clarence C. Gravlee apply both qualitative and quantitative methods to text analysis; Jeffrey C. Johnson and David C. Griffith apply social networks to social and environmental systems; Lisa L. Gezon applies multi-sited ethnography to agricultural decision-making; Eduardo S. Brondizio and Rinku Roy Chowdhury apply geospatial analysis to commodity use; Emily Lena Jones applies archaeological methods to long-term environmental relationships; Michael D. Scholl, D. Seth Murray, and Carole L. Crumley apply historical ecology to humans and their ecosystems; and Shankar Aswani applies a variety of methods described earlier in the volume to conservation design. The presentation follows a logical order and provides a comprehensive demonstration of the current methods used in the environmental social sciences.

Each of the chapters summarizes a method citing the relevant literature and provides examples from the authors' own research using the described method to understand an environmental issue. The text is directed toward social and natural scientists and toward policy-making, but the clarity of writing would enable it to be used in advanced undergraduate courses in environmental anthropology or other environmental social and natural sciences courses.

As Russell Bernard states in the foreword, this volume contributes to the interdisciplinary nature of environmental social sciences, includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and demonstrates the multiple methods necessary to understand the relationships between humans and their environment. This volume is an important contribution to the field of environmental social sciences because it provides the reader with an overview of the field without championing one theoretical or methodological approach over the others, but by demonstrating how a variety of approaches may be used to understand complex human behavior.

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Nomadic Felts. *Stephanie Bunn.* Artistic Traditions in World Cultures. London: British Museum Press (publisher), Oakville, CT: The David Brown Book Co. (distributor), 2010, 160 pp. \$50.00, paper.

If felt had been invented in the twenty-first century, it would be hailed as a sustainable technology with great global promise. All manner of clothing, shelter, furnishings and containers can be made from it using renewable, biodegradable materials that cost practically nothing and require no mechanization to process. Using only warm water and elbow grease, animal fleece can be transformed into a malleable, insulating, water-repellant textile with enormous artistic potential. A critical textile since the beginnings of recorded history, felt has only come to be appreciated again in the past 50 or so years.

In her cleanly written volume in the British Museum series "Artistic Traditions in World Cultures," anthropologist Stephanie Bunn demonstrates why felt and felt-makers should be rescued from the margins of history. Making judicious use of archaeological finds, ancient artworks, historical texts, museum collections, oral accounts, and field studies, Bunn details the use of this prosaic fabric across half the world from Eastern Europe and Egypt to Japan. In her first and richest chapter, "Ancient Felt," Bunn outlines evidence that felt use spread with the domestication of sheep from Mesopotamia. The knowledge may have diffused west first; the earliest dated felt in what is now Turkey is about 4,000 years old. Felt appears to have been adopted somewhat later by the Central Asian nomads who made it famous. At Pazyryk in southern Siberia for example, extremely well-preserved textiles in extensive burial complexes suggest that felting was a highly