

# Book Reviews

Bennett, Brett. 2015. *Plantations and Protected Areas: A Global History of Forest Management*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

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*Plantations and Protected Areas* provides a historical overview of changes in forest management models and the ways that developing and developed countries have attempted to reconcile forest protection with exploitation. The main argument is that globalization has caused the fall of the conservation model, which embraced the integration of forest conservation and extraction. Instead, what emerged beginning in the 1980s was what Bennett calls “forest management divergence,” between two processes: the creation of forest plantations for timber production, and of protected areas for conservation.

The main focus of the book is the history of forestry science itself, and how it has shaped forest management and policy in both the developing and the developed worlds. Bennett traces a rich history of forestry, from its emergence in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, until what he argues is its decline in the 21st century. We learn about the origins of forest science in Germany, and how early thinkers espoused the idea of sustainable harvest of wood. We also learn that one of the great forestry experiments—the creation, and worldwide expansion, of plantations of exotic species (namely eucalyptus)—ended up creating severe side effects, such as forest degradation and loss of income in local economies.

In the last two chapters, Bennett discusses the re-emergence of calls for protected forests and the public’s discontent with the clear-cutting of native forests. He argues that this period also saw a decline in the legitimacy of traditional forestry and the rise of other sciences, such as conservation biology. He also provides a wealth of information and history about the power of individuals in shaping and influencing forest management worldwide, from Hans Carl von Carlowitz, whose writings on timber protection inspired forestry thinkers in the late 18th century, to Jack Westoby, a former high-ranking official at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), whose views on forestry and development evolved and influenced the organization.

One of the limitations of the book is that its title promises a global history of forest management, but its discussion focuses on only a few countries in depth. It sometimes reads more like a detailed analysis of the history of forestry in the United States and other developed countries. This does not minimize the importance of the book in providing a general overview of forestry via specific cases, but it is worth noting the limitations of the term “global.” The book also does not include international forest politics. There are sparse references to the FAO and the World Heritage Convention, but the book does not at all discuss key international processes that have shaped the discourse of forest management and protection, starting with the International Tropical Timber Agreement in the 1980s, extending through the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the 1990s, to the United Nations Forum on Forests in the 2000s.

Despite these gaps, the book is an accessible and interesting read for anyone who is looking to learn more about forestry and the challenges of forest protection. It illuminates the historical roots of many of today’s disagreements over forest management. For instance, Bennett explains that early on in the emergence of forest science, foresters blamed forest dwellers as the perpetrators of deforestation and forest degradation, and “argued that the private sector and individuals living near forests could not be trusted to sustainably manage forests in perpetuity” (p. 22). This belief has prevailed until recently (and still does, in some countries), preventing traditional and indigenous communities from managing their own land.

Toward the end of the book, Bennett suggests a shift in forest management processes to becoming more interdisciplinary and inclusive of local communities, a recommendation that has featured in national debates and international negotiations for the past decade. Some of his other suggestions include putting a higher price on timber and decentralizing forest-related decision-making. More importantly, he argues that “public and forest experts should be wary of embracing policies that entirely decouple timber production from forest protection,” and that “decoupling production from protection will continue to devalue the cost of native forest timber” (p. 151).

These recommendations do not seem to target a specific country or group of countries, and one may wonder what types of conditions would have to be in place to make them work in both developing and developed countries. What is also missing are stories in which forest management, in any form, has actually succeeded. The author notes that “numerous examples of successful selective management programs that have been developed for a diverse range of ecological and social systems have emerged” (p. 155), but we do not hear about them.

Still, the focus on mistakes and misconceptions that have been carried out since the 18th century is useful. Bennett’s book is a necessary and important narrative of past wrongs, one that can inform forest protection and management in the 21st century and beyond.

Markham, William T., and Lotsmart Fonjong. 2015. *Saving the Environment in Sub-Saharan Africa: Organizational Dynamics and Effectiveness of NGOs in Cameroon*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

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*Saving the Environment in Sub-Saharan Africa* provides much needed insight into the landscape of environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in a context where data and information are not yet readily available. William T. Markham and Lotsmart Fonjong undertook the laborious task of surveying fifty-two environmental NGOs in Cameroon to conduct an organizational analysis, provide a comparative overview, and illustrate the vast internal diversity of that country's NGO sector. This book offers a direct challenge to a literature that has tended to portray NGOs as "ideal types," and in so doing it offers a comprehensive summary of the heterogeneous goals, structures, strategies, and activities of the NGOs in their sample.

Given that many of Africa's environmental challenges have global ramifications and affect development outcomes in ways that increasingly draw the attention of nonstate actors, this book is both timely and relevant. The authors define environmental NGOs as "nonprofit organizations pursuing environmental goals that are formed voluntarily, are not agencies of government, and are at least somewhat formalized; that is, they have established goals, rules, and procedures and formally established leadership roles" (p. 41). Because the authors lacked access to an official list of active NGOs in Cameroon, they note that their sampling methodology had inevitable imperfections. As a compromise to shed light on the range of environmental NGOs in Cameroon, they ensured that the organizations they sampled were diverse in terms of their legal status, size, resources, environmental goals, and geographical locations. While acknowledging that no single country can be considered "typical" for sub-Saharan Africa, they chose Cameroon as a case for this study because it is a country that is arguably "as typical as it gets." Known as "Africa in miniature," Cameroon hosts an array of biodiverse ecosystems. It also features a vast rural population and large urban centers, and it experienced a turbulent colonial history that continues to percolate today in the legacies of French, British, and German rule.

The authors relied on in-depth interviews and a review of relevant documents to conduct a classical organizational analysis. The core questions they set out to answer about NGOs were straightforward: What goals do they choose? What strategies, activities, and structures do they select to pursue their goals? What factors affect their choices? How successful are they in reaching their goals? And what factors affect their success? Markham and Fonjong assert that

this empirical approach is the most suitable for the analysis of Cameroonian NGOs. Its focus on the day-to-day real world of these organizations avoids the scattershot generalizations that overly theoretical orientations on this topic have produced. The book is rooted in an understanding that the academic literature originating in the Global North tends to emphasize liberal democracy and the contributions that NGOs make to democratization processes as part of civil society, or alternatively, to social movements and the politically contentious repertoires of environmental organizations. The authors argue that these perspectives can hardly be applied to the Cameroonian context, where the formation of NGOs was banned until 1990 and confrontational campaigns continue to be rare. Markham and Fonjong address the complex interrelations among the country's colonial legacy, vast internal diversity, economic challenges, and inefficient political system, to present a comprehensive picture of the context that has complicated the development of a vibrant NGO landscape.

This book ultimately elaborates an NGO typology that stands as its most important conceptual and theoretical contribution. Instead of focusing on goal orientation, this categorization homes in on financial resources, staff size, facilities, and levels of expertise. Markham and Fonjong distinguish international NGOs from Cameroonian organizations, and subdivide the latter into two types. International NGOs have headquarters abroad and are comparatively well-funded and well-equipped, due to an international mass-membership base. Cameroonian NGOs, in turn, are funded, led, and staffed by Cameroonians. Type I NGOs can rely on relatively stable levels of funding and several paid employees, including expert staff. Type II NGOs, in contrast, are characterized by unstable funding, inadequate office facilities, and small staff size; at times, an entire organization may be based exclusively on volunteer work. In describing the goals and challenges of these environmental organizations, and their relationships with government, their local communities, and each other, the authors successfully strike a balance between academic theory and development practice. They provide an insightful overview and do not hide the fact that some NGO actors have been coopted by the country's prevailing system of corruption and clientelism, whereas many others have adopted a hands-off approach to avoid government interaction altogether. Environmental NGOs in Cameroon are not necessarily a widespread democratizing force, but they fulfill key roles in local contexts to combat pollution, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and numerous other challenges.

*Saving the Environment in Sub-Saharan Africa* leaves as many questions open as it answers. As an entry point for future comparative work on this topic across countries, the book offers a useful guide for others keen to research the environmental NGO landscape. That said, the study does lack an informative index of the specific organizations, and is devoid of rich descriptions of individual profiles or cases. Readers are inevitably left thirsting for a thicker analysis after being presented with keyword-filled summary tables in the results chapters. The authors could also have offered more illustrative case studies of concrete NGO activities to elucidate their key findings.

Beyond those minor stylistic points, the book was purposefully written to be accessible to both academics and development practitioners. Those looking for a well-structured overview of NGO-related theories will find it in chapter 2. For a comprehensive snapshot of the political, social, economic, and environmental contexts that have shaped and that characterize contemporary Cameroon, turn to chapter 5, which presents a gold mine of quality research for comparative studies. Each chapter is usefully summarized at the end for easy reference, and the final chapter is separated into two sections: one addressing academic readers interested in theory development, and the other outlining research-based recommendations for practitioners. Readers in the academy and beyond will appreciate the book's jargon-free style and clarity. It is worth checking out.

Nicholson, Simon, and Sikina Jinnah, eds. 2016. *New Earth Politics: Essays from the Anthropocene*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

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"We are the asteroid" (p. 5) claim the editors of *New Earth Politics* in their introduction. This expression encapsulates what united some of the leading researchers on global environmental governance in this volume. The result is sixteen "essays from the Anthropocene," an era that, for Simon Nicholson and Sikina Jinnah, "has the potential to be long and dark" (p. 4).

So far, so gloomy—and so familiar. Scholarly work on the state of the global environment, and the governance thereof, frequently provides us with neologisms and puns to capture an ever-growing interdependence and urgency.

But this volume is much more than a quest for language. It reaches out. Nicholson and Jinnah steer away from the mantras of the modern ivory tower, asking what an engaged scholarship looks like in times of extreme human-caused environmental stress. This challenge unfolds into two cross-cutting themes. One targets (inter)actions scholars should cultivate to instigate political and social change, within and beyond their offices and classrooms. The second theme solicits recipes for maintaining hope in the face of environmental decline.

For the literature on global environmental governance, such a normative and self-reflective tour d'horizon by leading scholars is unprecedented, and it makes reading *New Earth Politics* an unusual and rewarding experience. The difference is not only one of content, but also one of form. Owing to Nicholson and Jinnah's superb editing, the book's format mirrors their vision of scholarly interaction. For one thing, they asked their authors to write in a conversational style and to include own experiences. This personal touch, one hopes, will not only be of appeal to curious colleagues, but also reach a wider audience.

Most notably, the editors brought all of the contributors into a continuous dialogue throughout the writing process, which is visible in the pairing of

chapters into eight complementary couples. The first of these twosomes takes stock of the mess we are in and how we got there. The ensuing seven sections look ahead and discuss the roles of research, teaching, institutions, civil society, geopolitics, climate change, and narratives in the New Earth. All are informed by guiding questions that the editors establish in short introductions to each section.

While the pairings are not meant to be perfectly antagonistic, most of the sections exhibit “productive tensions” (p. 12) between skeptical and hopeful accounts. In the first section, Ken Conca’s reality check on deeply interwoven economic, social, political, and technological problems meets a description of a dawning green civilization that, as Daniel Deudney and Elizabeth Mendenhall imply, may just be up to the challenge. Likewise, Michael Maniates cautions against exaggerated ambitions of teaching hope, while Karen T. Litfin offers a remarkable inventory of contemplative methods through which teachers and students may support each other’s learning processes. Similar encounters between critical and optimistic outlooks mark the sections on civil society (Peter Jacques and Erik Assadourian) and geopolitics (Judith Shapiro and Joyeeta Gupta).

Other pairings instead discuss alternative individual or societal pathways. In the section on research, Oran R. Young’s outstanding achievements in both academia and politics encounter Richard Falk’s autobiographical combination of scholarship and citizenship. In the section on climate change, Navroz K. Dubash’s calls for multi-objective institutions to manage energy transformations, while Wil Burns and Simon Nicholson, in turn, draw attention to climate engineering, an emerging technology meant to render these very transformations unnecessary.

In other sections, the productive tension is at best one of scope and terminology. Kate O’Neill calls for a scholarship that better grasps the evolving institutional complexities of global environmental governance. Maria Ivanova largely shares O’Neill’s concerns, while zooming in on the role of the United Nations Environment Programme at the heart of this intricate landscape. Paul Wapner and Peter Dauvergne both celebrate the creative potential of a growth-skeptical counternarrative, christening it in their contributions either environmentalism or New Earth sustainability.

Of concern, however, are the chapters that are not there. Since Nicholson and Jinnah based their selection on key themes of current scholarship, contributions on businesses and cities would have deserved a place in this volume. A section on theories and methods would also have been useful. Such a section could have provided a fruitful controversy between different research schools, as illustrated by Maniates’ and Litfin’s cross-chapter dialogue on teaching approaches. Also, climate change is the only environmental challenge given the spotlight of a full section, although the editors rate toxification and biodiversity loss as equally important markers of the Anthropocene. All this said, the volume never claims to deliver an exhaustive overview or attempts to replace existing textbooks. Also, the emphasis on climate change is telling, for the good and

the bad, in that it echoes the dominant theme of global environmental governance research today.

Sometimes the editors' normative ambitions turn objectivistic, for instance when they speak of "doing the right things" and "making the best" (p. 2), or in Assadourian's call for "converting the environmental movement into a missionary religious force" (p. 247). Such occasional excursions contrast with the otherwise dialectic nature of the book, but they do not dampen it.

The interactive layout and great editing make *New Earth Politics* a role model for future scholarly debates on the Anthropocene. The new epoch, as Frank Biermann observes in his epilogue, comes with built-in controversies. New fault lines will produce new winners and losers. The challenge is to leave triple-win rhetorics behind without getting cynical, and to navigate creatively within the uncertainties and tensions that are here to stay. For Nicholson and Jinnah, their very own navigation "was a joy to write and edit" (p. xiii). What better way to keep up hope, as scholars and citizens, in a long and dark age?