

Book Reviews

Stevenson, Hayley, and John S. Dryzek. 2014. *Democratizing Global Climate Governance*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Reviewed by Ayşem Mert
University of Duisburg-Essen

In the aftermath of the failure that was the twentieth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 20) in Lima, Peru, how are we to imagine (let alone actually construct) a more effective as well as more democratic climate regime? There is little indication that the next COP in Paris will be any different; dissensus, contestation, and inertia characterize the global climate regime despite increasing popular interest and grassroots activism on climate policies. The authors of *Democratizing Global Climate Governance* seem fully aware of the need for inclusion and deliberation on policies of global warming. Not only do they provide a timely intervention to debates in IR relating to authoritarian and/or ecologically hostile responses to climate change, but they also provide compelling evidence that a UNFCCC reformed with deliberative ideals could be an efficacious starting point to address the climate crisis.

The book's core purpose is to investigate how deliberative democratic governance can respond to the various challenges that humanity faces as the climate crisis deepens. To do this, the authors analyze the main premises and conditions of deliberation, particularly authenticity and reflexivity (as proposed by a long line of scholars working on deliberative models of democracy) and propose their inclusion in climate governance. This empirical work focuses mainly on the existing international regime on climate change and its various loci, thereby going beyond the UNFCCC. Governance networks, public-private partnerships, climate activism, and popular initiatives are studied systematically from a deliberative governance perspective.

Stevenson and Dryzek begin by problematizing claims that democracy is either not feasible or not desirable in global (climate) governance. First they discredit what they call "the authoritarian temptation" (p. 5–6): the suggestion that climate change is a super-wicked problem and therefore democracy must be put on hold for a while. They point to the necessity of democracy for effective problem-solving and the implausibility of global authoritarianism. They note that authoritarianism often results in less environmental protection and that reflective public opinion favors a stronger climate regime. Second, the authors question the arguments of mainstream governance and IR that object to democracy in the international system. While prominent democratic theorists and IR scholars argue that "democracy is something that can be an aspiration for the

states—but not for [the international system]” (p. 6), Stevenson and Dryzek argue that global democratic practices do not resemble liberal democratic systems, suggesting that representative democracy is not applicable on the global level. Various other democratizing practices—even those impossible in current liberal democracies—can nevertheless be operationalized at the global level, particularly when democratization is regarded as a matter of degree rather than as a binary (present or absent) choice. Furthermore, scholars of IR and governance have focused on concepts such as accountability and transparency in order to address legitimacy issues in global decision-making, only recently including deliberation in global democracy debates.

The empirical analysis is rich and deep. The authors focus on deliberation and the main components of a deliberative system: private, public, and empowered spaces; transmission across these spheres; accountability; meta-deliberation; and decisiveness. While the starting point is the international system and the UNFCCC’s potential for deliberative practices, later chapters focus on more diffused modes of authority, such as governance networks and specific public-private partnerships working on various aspects of climate change.

The book ends with several sensible and well-argued proposals to reform global climate governance, one of which is especially intriguing. The authors argue that particular nation-states and civil society organizations could represent particular discourses on a deliberative minilateral platform: “[I]t is possible to interpret non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activists in their normal activities as discursive representatives” (p. 196). Although representing discourses in a deliberative platform might be a legitimate reform to democratize climate governance, there are two problems that the authors do not reflect upon. First, the assumption that a single actor can represent a particular discourse simplifies processes of identity formation around discourses. Discourse coalitions are formed among actors with various viewpoints, and hegemonic contestations take place regularly between them. Deliberation among actors representing discourses can hardly result in legitimate decisions for all involved and affected, as actors would be representing one version of a larger ideological framework. Second, the practical issue of how to exclude from the process actors who believe they have something to say remains unresolved. When several similar processes emerge, competition, fragmentation, and hegemonic contestations seem to follow naturally, as happened with certification practices in the 1990s. An example is the competition between the Forest Stewardship Council, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, and various national timber certification programs (such as the Sustainable Forestry Initiative in the US, the Malaysian Timber Certification Council, the Australian Forestry Standard, and Keurhout in the Netherlands). There is no guarantee that minilateral deliberation platforms on climate change will not experience the same kind of competition.

Similar problems occur in every policy suggestion made about the imperative to democratize global climate governance. This timely volume is likely to

lead to critical debates about the subject and inspire deliberative practices in other areas of environmental governance.

Md Saidul Islam. 2014. *Confronting the Blue Revolution: Industrial Aquaculture and Sustainability in the Global South*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Reviewed by Rachel G. Tiller
SINTEF, Trondheim, Norway

Industrialized aquaculture is anchored in the ambitions of the “neoliberal globalization project” (p. 54), which aimed to provide a sustainable source of food for an ever-growing hungry global population. In *Confronting the Blue Revolution*, author Md Saidul Islam argues that industrialized aquaculture instead resulted in exploitation of the global South by privileged consumers in the developed countries of the North. The book is filled with insights from years of ethnographic research primarily in Bangladesh, with shrimp farming in ponds used as the case industry. The book provides in-depth analysis of the complex political, economic, and social dynamics surrounding the growth and proliferation of this industry.

The book does not really critique industrialization of aquaculture, as both the title and the abstract suggest it will. Rather, it introduces the problematization of the private regulatory regime, driven by the public through global quality certification schemes, which are seen as exemplifying a “paradigm shift in state power” (p. 161). These private certification schemes are motivated by the consciences of consumers in the developed North, molded by national and international NGOs emphasizing “soft” quality variables (such as employment and environmental issues), as well as by needs of powerful buyers such as Walmart.

The book uses two different lenses: the more overarching *Global Needs* angle (part I) and the more intimate and direct *Local Effects* angle (part II), though the two perspectives are intertwined throughout the book, emphasizing their interdependence. Islam also proposes a new model for understanding these dual quality governance processes of the global agri-food system, naming it the “twin-driven commodity chain.” In Part I, he lays out the conceptual foundations for this model, introducing and highlighting the interlinked institutional framework of the global agri-food system at the macro scale. He highlights core challenges to both the institutional system and ecosystems as a result of the global pressures for shrimp and other aquaculture commodities. As Islam says, the Blue Revolution emerged out of a need “to open up the natural resource pool of the global South to satisfy the appetites of wealthy consumers in the global North” (p. 49), which he (and others) derisively refer to as neoliberalism. He points out that most consumers do not consider the local consequences in communities of the global South of this exploitation.

The emerging power of international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both environmental and socially driven, brought “soft” quality variables to the table via private international regulation and certification