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In his recent work, *The Spectacular City*, Daniel Goldstein explores public life and the political process in periurban Cochabamba, Bolivia’s third largest city. Goldstein undertakes an in-depth analysis of the periurban barrio, Villa Sebastián Pagador, and its struggle to gain recognition and legitimacy in the eyes of the central government of Cochabamba. In doing so, Goldstein examines two different cultural performances—fiesta dancing and mob violence—as functions of the same community need for solidarity. Goldstein departs from a strict Geertzian interpretation of public performance as a societal mechanism for reaffirming cultural identity: he argues that cultural performances can be about a particular segment of society attempting to meld social perceptions to its own agenda.

Goldstein devotes a considerable portion of his book to a discussion of the development of the Latin American city more generally. In the colonial context, cities were carefully planned and constructed entities, divided neatly into business, shopping, and residential districts. Cochabamba was conceived as the “Garden City” of Bolivia by early planners, who endowed it with tree-lined avenues and parks. The influx of migrants from rural to urban areas in Bolivia intensified in the 1950s and has shown little sign of abatement. Goldstein highlights the disjuncture between migrants’ expectations of what the urban municipality would provide them and the city’s goals to maintain its tightly organized boundaries and carefully orchestrated aesthetic. Cochabamba had no place for migrants, who were thus not incorporated into the existing urban configuration. As a result, migrants began to settle in the greenbelt areas surrounding the periphery of the city, limiting legal ownership of the land. Villa Pagador is just one of the barrios surrounding Cochabamba that arose in this manner, and these barrios have had varying degrees of success in gaining recognition as a legitimate part of the city.

One of the key issues for periurban barrio residents is that they are left without a sense of community identity. As migrants, they are excluded from assuming the identity of the native Cochabamba population. Yet, in many cases, they are no longer able to maintain an identity rooted in their places of origin as they mingle with migrants from all across Bolivia. Goldstein asserts that Villa Pagador is dif-
ferent in this respect because barrio leaders have in effect forged an identity based on that of the migrants from the highly regarded Oruro region, renowned for its contributions to the folk culture of Bolivia. Although certainly not all of the residents of Villa Pagador have roots in the Oruro region, Goldstein emphasizes the powerful role that this creation of a strong community identity has played in making Villa Pagador one of the most organized and politically savvy barrios in Cochabamba. Villa Pagador has been the most successful barrio in gaining the city’s recognition of its rights to municipal services, such as police protection and transportation services.

In the context of community identity, Goldstein describes in great detail the annual celebration hosted by Villa Pagador, the Fiesta de San Miguel, which features a competition of traditional dance from the Oruro region among the local Villa Pagador dancers and visiting dance troupes. Villa Pagador has become well known for this fiesta, drawing on its self-proclaimed association with the Oruro region. Goldstein argues that through the cultural performance of the fiesta, residents of Villa Pagador shape the perception of their community within the city as a legitimate settlement of immigrants from the Oruro region. In the same vein, Goldstein reports that barrio leaders have used instances of mob violence and lynchings to push their agenda for the barrio forward with Cochabamba city officials. Goldstein describes on instance in which mob violence ensues after thieves are caught in Villa Pagador. The barrio leadership publicly punishes the criminals not only to demonstrate the strength of barrio self-organization and self-efficacy, but also to press the city for increased police services.

Thus, Goldstein creates an interesting parallel between two seemingly disparate public spectacles as they are both employed in the creation of a specific identity for Villa Pagador. The crux of Goldstein’s position with regard to the meaning of cultural performance is best captured in his statement that “spectacle serves as a device to restructure patterns of inclusion, a technique by which the marginalized insist on their own incorporation within national structures and systems from which they have previously been excluded” (19). Cultural performances, then, are much more than homogenizing acts to reinforce the cultural identity of the participants; they also serve the political purpose of creating a collective identity for the participants in relation to some outside group. Goldstein’s conceptualization of cultural performance offers an interesting exemplar of the application of anthropological theory in the study of modern urban realities, an undertaking that would also benefit from a consideration of the literature on the development of civil society. In sum, Goldstein’s *The Spectacular City* will prove interesting and relevant to those who study Latin America and also to scholars of urbanization.