

*The Ecopolitics of Development in the Third World: Politics and Environment in Brazil.* By ROBERTO P. GUIMARÃES. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991. Notes. Bibliography. Index. vii, 271 pp. Cloth. \$36.50.

This is an ambitious book. By studying environmental problems brought out by Brazil's economic growth, Guimarães wants to illuminate the workings of the political system; by arguing that environmental problems are fundamentally political rather than technical, he wants to situate "ecopolitics" theoretically and historically. Throughout, environmental issues are seen as integrally linked with other elements of Brazil's socioeconomic development rather than as a separate policy sphere, and Guimarães rejects the separation too often made in the social sciences between policy studies and historically grounded political and institutional analysis. The book draws on a wide range of documentary sources and some interviews, as well as the author's experience in Brazilian planning institutions.

The first section of the book gives a rapid overview of theories of ecological crisis and introduces the notion of ecopolitics; the second is a somewhat sweeping journey through Brazilian history from the colonial period to the present, looking at resource extraction, development policies, and especially the evolution of the technobureaucratic state apparatus. The book's major contribution is in the third section. It offers a fine assessment of Brazil's position at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm that challenges the prevalent and simplistic characterization of Brazil as a "spoiler" there. And it gives an account of the origins and early history of major environmental institutions and policies at the national level, as well as the bureaucratic logic that rendered them largely ineffective.

No other book has done this, and this one is essential reading for anyone interested in getting beyond newspaper headlines that simply demonize Brazil's environmental behavior. Nevertheless, however welcome its breadth may be in this sense, it is also a source of frustration. The emphasis on the logic and structure of bureaucratic organizations often begs the question of how things actually happen. A good example is the reiterated claim that despite its lack of power and resources, SEMA, the national environmental secretariat, has done a remarkable job. We're never told what it did that was remarkable, nor are we given any information on how it was able to be so. The explanation would have required delving below the macro level at which the analysis is pitched to explore strategic behavior and alliance building by environmental officials. This, plus more actual stories of environmental conflicts (instead of cursory references to them) would have strengthened the book considerably and would have reinforced, not detracted from, the author's desire to link bureaucratic politics to more general social processes. Without some notion of the political opportunities available as well as the constraints, the positive developments outlined briefly in the last chapter are not grounded in the story told in the rest of the book.

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