

Book Reviews

Aubertin, Catherine, and Estienne Rodary, eds. 2011. *Protected Areas, Sustainable Land?* Surrey, England: Ashgate Press.

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While many who study the environment accept as positive the establishment of protected areas, editors Catherine Aubertin and Estienne Rodary take normative judgments out of the equation and artfully demonstrate the complex political, economic, and social dynamics of the increasing number of protected areas on our planet. Protected areas, used as a tool of sustainable development, have expanded in their scope and purposes to cross territorial and societal boundaries. International agreements, financing mechanisms, and institutions create new barriers and opportunities for sustainable development. Protected areas bring up potential conflicts between nature and society. In addition, local and global connections forged for their protection may allow states to fulfill international agreements, but at the cost of saving their prized biosphere or world heritage sites through the requirements and loss of control of international financing.

The authors in this edited volume skillfully examine the conflicts and modes of consensus that arise from these new global management structures, and suggest new areas of analysis and investigation. They highlight a set of profound questions for those of us who study environmental policy and biodiversity: What is the role of science and scientists? How do our studies and findings affect not only the conservation of nature, but also the wellbeing of the societies that function within it?

The book is divided into three sections: discussion of the expansion and types of protected areas (marine and terrestrial), examination of the tools used to protect them, and case studies on the various types of protected areas on the planet. Core strengths of this analysis are the examination of understudied issues such as marine protected areas and their links with terrestrial and networked coastal areas, the relationship between international environmental law and protected areas, a comparison of African and Amazonian protected areas, and a comparative analysis of French versus U.S. perspectives on conservation. These case analyses are not only rich in environmental policy, but also include significant scientific explanations that inform the findings.

The authors redefine protected areas not as static museums, as they were in the late-1800s and early 1900s, but rather as dynamic ecological reserves with diverse societal groups that interact within them. Notably, the authors point out the difficulties of marine protected areas (MPAs) as they interact with other

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coastal and terrestrial areas. Such socioenvironmental contention about protected areas is a theme throughout this work. For instance, tropical forest protection may be a welcome form of protection for indigenous peoples, as demonstrated in the chapter on the Brazilian Amazon, but local fishing communities often oppose MPAs as a threat to their livelihoods.

The international call for increased terrestrial and marine protection has created a powerful role for international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), referred to in this volume as the “central operators of sustainable development” (p. 5). These INGOs have created governance and financial structures that protect areas but may not include local peoples in the process. In Madagascar, for example, INGOs are part of the trust fund governance structure for protected areas. International classifications of protected areas, such as world heritage sites and biosphere reserves, also limit sovereignty, as states must conform to these international standards to avoid being removed from such lists. Mexico faced this issue when the World Heritage Commission threatened to remove its El Vizcaino Whale Sanctuary from the list when a proposed salt production plant posed threats to the pacific gray whale population in the vicinity.

Yet local societies can be empowered by these new global governance structures. In the case of the Kayapó and Yanomami peoples in the Brazilian Amazon, protected areas were formed to protect human and environmental biodiversity. NGOs have supported indigenous organizations against the denigration of their territories by outside mining and agricultural interests. In other cases, protected areas have increased conflicts between state and society. In Western and Eastern Africa, state park rangers have violently resisted pastoralists who use protected areas to move cattle herds, threatening both the human populations and the distinct bovine breeds that roam these areas.

The local-global complexities are also underscored in analysis of financial tools used to support the protected areas. While the government of Madagascar, for instance, committed to conserving 50 percent of its area following the 2003 World Parks Congress in Durban, financial crises and lack of funding have forced it to look to the international level for financing. States often make promises at the international level for conservation, but are unable to deliver at state or local levels. Low park fees and five-year contracts from INGOs (such as Conservation International and World Wildlife Fund) may impel states to look to market options, such as carbon trade, to finance protection.

This engaging text takes the reader on a journey from local forest peoples to international environmental law and into the depths of the oceans. It promotes a re-thinking of environmental policy and calls for new dynamic models for local-global connections in global environmental governance studies. While more of the voice of local peoples and state officials could have been presented, the central focus of the book on the international level and its impacts on protected areas for sustainable development is an enormous contribution to our understanding of these issues.