

THE POLITICS OF ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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- POVERTY, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND PUBLIC POLICY IN CENTRAL AMERICA.* By Sheldon Annis et al. (Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Council, 1992. Pp. 199. \$32.95 cloth, \$17.95 paper.)
- FORESTS AND LIVELIHOODS: THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF DEFORESTATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.* By Solon L. Barraclough and Krishna B. Ghimire. (New York: St. Martin's, 1996. Pp. 259. \$65.00 cloth.)
- PROMISED LAND: BASE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE AMAZON.* By Madeleine Cousineau Adriance. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. Pp. 202. \$19.95 paper.)
- A CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT OF THE TERRESTRIAL ECOREGIONS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.* By Eric Dinerstein et al. (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1995. Pp. 129. \$29.95 paper.)
- THE ROAD FROM RIO: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL MOVEMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD.* By Julie Fisher. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993. Pp. 269. \$55.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- FORESTS IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS: INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, NGOs, AND THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON.* By Ans Kolk. (Utrecht, the Netherlands: International Books, 1996. Distributed by Login Publishers/Inbook. Pp. 336. \$29.99 paper.)
- SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENT IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON.* By Anna Luíza Ozório de Almeida and João S. Campari. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. 189. \$32.95 cloth.)
- CONTESTED FRONTIERS IN AMAZONIA.* By Marianne Schmink and Charles H. Wood. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Pp. 387. \$35.00 cloth.)
- DEFENDING THE LAND OF THE JAGUAR: A HISTORY OF CONSERVATION IN MEXICO.* By Lane Simonian. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. Pp. 326. \$40.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

Much has been written about environment, development, and conservation since the publication of *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987). Most of the studies focus on diagnosing the causes of environmental destruction and

prescribe policies for a future that is environmentally more sustainable. Important work to be sure, but these books exhibit little understanding of the politics that might turn such prescriptions into policy. Instead, analysts generally appeal to the need for strong political will (see Goldsworthy 1988; Hurrell 1991).

Despite that trend, several research agendas analyzing the politics of environment and development have appeared. This review essay will evaluate the state of an emerging research agenda that turns to the field of political economy to explain the politics of environment and development. Although the authors under review call diverse academic disciplines home, most draw on that approach.

To varying degrees, all nine texts address a common problem: how to formulate policies for sustainable development, defined as the maintenance of environmental quality without sacrificing socioeconomic development. While the concept has been criticized for its fuzziness (see Daly and Townsend 1993), the policy community has embraced it nonetheless.

To simplify the subject drastically, sustainable development has been defined in terms of four components (WCED 1987; World Bank 1992). A key assumption is that underdeveloped and economically unstable countries cannot control depredation and pollution of natural resources. Resources must be exploited as cheaply as possible and in large quantities in order to maintain socioeconomic and political order. This assumption determines the first component of sustainable development: building healthy economies based on technologies that minimize damage to the environment. Second, given the often observed connection between poverty and environmental degradation—that poor people are driven to strip resources for survival—attention to the basic needs of impoverished peoples with environmentally friendly approaches is crucial. Addressing these concerns generates a third condition for sustainable development: environmental sustainability that will provide for present generations without depleting environmental quality for future generations. The fourth component of sustainable development is ample participation by civil society in decision making and implementation of policies.

Despite general agreement on these broad principles, interpretations of how to achieve those ends differ widely, fueling policy debates (Redclift 1987). Taking sides, these works anchor interpretation of sustainable development in a shared conception of social justice. For these authors, the achievement of sustainable development is inextricably linked to overcoming widespread poverty and glaring social inequality.

Because the books under review address natural renewable resources, they advocate environmentally friendly grassroots development for rural areas. From this perspective, the livelihood of peasants and small farmers depends on organizing communities and building small-scale enterprises to manage an array of natural renewable resources. The operat-

ing assumption is that under these conditions, more income will stay in the community in the form of higher wages, social benefits, and capitalization. This diverse basket of goods contributes to economic sustainability by providing more income and protects communities from market collapse in any one commodity. Economic sustainability also depends on forming cooperatives to pool resources and know-how and linking them to local, regional, national, and world markets. The grassroots development approach contends that environmental sustainability is better served by small-scale use because when combined with appropriate technology, it offers a better opportunity to mimic natural processes. Equally important, the books focus on low-intensity use of renewable natural resources. This choice protects the broader ecological functions of an environmental system and preserves biodiversity.

The grassroots development perspective takes an activist stance with respect to the state and social participation. The state has an important role to play in crafting industrial and extension policies favoring grassroots development. Otherwise, community enterprises, networks of cooperatives, and links to markets are unlikely to flourish beyond a few individual instances. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are considered central to this process, as is the inclusion of social groups in the policy-making process. But at its core, participation comes down to a focus on organized communities as a vehicle for the self-determination of subordinate classes and ethnic-based social groups (Ghai 1994; Friedmann and Rangan 1993; Ghai and Vivian 1992).

Many analysts who are mainly concerned with preservation have also accepted the idea of environmentally friendly grassroots development. They recognize that wildlife and ecosystem protection in developing countries cannot be addressed without a strategy for providing alternate livelihoods for poor people. Otherwise these social sectors will continue to invade parks and reserves, stripping them for personal survival unless governments guard them at bayonet point.

Given the predominant free-market socioeconomic development model, crafting effective environmental policy in developing nations is difficult (MacDonald, Nielson, and Stern 1997; Jaenicke and Weidner 1997). What conditions favor policies for environmentally friendly grassroots development as a component of sustainable development? To varying degrees, the authors all turn to political-economy approaches, relying on domestic and international structures to define actors, interests, and power resources (Hurrell and Kingsbury 1992).

An international structure has both political and economic dimensions. International actors include governments, transnational corporations, multilateral development banks, and international organizations. Their interests regarding environment and development depend on the position of the political parties in control of the executive branch, the

country's situation in the international division of labor, the logic of international business, and the balance of power among respective member states. Depending on the circumstance, actors from developed countries can draw on significant political and economic power.

Domestic political and economic structures define state actors and social groups. State actors include the president, relevant ministries and agencies, and political parties that are represented in the legislature. Social actors run the gamut from large-scale economic interests to peasants, smallholders, and native peoples. In this schema, the structure of state institutions—their cohesion, the tightness of policy-making teams, the hierarchy of ministries, and their porosity to social forces—is crucial in shaping the power resources of state actors and social groups. By the same token, the economic and organizational capabilities of social actors affect their strength or weakness in relation to state actors.

Some social actors, however, are not defined by domestic or international structure. Prime examples are the environmental nongovernmental organizations. These groups can be key advocates of market-friendly or grassroots-development approaches to forest policy during its formulation. When they are professional organizations, their policy stances generally derive from the intellectual and scientific ideas of middle-class staff members. When environmental NGOs have a peasant base, their economic interest often leads them to advocate grassroots development ideas about combining environment and development (Keck 1995). In addition to these characteristics, some of the large NGOs of the developed world are important international actors in their own right. Domestic NGOs can also be significant actors in the policy process. Their power often depends on their financial and organizational capabilities and the quality of expertise available to them.

In the works under review here, ideas and knowledge about the environment and their relationship to development also play an important role in outcomes. As Peter Haas (1990) has argued, they inform the policy stances of the state agencies charged with formulating policies on the environment and development. Such a view assumes that the state is not a unitary actor (Migdal 1994). Knowledge also provides NGOs with their rationale for action.

Mapping configurations of actors, interests, ideas, and power resources provides a good starting point for uncovering how state institutions, social groups, intellectuals, and the country's relationship to the world political economy influence policies on the environment and development. But this static approach can offer only a partial account. In the end, policy outcomes generally depend on the dynamics of coalition formation among social, state, international, and nongovernmental actors on the one hand and the historically specific international and domestic structures in which they are enmeshed on the other hand. These alliances

and structural conditions define the sum of power that competing coalitions muster in support of alternative policy stances during the formulation stage of the policy process (Gourevitch 1986; Frieden 1991; Rueschmeyer, Stevens, and Stevens 1992).

Diagnosis and Prescription

Some of these volumes are more narrowly policy-oriented than others. They limit their analyses to diagnosing problems and advancing policy prescriptions to overcome them. These texts help shape an agenda for change. A prime example is *Poverty, Natural Resources, and Public Policy in Central America*. The contributing authors include a former president and Nobelist, prominent academics with solid connections to the international policy-making community, and high-profile researchers with international conservation NGOs. In the overview chapter of the same title, Sheldon Annis lays out the central problem and an agenda for change, both rooted in political economy. They also place livelihood issues unambiguously at the center of the search for sustainable development and biodiversity conservation.

Annis argues that Central America's environmental crisis is inextricably intertwined with the region's deepening poverty. The current economic development model has thrust huge numbers of very poor people onto ecologically fragile lands. This outcome has contributed to deforestation, watershed destruction, massive soil erosion, depletion of fisheries, and marine degradation.

The essay's contribution regarding this sadly familiar pattern lies in Annis's analysis of the changing patterns of poverty and how they affect policy prescriptions. Several forces are at work, most of them related to the deepening of capitalist economic and social relations. Civil war, free-market economic reforms, and the expansion of agribusiness generated a shifting population of rootless Central Americans who, pushed onto vulnerable lands, strip them of their resources to survive. This chain of events has deep significance for policy prescriptions to rectify the situation. Poor peasants with land and small-scale farmers are at least stakeholders: their commitment to a place gives them incentives to husband scarce resources and respond to traditional extension services. But no such commitment characterizes the sea of itinerant rural poor generated by the application of green-revolution technologies and free-market economic reforms. Annis recognizes that solutions geared toward the poor will encounter resistance from entrenched interests in the dominant socioeconomic system. Yet he is optimistic that the reestablishment of peace and democracy in the region and the use of modern communications technology by the organized poor offer an opportunity for action. The challenge, Annis argues,

lies in establishing a policy agenda that smoothes over inherent tensions and induces cooperation among antagonists.

Coauthors Oscar Arias and James Nations take up the challenge with a proposal to create and expand “peace parks,” protected areas such as parks or biosphere reserves that span international borders. They believe that cross-border parks can play a key role in reducing regional conflict because they bring leaders to the negotiating table. The parks can also alleviate poverty by promoting grassroots, environmentally friendly development projects in buffer zones.

Stephen Cox prescribes changes in the structure of local-community and NGO participation in designing development assistance. Current technocratic top-down practices, he argues, generate obstacles to success. Bottom-up approaches are better in that they enable local communities to establish goals that they can support more wholeheartedly and help flag problems before they ruin a project.

Alvaro Umaña and Katrina Brandon address conservation in Costa Rica, exploring its lessons for the crucial task of building institutions. They assert that the country has developed institutions capable of linking the livelihood concerns of local peoples to preservation. Among them has been the Ministerio de Recursos Naturales, Energía y Minas, which has devised national policies, created decentralized regional conservation units, and invented creative financing mechanisms.¹

Stuart Tucker observes that export-led development in Central America has had dire consequences for the rural poor. He foresees winter fruits and vegetables as the crops of the future. Yet if credit is not made available, if land tenure is not secure, and if agricultural extension programs are not adopted, then peasants and smallholders will be forced off their lands when traditional crops fail to provide them with a livelihood, thus enlarging the legion of “new poor” described by Annis. Tucker believes that making external aid conditional on support programs could help pressure recalcitrant governments to adopt such measures.

In the final chapter of *Poverty, Natural Resources, and Public Policy in Central America*, John Strasma and Rafael Celis argue that land-tax reform is a vital policy instrument for solving the problems of poverty, underdevelopment, and environmental degradation. Land taxes should be structured to provide incentives to conserve soil, plant trees, manage forests sustainably, and otherwise care for resources that owners intend to pass on to their offspring. Revenues could help finance the infrastructure and credit needed by local communities.

Poverty, Natural Resources, and Public Policy in Central America has much to recommend it in offering practical prescriptions for advancing

1. In 1995 the name of the ministry was changed to Ministerio del Ambiente y Energía (MINAE).

toward sustainable development, with an emphasis on livelihood alternatives for the poor. The analyses of particular issues and problems are highly informative. Yet their cumulative impact more closely resembles a menu of prescriptions than an integrated set of recommendations. Moreover, it seems that the connection between institution building and providing livelihood alternatives in protected areas on the one hand and biodiversity conservation on the other is largely assumed. Little evidence is offered that such a connection actually exists and to what extent. The link between taxation and land reform to conservation and sustainable development suffers from the same lack of proof.

Sustainable Settlement in the Brazilian Amazon, by the late Anna Luíza Ozório de Almeida and João Campari, is a more narrowly focused study on how to raise the incomes of small farmers in order to reduce their need to deforest. In a provocative diagnosis of the current situation, the authors argue that in the 1990s, migration from outside the region is no longer the principal threat to deforestation because the flow of migrants has stopped (a view not shared by the authors of *Contested Frontiers in Amazonia*). Rather, the danger now comes mainly from migration by small farmers within the region. Almeida and Campari's interpretation of the sources of internal migration is congruent with other accounts, although their economic analysis is more fully developed. Intra-regional migration stems from Brazil's macroeconomic imbalances of the 1980s and 1990s and their effect on property values on the frontier. When the price of agricultural products dropped relative to the worth of land as a hedge against inflation, smallholders sold out to urban landowners in prosperous Southern Brazil or the cities of Amazonia, who then converted the farms to pasture for ranching. Lack of supplements to their livelihood drove the small farmers deeper into the forest to clear out new subsistence plots, and the cycle began all over again.

Almeida and Campari advance several policy prescriptions for containing intra-regional migration to new frontiers. In many respects, they resemble the recommendations made by Annis et al. Their purpose is to make the economic incentives for farming on old frontiers without encroaching on the forest greater than the incentives to move on or expand existing holdings. Such proposals include an array of approaches: promoting productive farming through zoning, rural extension, and credit policies; taxing agricultural incomes to penalize farmers who deforest; punishing land speculation by taxing capital gains on real estate transactions; penalizing deforestation directly by higher stumpage taxes and fines for forestry law violations.

Sustainable Settlement in the Brazilian Amazon has several strengths and a few weaknesses. Its strengths include the fine exposition of the many economic factors driving deforestation in Amazonia, especially by smallholders. The appendices contain much useful data, and the discus-

sion credibly links macro and micro economic levels of analysis without neglecting key institutional variables. But as the authors themselves point out, the principal problem is that smallholder behavior is isolated from larger patterns of Amazonian occupation and other factors affecting deforestation.

A Conservation Assessment of the Terrestrial Ecoregions of Latin America and the Caribbean is an excellent example of studies offering information intended to influence the conservation strategies of policy makers in national governments, multilateral banks, and international organizations. This book is the only one under review that deals exclusively with habitat protection and management rather than human beings. It identifies 191 ecoregions according to their biological value and degree of vulnerability. The authors, most affiliated with the World Wildlife Fund, establish a hierarchy of habitat types that emphasizes representation of all distinct ecosystems. These types provide the data for setting regional priorities. Ecoregion status is determined by the amount of habitat loss, the number of remaining blocks of intact habitat, and their size. In addition to the conservation status, the biological distinctiveness of each ecoregion determines the setting of geographic priorities for conservation. The volume's main limitation, as the authors point out, is that it utilizes a coarse scale and therefore can identify neither "where the most important investments should be made within ecoregions nor what to do at those sites to conserve biodiversity" (p. 46). Presumably, some of those decisions would have to address the socioeconomic causes of biodiversity loss.

The Politics of Conservation and Sustainable Development

Defending the Land of the Jaguar: A History of Conservation in Mexico confronts those socioeconomic issues in an engaging history of conservation policy in Mexico from the pre-Columbian era through the administration of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994). In the telling, Lane Simonian develops a political interpretation of the outcomes. His analysis accounts for the ebb and flow of Mexican conservation policy from a dialectical and state-centric perspective, focusing on forests, soil, and wildlife.

A central question of the book is, under what conditions were key individuals successful in advancing conservation policy? Following the lead of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN 1980), Simonian defines conservation policy as measures that protect habitat and wildlife by combining sustainable use of natural renewable resources with preservation. Given widespread rural poverty, successful conservation policy must address the livelihood needs of the poor, preferably through grassroots development initiatives. Yet the socioeconomic structure of Mexico also demands attention to sustainable use by large-

scale business and landowners. Simonian argues that preservation efforts that ignore these factors are doomed to failure.

Simonian frames conservation history in Mexico according to the traditional periodization: pre-Columbian, colonial, independence to revolution, the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas, the years of stabilizing development (from the 1940s through the 1960s), the oil boom of the 1970s to the economic crisis of the 1980s, and from there to the present. For each era after the pre-Columbian, the author lays out the political conditions that affected the efforts of key individuals to forge Mexican conservation policy.

The political model used in *Defending the Land of the Jaguar* is largely state-centric and recalls Peter Haas's epistemic community model (1990). In highly centralized authoritarian systems such as that of Mexico, the apex of power is located in the chief executive. This individual's stance toward natural resource use and conservation therefore determines the measure of support given to conservationists. Yet even when political leaders have been interested in addressing the environment, they have had little substantive knowledge of this highly technical issue area. They consequently have hired experts at middle levels of the bureaucracy to formulate policy. In Mexico and in many other Latin American countries, such experts are drawn from the ranks of committed activist professionals in academia or think tanks. A second crucial factor is the degree of cohesion of the policy-making team responsible for conservation policy within and across government agencies. The outlook is most favorable if the president favors conservation and puts together a policy-making team that shares conceptions of cause and effect and coordinates across agencies. This concurrence characterized the colonial period, the Cárdenas era, and the most recent periods. At other times, the situation was reversed and conservation efforts foundered. Even under the best of circumstances, establishing conservation policy in Mexico has been an uphill battle.

Simonian also shows how politically favorable periods correlated with those of institutional development. But even with favorable conditions, those institutions were challenged and sometimes overwhelmed by lack of enforcement capability. He asserts that more effective and consistent policy depends on expanding social support for conservation. Ecological associations must raise consciousness of the issue if Mexico's environmental problems are to be solved.

Defending the Land of the Jaguar is highly readable and informative and places Mexican conservation in an international context, especially in relation to the United States. Yet while its account of politics within the state rings true, the relationship between state and society is not articulated with equal clarity. At key points, Simonian shows how Mexican political leaders weighed the costs and benefits of conservation policy against their political support from industrial and landowning interests. But the social sources of support for environmental policy and the al-

liances that they might have formed to generate political influence remain underexplored.

In contrast, *Forests and Livelihoods: The Social Dynamics of Deforestation in Developing Countries* methodically explores the political economy of the social dynamics of deforestation in developing countries, with cases from Brazil, Central America, Tanzania, and Nepal. Solon Barraclough and Krishna Ghimire examine how international and domestic economic and political factors force peasants, smallholders, and indigenous peoples to deforest increasingly larger tracts to survive. They also review the successes and failures of various approaches taken to stem the destruction.

At the core, *Forests and Livelihoods* analyzes how the extension of capitalist relations of production in the developing world have robbed rural populations, forest dwellers in particular, of alternatives to deforestation in their struggle for survival. Given this diagnosis, Barraclough and Ghimire argue that population pressure or any other monocausal explanation cannot account for the problem of deforestation, nor can any single solution rectify the current unsustainable course. Instead, the dilemma of sustainable development has to be understood in relation to the role of developing countries in the world economic system and how that affects their agrarian and resource extraction policies. As the world economy has expanded from colonial times to the present, domestic economic and political elites have entered into alliances with international forces to change traditional land-tenure patterns, technological “packages,” and the settlement practices of local peoples.

Given this perspective in the book, political-economy criteria largely (but not exclusively) define actors and their interests. These criteria include location in the structure of production, occupation, status, and ethnicity in the case of indigenous peoples. Dominant social groups, in their thirst to control extraction of natural resources, rely on their control of political and economic institutions to enact policies that effectively dispossess and displace subordinate social groups. The market structures supported by those dominant groups and their international allies have the same effect.

These processes cause unchecked deforestation, with highly negative impacts at the local, regional, national, and global levels. Locally, residents suffer from decreased fuelwood and construction materials, an impoverished diet, decreased agricultural yields, and changes in microclimates. The decline in livelihood alternatives for local inhabitants due to agricultural modernization has also encouraged migration by displaced rural populations, siltation of rivers, soil erosion, and possible negative contributions to greenhouse gases and global warming.

What can be done in the face of this onslaught? *Forests and Livelihoods* examines how local communities attempt to defend themselves from this depredation. They forge alliances with international conserva-

tion nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), officials sympathetic to their causes in state and local government, international organizations, political parties, social movements, and organized peasant and labor groups. These alliances open political space for policies that offer livelihood alternatives to forest dwellers and rural populations living near forests. The book does an excellent job of summarizing these alternatives. In the end, however, Barraclough and Ghimire remain pessimistic about the prospects. They conclude that much effort, personal sacrifice, and risk are undertaken with little to show. The authors argue that nothing significant will happen until development is redefined, although the battleground for that campaign is not the poor "South" but the rich "North."

Barraclough and Ghimire speak most clearly on the political economy of unsustainable development and its impact on local communities and deforestation. As in *Defending the Land of the Jaguar*, however, their argument is weakest on the politics of generating sustainable development. Ultimately, the authors assert that external conditionality could force southern governments and their socioeconomic elites to adopt some policies favorable for sustainable development at the grassroots. But they lack a clear vision of what kind of politics might produce that change in orientation in developed countries. Nor do they seem to grasp the linkages between those international institutions and local forces. Their assessment is bleak, a view that is easy to slip into, given the dimensions of the problem.

Contested Frontiers in Amazonia lucidly tackles these issues from a more hopeful point of view. It analyzes the process of frontier change in the Brazilian Amazonian state of Pará from the colonial period to the early 1990s. Authors Marianne Schmink and Charles Wood show how the competition for resources among social groups and the varying degrees of power that they mobilize explain current processes of deforestation and rural violence as well as settlement patterns in the region. The authors focus primarily on the struggle for grassroots development initiatives.

Schmink and Wood start from the premise that contests over the control of resources drive politics in Brazilian Amazonia. They explicitly link actors and their interests to international and domestic economic and political structures. Actors, whether international or domestic, are embedded in a world capitalist system and can be categorized into dominant and subordinate social groups. Dominant social groups are members of a "tri-pe," a triple alliance of state actors, transnational economic forces, and domestic capital (Evans 1979). In the context of frontier expansion in Amazonia, these actors include executive branch institutions (at federal, state, and local levels), public enterprises, ranchers, large-scale landowners, and transnational corporations. The main subordinate social groups are native peoples, peasants, migrants, rubber tappers, and placer miners (also known as *garimpeiros*).

Schmink and Wood posit that dominant and subordinate actors are

embedded in a matrix of economic and political conditions that shape their power resources. These circumstances include macroeconomic conditions, such as economic growth and monetary stability; the form of government, whether dictatorships are in their prime or subject to redemocratization and democracy; and cohesion of the state apparatus in the policy-making process, especially among political parties in the legislative branch. Dominant actors use political-institutional and economic advantage, external sources, and repression to wrestle resources—commodities, land, and labor—from the subordinate social groups. The latter, however, do not remain passive or submissive. They practice the politics of resistance, marshaling their own political, institutional, organizational, and external sources of support to retain control over the resources on which their livelihood depends. Because the factors in the matrix change over time, the power relations between dominant and subordinate actors shift as well. Consequently, subordinate social groups are not always vanquished, although their victories are generally partial.

In narrative form, Schmink and Wood analyze how these factors affected deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution, and wildlife depletion in Pará. They also consider how changes in the matrix contributed to policies for sustainable development at the grassroots. In the initial matrix, the repressive capability of a strong military government in a booming economy allowed members of the triple coalition to wrest land and labor from Amazonian colonists in the 1970s. Economic hard times in the 1980s fueled a sharp increase in land grabbing by socioeconomic elites as a hedge against inflation. But economic problems and political liberalization weakened the repressive capacity of the state. This outcome led to bloody private violence on the frontier while offering subordinate groups political space for resistance (with the state sometimes siding with them, as with the *garimpeiros*). Brazil's return to democracy allowed the formation of a grand coalition made up of grassroots organizations, Brazilian political parties, local and international NGOs, and the U.S. Congress. This coalition favored grassroots development solutions for subordinate social groups, notably the establishment of extractive reserves as well as title and demarcation for Indian lands.² Dominant social groups then used their leverage in the Brazilian legislature to weaken those bills, although they could not defeat the bills outright.

Contested Frontiers in Amazonia works well in showing how actors and their interests are firmly anchored in political and economic structure. Power resources are clearly spelled out and used consistently on the whole. In telling the story, Schmink and Wood adroitly establish the nexus between environmentally friendly grassroots development and the liveli-

2. Extractive reserves set aside extensive areas of forest for the near exclusive use of forest dwellers who extract economic resources from the forest without destroying it beyond the point of spontaneous regeneration. One such extractive activity is rubber tapping.

hood concerns of local peoples. This connection was the glue that held the coalition together. Moreover, shifting the analysis from the national level to the regional and local levels gives wonderful texture to the study.

At the same time, one wishes for more consistent use of the explanatory factors themselves. For example, discussion of international variables occurs in an ad hoc manner. Unions are ignored as an important source of organizational strength for some subordinate social groups. More significantly, use of the term *matrix* to establish connections between variables and outcomes obscures both the relationship between explanatory factors and the identification of patterns for comparative purposes. This problem becomes more apparent as the analysis shifts from the national to the regional and local levels. These shortcomings aside, *Contested Frontiers in Amazonia* is a valuable contribution to the literature on the political economy of Brazilian Amazonia, one that successfully combines rich analysis with crisp narrative.

No account of the struggle for land and livelihood in Amazonia could be complete without reference to the role played by Christian base communities in organizing resistance to land grabbing and the violence that accompanied it. These groups of ten to sixty persons gather weekly for Bible study. Although often organized by priests or nuns, they are usually led by laypersons. *Promised Land: Base Christian Communities and the Struggle for the Amazon* links participation in these grassroots church groups to activism for land reform and sustainable development. Author Madeleine Cousineau Adriance roots land hunger in the familiar pattern of Brazil's economic development model and its environmental and social effects in Amazonia. In this context, Christian base communities organized mobilization against mounting violations of human rights visited on the poor in the region. The communities also helped forge broader alliances with other sectors of the organized poor, such as unions—a course that led to the establishment of extractive reserves. *Promised Land* documents how religious belief, facilitated by religious organization, motivated political resistance to increasing insecurity. These political movements were inspired by deep religious commitment and were not dominated by Marxists, as critics have suggested.

Forests in International Environmental Politics: International Organizations, NGOs, and the Brazilian Amazon is perhaps the most theoretically self-conscious work in this set of books. It uses the issue area of the forest to propose an international political-economy approach to the politics of environment and development, again focusing on Brazil. More than the previous works, it addresses linkages between the international and domestic levels throughout the policy-making process—from agenda setting to formulation to implementation.

Ans Kolk also offers a more nuanced treatment of the dependent variables. Whereas the other books reviewed thus far focus on grassroots

development exclusively, Kolk identifies three approaches to the problem of environment, development, and the plight of the forest. Each carries its own set of assumptions about the degree of compatibility between environment and development, the locus for solutions, the role of the state, and the actors required to bring about change. On the basis of these characteristics, Kolk distinguishes among neoliberal, environmental regulatory, and transformative environmental approaches. He analyses how actors, interests, and power cluster around those stances. Kolk then examines how the play of forces among them influence the degree to which key United Nations conferences and Brazilian legislation favor one approach over another.

To recreate the scenario, Kolk tells the story of how the Brazilian military government, its development model, and the triple alliance stimulated frontier expansion via colonization and the appropriation of subsidies by elites, resulting in massive social dislocation and deforestation. Given the Brazilian government's resistance to change even after democracy was restored, it took the internationalization of the forest issue to get it on the domestic policy agenda. That process had its roots in the World Commission on Environment and Development's definition of sustainable development, the discovery of the global environmental function of forests in climate change, and the international campaign against the World Bank led by U.S. environmental NGOs. International NGOs melded concern over the global environmental function of forests with the WCED's concept of sustainable development to forge coalitions of subordinate social groups in Brazil, brought representatives to lobby in the United States, and generated a public campaign to pressure the U.S. Congress to force the World Bank to halt destructive practices in Amazonia. In this instance, external factors tipped the balance in favor of the Brazilian grassroots development coalition. The grand coalition drew its policy prescriptions from the environmental-regulatory as well as the transformative interpretations of sustainable development. Extractive reserves, Indian rights, and other measures were introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In recounting this partial victory, Kolk traces how supporters of a neoliberal approach to the sustainable development of forests mounted a counterattack. They reshaped the global environmental institutions emerging from the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in more market-friendly directions that were pro-private sector. Meanwhile, the World Bank transformed itself from the ogre of the environmental movement into a major proponent of market-friendly environmentalism. Backed by the Group of Seven (an organization of industrially advanced countries), the World Bank assumed primary responsibility for administering the newly created Global Environmental Facility. Further efforts to promote the sustainable development of forests from any per-

spective, however, were stymied. During the UNCED, countries in the Southern Hemisphere blocked new forest regulation to check their exploitation. Meanwhile, northern countries avoided committing additional resources for biodiversity conservation, grassroots development, and institutional strengthening. These trends have crippled implementation of Pilot Programme for the Brazilian Amazon.

Forests in International Environmental Politics represents a significant contribution to the international political economy of environment and development. It is also a useful source of information on recent international forestry organizations and programs. It could have been more precise in several areas, however. The book begins with a useful overview of the implications of realist, liberal, and radical theorizing for analyzing environment and development. But the relationship between these approaches and Kolk's own work remains unclear. Does the author wish to contribute to the literature on regime building by analyzing the difficulties of constructing an international regime for forests? If so, what is the connection between regime theory and political economy? And although the book shows how the internationalization of the forest issue affected the responses of the Brazilian government, the analysis falters in systematically determining how international factors affect domestic politics.

Many of the texts reviewed here examine the role of NGOs in the environmental issue area. *The Road from Rio: Sustainable Development and the Nongovernmental Movement in the Third World* offers a useful account of one specific type: the grassroots organization (GRO). Julie Fischer argues that GROs are key to bottom-up development because they empower the poor to challenge entrenched socioeconomic and political interests. They are also the only vehicle for popular participation in institutional development. Fischer makes several vital observations: forming networks of GROs increases their power; the success of development projects hinges on working with existing GROs; and GROs should seek broader coalitions with social movements and ties to universities. A sounder theoretical introduction would have strengthened the book and allowed Fischer to suggest a strategy for turning these sensible prescriptions into reality.

Political Economy, Sustainable Development, and Politics

These nine books contribute to an emerging research agenda in the political economy of the politics of sustainable development. Concentrating on forests, they specify policies and practices conducive to sustainable development at the grassroots. Actors, interests, and power are firmly linked to international and domestic economic and political structure. The role of knowledge is factored in, but coalitional behavior among actors is the key to understanding outcomes.

The books also outline the tasks necessary to strengthen this emerg-

ing research agenda, such as greater specification of the consequences of development. Sustainable development has no single definition. This amorphousness bedevils scientists, but it lies at the heart of the politics of the matter. What are the criteria that inform interpretations of sustainable development other than the grassroots development approach? Kolk is on the right track in offering useful suggestions that could be refined further. This step is crucial to understanding the agenda-setting and formulation stages of the policy process (Redclift 1987; Pearce and Turner 1990). The issue is no longer sustainable development versus unsustainable development but rather several related questions: which perspective will prevail, who will benefit, with what technologies and economic organization, and in relation to what kind of social and political order?

A more thorny problem remains. The books under review recognize that international, social-group, state, and ideational factors are necessary but insufficient to explain outcomes. But what is the relationship between them? Paralleling Haas (1990), Simonian illuminates processes within the state but falters in handling the effect of social forces on state actors. Schmink and Wood and Kolk take this point up to varying degrees, but they have difficulty systematizing their analysis.

One solution is to build on international political economy approaches that explore how and when these factors are relevant in the policy process, rather than focusing on whether state-centric or society-centric conditions explain most of the variance (Gourevitch 1986; Haggard 1990; Migdal 1994; Haggard and Kaufman 1995). My own study has suggested that state-centric factors and ideas are most significant in the initial stages of the policy-formulation process, while society-centric dimensions weigh more in the ultimate outcome. International factors tip the balance of power among domestic forces (Silva 1997).

Equally important, more careful specification of each factor is required, as is consideration of the question of power. Thinking about these factors as clusters of variables and carefully distinguishing among them may prove helpful. From there, analysis can focus on how the structural variables affect the power resources of actors. The causes of coalition formation and coalitions as a sum of power are additional dimensions that deserve meticulous attention. A rich theoretical literature in international relations and comparative politics can be tapped in this effort.

The politics of sustainable development at the grass roots is also the politics of social movements. Thus the literature on this subject can make a significant contribution to a political-economy approach, especially a research model focused on the concept of "political opportunity structure" (Tarrow 1996; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). Many of the variables considered are similar to those employed in political economy. Key questions include: what influences the origin, power, and dynamics of a movement; how do movements affect the policy process; and what happens to

movements once they begin to participate in the policy process? The literature is useful in focusing on the outsider status of the social forces under examination and their struggle for inclusion in the political agenda. The political-economy approach could prove helpful to sharpening the political and economic dimensions of the problem in both international and domestic arenas.

Finally, we come to the problem of comparison across cases. Many analysts in the field of environmental studies eschew it. They argue that the complexities and historical specificities of each case or locality do not lend themselves to the task. Yet the absence of systematic comparison hinders generating and testing hypotheses for theory building. Methodologies exist for preserving historical specificity while making comparisons (Skocpol 1984; Tilly 1984; Smith 1995). Cases can be selected for contrasting characteristics in which their unique features explain divergent trajectories. They can also be selected to show how crucial similarities or differences account for variation on a dependent variable. Regardless of the method used, the exercise requires careful specification of the problem, the factors that explain it, and the relationship between the two. Resorting more explicitly to historically anchored political-economy theorizing and applying it to the problem of environment and development might improve understanding of the issue and theoretical approaches to it.

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