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By Patty Kelly

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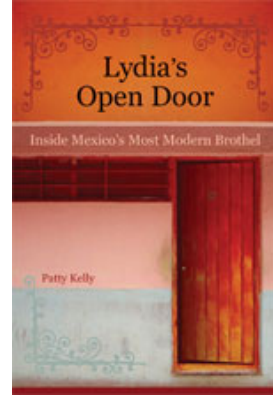
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Lydia's Open Door: Inside Mexico's Most Modern Brothel. Patty Kelly:
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Reviewed by CARLY M. CHILLMON.



Anthropologist Patty Kelly's book *Lydia's Open Door: Inside Mexico's Most Modern Brothel* (2008) explores state-regulated sex in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the capital of Chiapas. Rather than focus on Chiapas as agricultural and indigenous, Kelly provides much-needed attention to the urban terrain of this state, which is less frequently covered by social scientists. Her ethnographic study provides an examination of how modernization during the neoliberal era informs the structuring and control of the Zona Galáctica (Galactic Zone), a state-run brothel, through a discussion of the state's explicit desire to be "modern."

Kelly's fieldwork reveals telling stories of women's sexual labor in the zone. For a year, Kelly worked regularly at the Galactic Zone as a researcher and teacher. Her research sheds light on the personal histories and experiences of these women. A major strength of Kelly's study is her investigation of the circumstances in which women enter prostitution. The narratives from the women show the complex ways and reasons women go into the sex industry. The friendships that she developed with the sex workers enabled her to paint a detailed portrait of gender, sexuality and sex work in modern Mexico. This portrait highlights the spaces for contradiction in the lives of workers in the zone. As Kelly (2008) argues, "The zone, then, is simultaneously a place of confinement and restriction, a holding pen for populations defined as deviant, and also a space of freedom, where these populations can experience alternative expressions of sexuality, gender, speech, and dress" (p.202-03). For Kelly, the Galactic Zone is "a space apart" (p.202).

An attention to space informs Kelly's work. Not only does she historicize prostitution in the specific location of the Zona Galáctica, she also offers a rich discussion of the economic and political climate of Chiapas that shapes its modern capital city. This spatial attentiveness offers much insight into how public space is shaped and reshaped by historical and cultural conditions. Kelly articulates how neoliberalism, which represents a more aggressive stage of capitalism and the "free" market, also demonstrates

cultural transformations such as heightened consumerism (p.3-4). Her ability to describe the political, social, and physical architecture of the zone provides a deeper understanding of the complexities of state-regulated sexual commerce, specifically prostitution.

Going outside the Galactic Zone, Kelly explains that the municipal efforts to cleanse the streets of clandestine prostitutes illustrate a discourse for moral order in terms of health and spatial regulation. She vividly recounts her experience of going along on a police raid of unregulated prostitutes outside the zone at the city's center. This raid, as Kelly argues, demonstrates city officials' desire to confine and control prostitution inside the Galactic Zone and out of sight from other citizens. Inside the zone, where prostitution is regulated and visible to authorities, the state's disciplinary practices of medical, spatial, and social control and surveillance maintain and reinforce cultural assumptions about prostitution and stigma. Thus, visibility is a key component to Kelly's study.

In her exploration of the Zona Galáctica, Kelly examines how the local land struggle over where the zone is located uncovers a centuries-old conflict between "indigenous" Mexico and "modern" Mexico. In this analysis, Kelly emphasizes an important theme of the book, namely, how the state prioritizes order and modernity. For example, this land conflict involving communal landholders, the municipal government, private landlords, and prostitutes brought prostitution under scrutiny and debate. This concern was amplified by the media's sensationalized coverage of the land dispute during this time. Ultimately, city officials began a campaign to establish the "public utility" of the zone, its safety, and the dangers of unregulated prostitution (p.113). The state attempted to manage the conflict and concern through a message of prostitution and the public good.

Patty Kelly persuasively shows the vested interest of the state to maintain an illusion of control for the sake of modernity. In her discussion of the policies and regulations at the zone, Kelly exposes how such control reinforces the stigmatization of prostitutes. Her concluding thoughts call for the decriminalization of prostitution and the current regulationist system. *Lydia's Open Door* is a beneficial contribution to the understanding of the regulation of the sex industry at the state and local level. Kelly's research demonstrates the significance of time and space in the construction of gendered and sexual cultural norms. Her well-written book proves useful to all social scientists interested in gender, sexuality, and the state.

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