

REVIEW ESSAY

# The City, the Neighborhood, and the Street: Toward a Global Urban Labor History?

Ángela Vergara 

California State University, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Email: [avergar@exchange.calstatela.edu](mailto:avergar@exchange.calstatela.edu)

Ingrid Bleynat, *Vendors' Capitalism: A Political Economy of Public Markets in Mexico City* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2021).

Lucia Carminati, *Seeking Bread and Fortune in Port Said: Labor Migration and the Making of the Suez Canal, 1859-1906* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2023).

Thomas A. Castillo, *Working in the Magic City: Moral Economy in Early Twentieth-Century Miami* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2022).

Sebastián Leiva Flores, *Vida y trabajo de la clase obrera chilena: los trabajadores de la textil Sumar y la metalúrgica Madeco entre las décadas de 1940 y 1960* (Santiago, Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2020).

Rodolfo Porrini, *Montevideo, ciudad obrera: el tiempo libre desde las izquierdas (1920-1950)* (Montevideo, Uruguay: CSIC, Universidad de la República, 2019).

Juliette Rennes, *Métiers de rue: observer le travail et le genre à Paris en 1900* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2022).

## Abstract

Labor scholars have increasingly recognized the need to look beyond the workplace and explore where and how workers lived, socialized, shopped, or protested. The six books reviewed in this essay contribute to understanding how modern cities shaped the process of working-class formation as well as workers' identity, experiences, and economic and material conditions. From different standpoints, these urban and labor histories of Paris, Mexico City, Miami, Port Said, Montevideo, and Santiago, Chile, demonstrate the impact of urban modernization, industrial capitalism, and migration on working families. By bringing together books from different regions and historiographical traditions, this essay also reflects on the possibilities and challenges of writing a global labor urban history.

Nicomedes Guzmán (1914–1964) is known as Chile's proletarian writer. A member of the 1938 literary generation, his novels and short stories depict the lives of the working

poor and denounced the social and economic inequality that permeated every aspect of mid-twentieth-century Chilean society.<sup>1</sup> In *La Sangre y La Esperanza* (1943), he tells the story of tramway workers and their union. But if workers and their 1940 strike are the novel's main theme, we learn about them not on the shopfloor but through everyday life in Barrio Mapocho, a working-class neighborhood in Santiago, Chile.<sup>2</sup> In the city's *conventillos*, the crowded tenement buildings that housed the urban poor, workers rested and spent time with their families. They discussed union and political matters with their neighbors. Children and their mothers looked out of the windows and saw strikes and police brutality on the city's streets, which became the most important space of socialization, shopping, and politicization.

Guzmán's critical voice is a compelling source for understanding working-class life, and a reminder that the workers' world was never limited to the shopfloor. Like in his novels, people's working and living spaces are intertwined in complex ways, and the neighborhood has long played a central role in the process of working-class formation. By looking outside the factory, we can learn about other workers—for example, the many women, children, and men who have historically made their livings on the streets or from the home—not to mention the social and leisure activities of workers and their families.

Although many authors have pointed out these connections and argued that it is important to consider workers as part of a city, urban and labor history do not always intersect. In fact, sometimes they run on parallel tracks. In their introduction to a 2011 special issue of the labor history journal *Mundos do trabalho* that focused on the urban world and labor history, the Brazilian historians Paulo Fontes and Deivison Amaral argue that “the world of work, in the last two centuries, has an umbilical relationship with the formation of the modern city and the multiple processes of urbanization provoked by the development of industrial capitalism.” Thus, they implore labor historians to seriously explore how the characteristics of urban space “informed and impacted the process of class formation and the political action of workers.”<sup>3</sup> Or, to use the words of labor historian Michael Savage, we need to study not only how working people developed a collective identity and class consciousness over time but how that “making” took place and was influenced by a particular place.<sup>4</sup>

The books under consideration in this review invite us to study cities not just as sites of work, but also as spaces of socialization, protest, and class formation. In her 2022 study of Paris, the French sociologist Juliette Rennes tells the story of the many different jobs that were performed on the streets and in the public spaces of the French capital during the Belle Époque. For Rennes, the city is both a place of work and a place of encounter between men and women and people of different classes, ages, and origins. The public markets and sidewalks of Mexico City were also a working space. Although vendors were not wage workers but rather self-employed, historian Ingrid Bleyнат shows that they were nevertheless part of the city's diverse laboring class. Drawing on traditions of US labor history, Thomas Castillo looks at the case of Miami, where workers struggled to make a living in the shadow of popular representations of a tourist city, free of class tensions. Unlike the other cities discussed here, Port Said, Egypt, was only born in the mid-nineteenth century. Established first as a labor camp, it quickly became the home to thousands of migrant workers who helped build the Suez Canal. In Montevideo, Uruguay, Rodolfo Porrini's 2019 book reveals how newspapers,

picnics, and soccer games all became part of an urban, militant, and working-class culture in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Finally, by assessing the lives of metal and textile workers in Santiago, Chile, Sebastián Leiva demonstrates how efforts to improve working conditions went hand-in-hand with the fight for better housing and urban infrastructure.

Bringing together books from distant regions and different national historiographical traditions presents challenges. Marcel van der Linden has long written about the urgency of a global labor history that can overcome historians' Eurocentrism and methodological nationalism.<sup>5</sup> Van der Linden argues that one way to accomplish that is by identifying common threads and questions. The authors discussed here focus on specific cities and neighborhoods that do not interact directly with each other, and, with the exception of Carminati's study of Port Said, they do not intend to be transnational or comparative. And yet, all of the books shed light, from their unique vantage points and national histories, on critical questions for global labor and urban historiography. On the one hand, they show how political, economic, demographic, and geographic characteristics influenced people's working, living, and organizing experiences. In this regard, they also highlight how diverse projects of urban modernization and urban capitalist development, including the establishment of public markets and construction of large infrastructure projects, influenced working-class formation and identity. On the other hand, the authors also pay attention to workers' diverse experiences and voices, demonstrating how despite oppression, discrimination, and economic insecurity, labor contributed to urban culture and to the democratization of cities across the world.

### The city as a working space

The status, experience, and identity of people who earn a living in the streets have long puzzled both urban and labor historians. Whether such groups are called "marginal," "vagrants," "informal laborers," "self-employed," or "street workers," this category of workers was regularly harassed by the police and urban reformers. It was also perceived by the radical Left as insufficiently organized or lacking class identity. Recent historical scholarship has begun to question these views, pointing out workers' agency, organizations, and contributions to the urban economy. Most studies have focused on street and market vendors, paying special attention to questions of race, gender, and citizenship. For example, Patricia Acerbi, in her study of street occupations in Rio de Janeiro, demonstrates that vendors and peddlers, many of them Afro Brazilians, fought for rights and recognitions and contested repression by city officials and the police.<sup>6</sup> In the United States, studies about street food vendors have also revealed workers' agency and struggles for rights, citizenship, and inclusion. In Los Angeles, fruit vendors, most of them from Mexico, moved between the formal and the informal, and between documented and undocumented status, building complex networks in order to make a living in an otherwise hostile environment.<sup>7</sup>

Juliette Rennes and Ingrid Bleyinat illustrate the multiple work arrangements and forms of labor commodification that existed in the streets, on sidewalks, and in markets of Paris and Mexico City, respectively. In doing so, they examine a range of labor relationships, from the formally and informally employed to the independent or

self-employed to family labor arrangements. In her *Métiers de rue*, Rennes examines the gender and visual history of street workers during France's Belle Époque of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the turn of the century, vendors, musicians, performers, mattress makers, drivers, sex workers, coalmen, and food deliverers occupied the streets of Paris. Mainstream media uses the term *petits métiers* (small job) to refer to the odd jobs these groups carried out there, and which came to symbolize the idiosyncrasy of the Parisian lifestyle as frequently depicted in postcards and paintings. But Rennes prefers the term *métiers de rue* (street jobs and professions), a broader expression that includes

all possible forms of remunerated activity in which a significant part of the working time is spent outdoors, whether on the pavement, on the sidewalk, on the quays or the heights of buildings, in the open air or partially sheltered ... and which expose, to varying degrees, those who carry them out to the vagaries of the climate, the public gaze and police surveillance. (14)

Based on an impressive collection of visual sources, most notably postcards, but also documents produced by experts, police reports, and city statistics, the author looks at the multiplicity of jobs being performed outdoors. Through these sources, Rennes reconstructs the changing world of the streets, offering not only insights into workers' experiences but also how they were seen, described, and harassed by reformers, police officers, and society in general.

One of Rennes's most interesting arguments is that the complex and highly diverse group of workers and performers on Paris's streets were "not a class united by a set of common interests." Rather, they were divided and segregated by social status, age, and sex (44–45). Some jobs required more skill than others (for example, photography). Others, like construction work, required physical strength. Still others bordered on mendicancy, begging, and illegality. Above all, Rennes shows that sex determined workers' position in the street, the jobs they could perform, and how they were viewed and described by the media and urban reformers. Like in many modern cities of the time, ideas and expectations about family, womanhood, and masculinity limited the jobs that women could safely perform in the streets of the French capital. Whether jobs were perceived as requiring physical strength or the capacity to yield and have one's voice heard (for example, selling newspapers in a crowded public space), men dominated the streets. The masculinization of the street was clearly reflected on postcards, where visual references to the virility and strength of construction workers and other male workers were standard. In contrast, women remained a minority and were concentrated in very few trades, like bread delivery, market and street vending, and sex work. Despite these constraints, some women did enter men's spaces, often disguised or protected by family members. A few became exceptions to the labor customs of the era by working as coach drivers. But this was also a world that was changing. As more women entered trades that were historically dominated by men, they became more visible. Paris, Rennes concludes, thus offered women, many of whom migrated from other parts of the country, a space for freedom and emancipation.

Looking at work in the streets also sheds light on working people's place in the city and how and when they occupied public space. Particularly interesting is Rennes'

description of how Paris changed from morning to night, as certain jobs were performed at different times. For example, bread deliveries, a job performed mostly by women, only took place at dawn. Time and place intersected and shaped people's experiences. As the author explains, "we know that the time Parisians get up is a good indicator of the place occupied in social stratification" (203). The streets themselves also changed over time. In the late nineteenth century, during the early decades of the Third Republic, Paris was gentrified, and the police presence in public spaces increased as "undesirables" were pushed out through a process that Rennes calls "disciplining the use of the streets" (62). Modernization eventually affected work, and many street jobs became obsolete. This too is part of the vintage past that can still be seen in the hundreds of *petits métiers* postcards Rennes relies upon in her study.

Ingrid Bleyinat contributes to understanding the city as a working space by studying Mexico City's public markets from the end of the French occupation in 1867 to the 1960s, when markets were owned and regulated by the city government. Based on a wide range of sources, including city archives and periodicals, the author follows the history of public markets through the lives of market vendors. Specifically, she looks at how vendors collectively organized and responded to the many efforts of city authorities and reformers to control them, consumers' changing demands, and competition from other vendors. She examines this history through the lens of political economy, but her book also contributes to debates in labor and urban history.

Like Paris, Mexico City experienced rapid modernization at the turn of the century, and in the process, people's status, rights, and place were redefined. During the Porfiriato (1876–1911) years, the city moved on from being "a backward provincial capital into a bustling modern metropolis," the author writes. Streets were beautified, and parks and buildings were built, often emulating European views of city planning (41). At the center of this change were public markets and the act of consumption. Like in other cities, public markets had played a central role in the everyday lives of Mexicans, offering a wide variety of goods and produce, but they were also controversial and sometimes chaotic spaces. As a result, they became the focus of urban reformers and public health officers. For such groups, building new facilities also required disciplining vendors. But modernizing street markets was a grueling task. Eliminating peddlers who sold goods in the streets (*vendedores ambulantes*) was almost impossible, and as soon as the city inaugurated new market spaces to relocate businesses, less affluent vendors occupied the old and now semi-abandoned buildings.

Importantly, the markets were not only a place of consumption but also a space of work—a sort of "middle ground" between the sidewalks and more established stores. Mexican vendors, Bleyinat argues, "were not wage workers, in the sense that they did not sell their labor power to make a living. They were not capitalists either because they did not hire people to work for them, and in most cases, they never managed to accumulate any capital" (2). Instead, she refers to them as "the proprietary mode of production: people who work for themselves, more often than not with the help of their families, running small scale operations with at best a modest working capital, usually on credit" (2). Despite improvements, vendors' legal and economic position remained fragile and had to adapt to the changing urban, economic, and political landscape. Among other things, this included the instability of the revolutionary period, state control of prices and regulation of consumption, and by the second half of the twentieth

century, the popularity of supermarkets. Stalls and halls offered vendors more status and protection than selling goods in the streets, but in such places, they had to pay high rents and faced the city governments' ever evolving and sometimes arbitrary regulations. It was a precarious economic activity that reflected their place in Mexico's diverse urban laboring class. And like other workers, market vendors developed a collective identity and at times organized to protect and advance their rights in tandem with larger labor and political organizations. From a larger perspective, Rennes and Ingrid Bleyнат offer a complex view of markets, vending, and street occupations that challenged traditional interpretations of the so-called informal economy.

### **Working-class formation**

How the characteristics and particular histories of cities influenced workers' identities and, related to that, the question of how workers transformed their urban environment are two important themes for labor historians. Scholars have looked, for example, at the rise of working-class neighborhoods and industrial cities and the distinctive experience of small factory and company towns. In small industrial towns, employers implemented ambitious paternalist agendas that looked to create model communities, assimilate immigrant workers, and coopt union demands. If some of these policies were effective, economic crises usually evidenced the shortcomings of paternalistic policies and sparked bitter labor conflicts, as the classic 1894 strike in Pullman, Illinois showed.<sup>8</sup> Historians have also looked at cities as spaces of radicalization. In his classic labor history of Chilean textile workers in the long 1960s, Peter Winn argues that the neighborhood, away from employers' surveillance, facilitated the radicalization of a younger generation of workers. As he writes, "[g]rowing up in a working class población in San Miguel, the 'Red County' close to the Yarur mill (...) was a powerful formative experience." It was there that young people learned about the "language and the politics of class" as well as "the habit of solidarity and tradition of struggle."<sup>9</sup> In their respective histories of Miami and Port Said, Thomas Castillo and Lucia Carminati similarly posit that the characteristics of the local labor market, the culture of employers, and the cities' politics and demographics are all important elements to consider in analyzing the diverse working-class trajectories and identities.

Miami is more known for its tourist industry than its working-class history. But while many historians have dismissed its labor past, Thomas Castillo shows how the unique characteristics of Miami—its geographic location, its demographics, and its economy—shaped the processes of working-class formation and created distinct forms of resistance and accommodation. As Castillo writes, the "Magic City" presented itself as a dreamy tourist destination, "a city built on tourism and dreams of greater economic power" (15), and employers used the language of freedom and class harmony to undermine labor rights, dismiss workers' economic demands, and cover up the many problems of an unequal and rapidly growing city. Indeed, rigid racial and class lines affected where people lived, worked, and spent their free time, while precarity and an acute housing shortage undermined people's economic security. Moreover, the economics of a tourist city created endemic problems, like seasonal unemployment and a need to maintain the appearance of a city without conflict to attract visitors.

Miami's economic and employment features molded workers' identities and their forms of mobilization. While modern Miami may not have experienced the same level of radicalization as contemporary US industrial cities, Castillo underscores the subtle forms of labor resistance and organizing that occurred in South Florida, showing how workers fought to reestablish a "moral economy" within the limits of capitalism. At the center of these fights were Black workers, who confronted a segregated city and job market. Castillo shows "that Jim Crow was firmly rooted in Miami, Florida, at the beginning of the twentieth century and that outright racists permeated all parts of the city" (13). Despite the everyday violence of racism and segregation, different groups, such as Black chauffeurs and construction workers, fought for the right to work across the city and challenged employers' racist and anti-union policies.

If unemployment remained endemic and linked to the seasons of the tourist industry, employers' and urban authorities' discourse of "joy and progress" and "harmonious class relations" made the city an attractive destination for people from all walks of life (102). However, over time, many saw the arrival of new migrants and long-term visitors as a threat, giving way to "home-labor protectionism" and the criminalization of poor migrants and the transient unemployed. Migration ended up dividing working people, preventing the development of more radical responses and alternative futures. Despite this, workers across Miami organized in the 1930s and joined the larger pro-union wave of the New Deal era, even if their gains remained uncertain before the powerful and anti-labor business class. Organizations such as the Dade County Unemployment Citizens' League reflected the characteristics of Miami's labor and grassroot tradition, which blended "organized labor's goals, socialist ideas, and an Americanism comfortable with pushing the liberal political economy beyond normative conceptions of capitalism into a realm of greater equality and democracy" (158). On the eve of World War II, Miami also witnessed several union organizing drives, including those led by dockworkers and some unskilled laborers. According to Castillo, for a little while, "a union-dominated city remained a possibility (...) though darker days were certainly not far ahead" (215).

Unlike the other cities discussed in this review, Port Said is a relatively new city, sprawling alongside the construction of the Suez Canal in the 1860s. The city started as a camp for construction workers and company employees, but the arrival of migrants, who followed dreams of prosperity, independence, and freedom, quickly transformed it into a diverse urban settlement. Lucia Carminati argues that the canal project "engendered a novel urban environment, new employment opportunities, an unprecedented migratory trajectory for job seekers in and out of Egypt, and a peculiar migrant society" (4). To understand this novel city, Carminati proposes a "microspatial perspective"; her goal is to observe from the standpoint of Port Said how migrants arrived, settled, and made a home in this unique environment.

Carminati contributes to labor-urban history by analyzing migration and the making of a working-class community. Like in Miami, the economics and politics that surrounded the construction of the Suez Canal and, after 1869, the canal's administration, shaped life in Port Said. In that way, the city resembled other towns and cities that were dependent on a single economic activity. For example, the canal's inauguration in 1869 meant the end of construction jobs and the beginning of a long period of uncertainty. The city was not only dependent on infrastructure jobs, but the characteristics

of those jobs influenced the city's layout and determined people's privileges, rights, and position within the town. Construction work was dangerous and unsafe. In its early years, it included a mix of free and coerced labor, and was hierarchically organized according to race and nationality, with European engineers at the top and local Egyptian and other Arab workers at the bottom. These divisions were visible in the city as "Port Said was divided from its inception into a so-called European quarter and an Arab part of the town and maintained unequal sewer and water infrastructure across its two halves" (111).

Despite the efforts of company managers and local authorities to exert tight control over the local population, a complex society emerged along the borders of company and construction work, and a diverse group of men and women made a living working as domestic, sex, or entertainment workers. Difficulties to police and control were exacerbated by the transnational nature of the port and the changing responsibilities of the Egyptian government, consular authorities, and after 1882, British occupation forces. But this chaotic urban situation, Carminati argues, also reflected the rise of a unique urban and working-class culture centered around the city's many drinking establishments, shops, music halls, and cafés. If authorities saw these places as centers of moral corruption and criminal behaviors, the author also shows how they "brought people together" (193).

Despite their many differences, the histories of Miami and Port Said share some important similarities: rapid demographic growth, large currents of migration, and a labor market affected by boom/bust cycles and periodic or seasonal unemployment. What's more, both cities were associated with a magic aura. They were places where people believed they could become rich and free. In their own ways, Thomas Castillo and Lucia Carminati show the difficulties migrant workers faced in these buoyant and rapidly changing urban environments and the emergence of unique labor traditions.

### **Working-class neighborhoods**

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Uruguayan capital of Montevideo experienced dramatic social, cultural, and demographic changes. According to Rodolfo Porrini, the city became a working-class city during this period, and workers, labor unions, and radical political parties were increasingly visible in public spaces. By the 1920s, working families had more free time. They could also afford some of the many leisure opportunities that Montevideo offered, such as going to the beach in Pocitos, playing and watching soccer games, enjoying the carnival, plays, and movies, and sitting at a café while reading newspapers and magazines. This shift meant that the urban working class "constituted a significant part of the consumer market for material (housing, food, clothing, transportation) and cultural goods," something that was reflected in the rise of a growing leisure market (58). In this vibrant urban environment, leisure turned into a contested and changing activity, influenced by the state, political parties, mass media, and workers' traditions.

Roy Rosenzweig argued in his already classic study of Worcester, Massachusetts, that studying the leisure activities of working people is essential to understanding working-class culture and identity. By examining recreation, celebrations, and spaces of socialization, like saloons and parks, historians not only gain unique insight into



how people lived in a city during a particular time but also a window into the social and political conflicts that permeated cities at the turn of the century.<sup>10</sup> For Porrini, those hours beyond “the factory, workshop, or office” are a way to detangle the complex relationship between the political Left(s)—he uses the plural to underscore the diversity of leftist traditions—and workers. He goes on to offer a detailed analysis of how the Uruguayan Left and labor movement approached recreation, demonstrating that both tried to compete against and adapt to what workers did during their free time.

Radical political parties, including socialists, communists, and anarchists, all tried to shape what Uruguayan workers did during their spare time. They organized meetings and workshops, sponsored radio shows, and screened movies—all activities that sought to “educate, organize and enlighten” working people (157). Some of these took place indoors in libraries and union halls, while others took place outside, including through day trips to the countryside and beach or to sporting events. As a result, an alternative popular culture emerged on the pages of newspapers, through radio programs, and during meetings at the many local cafés in Montevideo’s working-class neighborhoods. Over time, this political culture slowly came to accept leisure as a basic need for working people. Indeed, as Porrini posits, the street and the neighborhood became spaces of both socialization and politicization, and these activities guaranteed the “social and territorial insertion of the Lefts” (205).

Porrini’s *Montevideo, ciudad obrera* (Montevideo, working-class city) depicts the everyday culture of the urban working-class during the first half of the twentieth century. The descriptions of the many activities he details are placed in concrete neighborhoods, advancing our understanding of how workers moved and interacted—and what they saw in doing so. It shows the importance of politics and the success of the Left in creating an alternative political culture that incorporated many of popular traditions as well as some of the changes brought by mass culture. To do so, Porrini turns to the working-class press, commercial magazines, memories, and collections of testimonies, photographs, and novels. While these sources usually reflected the view of political militants, a critical analysis of the program of a cultural or sporting event, the list of books available at the union library, or the photograph of a picnic offer valuable insights into people’s world outside the workplace. They also reveal that Montevideo’s working-class was dynamic, always changing and regularly incorporating new cultural elements, including the concerns and tastes of younger generations.

Finally, in *Vida y trabajo de la clase obrera chilena* (Life and work of the Chilean working class), the Chilean historian Sebastián Leiva reconstructs the history of San Miguel, Santiago’s quintessential working-class suburb, with a special focus on the intersections between working spaces and living spaces in the community. In the mid-twentieth century the neighborhood was home to many factories and a diverse working-class community. It attracted both skilled workers and middle-class families, many of whom benefited from new housing credit and state subsidies. By the 1940s, the arrival of two large factories, Sumar, a textile mill, and Madeco, a copper products manufacturer, accelerated this transformation. Industrialists built modern facilities and a special neighborhood for their workforce. Población Madeco, for example, included a large stadium that became a meeting place for the entire community. But like most working-class neighborhoods in Latin America, San Miguel experienced rapid change in the long 1960s. The need to resolve problems related to public transit,

health care, and urban infrastructure mobilized neighbors and workers. At the same time, demographic growth and migration put more pressure on the neighborhood's existing housing options and social infrastructure. Local politics also started reflecting the radicalization of the time, as San Miguel became an iconic socialist stronghold.

Leiva centers his history on the industrial workers of Sumar and Madeco, showing how they organized and built a distinct union identity at the height of Chile's era import-substitution industrialization. While the shopfloor and union activity structure the narrative, it becomes clear that the characteristics and challenges of the neighborhood had a strong impact on workers' identity. For example, the local unions mobilized to demand better transportation and the end of price speculation and hikes. As with Porrini's work, the intersection between working, living, and recreational spaces is central to Leiva's research. Outside work and beyond the walls of the factories, workers and their families practiced sports, such as soccer and boxing, they attended musical performances and other cultural events, and they participated in the city government and on housing committees. Many of these leisure activities were sponsored and promoted by local unions, which made them part of the complex fabric that was the neighborhood. San Miguel was not a homogenous community; economic and employment difference mattered and sometimes created divisions between more affluent factory workers and low-income residents. But Leiva shows that workers sometimes overcame those differences and built social, personal, and political relations. These collaborations were particularly visible in local urban politics as residents came together to resolve everyday problems and advocate for local improvement.

Read together, the six books reviewed here illustrate the many possibilities of doing urban labor history. Centered around a single city or a neighborhood, they highlight that the characteristics of the urban environment, including its location and political economy, influenced working-class identity, resistance, and culture. Despite their many differences, they shed light on three main themes. First, they underscore the diversity of work experience in the city—from jobs performed in streets and factories to the dangerous digging of a transoceanic canal. Related to this, they also demonstrate how class, gender, race, and nationality influenced people's position in the city. Second, this collection of recent books looks at the impact of capitalist modernization on the urban landscape, its labor opportunities, and working conditions. One of these consequences was the emergence and growing visibility of laborers in public spaces, whether they were working, trading goods, enjoying a stroll in the park, protesting, or just hanging out. Third, they call attention to the importance of leisure to urban working-class culture, including sports, drinking, and reading. With the exception of Carminati's study of Port Said, all studies would have probably benefited from a more transnational perspective to better underscore their place within the world economy and the global circulation of ideas and people.

In the end, these six books make us think about the long history of what David Harvey called the struggles for the "right to the city." This is understood as a right not only to urban resources, such as housing, urban services, or infrastructure. Rather, to use Harvey's words, "it is a right to change and reinvent the city more after our hearts' desire (...) [T]he freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is," in Harvey's words, "one of the most precious yet more neglected human rights."<sup>11</sup> From the women who delivered bread at dawn in the streets of Paris to the Uruguayan working families

who spent their leisure time at the local beach, the stories these books tell reflect working peoples' struggle to make a living, participate in the life of their respective cities, and enjoy the same rights as every other urban citizen.

## Notes

1. The generation of 1938 was known for its focus on social issues. Many of the writers embraced radical politics and supported calls for social, political, and economic change and opposed the rise of fascism and authoritarianism.
2. Nicomedes Guzmán, *La sangre y la esperanza* (Santiago, Chile: Orbe, 1943).
3. Paulo Fontes and Deivison Amaral, "Mundo Urbano e História Do Trabalho," *Mundos Do Trabalho* 3, no. 5 (October 9, 2011): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.5007/1984-9222.2011v3n5p1>.
4. Michael Savage, "Space, Networks and Class Formation," in *Social Class and Marxism: Defences and Challenges*, ed. Neville Kirk (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1996), 58–86.
5. Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 6.
6. Patricia Acerbi, *Street Occupations: Urban Vending in Rio de Janeiro, 1850-1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).
7. Rocío Rosales, *Fruteros: Street Vending, Illegality, and Ethnic Community in Los Angeles* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2020).
8. Ángela Vergara, "Company Towns in the United States," in obo in *Urban Studies*, accessed April 20, 2024, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190922481/obo-9780190922481-0062.xml>.
9. Peter Winn, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 84.
10. Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City; 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
11. David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London New York: Verso, 2019), 4.

**Ángela Vergara** is a professor of history at California State University, Los Angeles. A social and labor historian, she is the author of *Copper Workers, International Business, and Domestic Politics in Cold War Chile* (2008) and *Fighting Unemployment in Twentieth-Century Chile* (2021), and co-editor of *Company Towns in the Americas* (2011).

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