Liberalism as Utopia

*Liberalism as Utopia* challenges widespread perceptions about the weakness of Mexico’s nineteenth-century state. Schaefer argues that after the War of Independence non-elite Mexicans – peasants, day laborers, artisans, local merchants – pioneered an egalitarian form of legal rule by serving in the town governments and civic militias that became the local faces of the state’s coercive authority. These institutions were effective because they embodied patriarchal norms of labor and care for the family that were premised on the legal equality of adult, male citizens. The book also examines the emergence of new, illiberal norms that challenged the egalitarianism of the early republican period and, at the end of the century, overwhelmed it. By comparing the legal cultures of agricultural estates, mestizo towns, and indigenous towns, *Liberalism as Utopia* proposes a new way of understanding the social foundations of liberal and authoritarian pathways to state formation in the nineteenth century.

Timo H. Schaefer received his PhD in history from Indiana University. Between 2015 and 2017, he was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of British Columbia.
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Liberalism as Utopia

The Rise and Fall of Legal Rule in Post-Colonial Mexico, 1820–1900

TIMO H. SCHAEFER
For Allison. For our little history.
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