

in perspective rather than dismiss them (or become disillusioned) because they seemingly lack the capability to transform the society they contest.

*University of Missouri-St. Louis*

EDUARDO SILVA

*J. Lat. Amer. Stud.* 41 (2009). doi:10.1017/S0022216X08005488

David V. Carruthers (ed.), *Environmental Justice in Latin America: Problems, Promise, and Practice* (London: The MIT Press, 2008), pp. vi + 329, £39.95, £16.95 pb.

The stimulating dialogue among different narratives of struggles for social justice and environmental well-being in Latin America and the Caribbean presented by Carruthers blows a refreshing air through the concept of environmental justice and its practice. Traditionally associated with protest against environmental racism in US communities, the environmental justice movement merged civil rights activism with environmental concerns and resulted in resistance action to policy decisions imposing industrial hazards and toxic threats on politically weak minority groups. This reader, however, presents a series of fascinating experiences from urban and rural Latin America on a wide range of environmental issues which promote the breaking open of the environmental justice discourse as an important part of popular environmentalism all over of the world, particularly in the global south. In addition, it contributes to the recognition of its principles, symbols and methods as strong analytical tools to better understand and address environmental conflicts and concerns in a variety of global settings and environmental issues, while it helps us recognise and analyse local and global forms of environmental justice consciousness and action.

As an introduction to the book's content, the editor makes a few very important considerations on the challenges facing environmental justice research in Latin America. In contrast with the US experience, he highlights the unequal land and income distribution, the informal and fast growth patterns as well as the relative lack of legal protection and the limited opportunities for democratic political participation as key factors to explain environmental injustice in the region. From this perspective, Carruthers presents the practice of environmentalism in Latin America as deeply woven into the fabric of popular mobilisation for social justice and equity and shows how environmental concerns intersect with strong traditions of social activism and takes shape in the arenas mostly salient to people's lives and livelihoods.

Quoting Joan Martínez-Alier, Carruthers agrees that environmental justice is clearly global but argues that we should view it as a malleable discourse that presents elements of both Northern and Southern forms of environmental consciousness, grounded in local history, socio-political context and cultural expression. The selection of case studies presented in this book builds up a very powerful and wide illustration of that.

The book is very well organised in three complementary parts. Part I gathers chapters that address the large conceptual issues evoked by environmental justice as a discourse, a social movement or an analytical construct in the Latin America context. Juanita Sundberg explores a set of historical articulations between race and environmental formations to identify race as a key variable for environmental justice research in the region. Peter Newell turns our attention to the global economy, exploring the controversial relationship between trade, social justice and the

environment. Henri Acselrad discusses domestic and international contributions to the evolution of environmentalism in Brazil and shows how innovative practices by grassroots social movements have reframed environmental struggles in that country, creating opportunities for social inclusion and justice and not merely for implementing the ecological modernisation ruled by market forces.

Parts II and III of the book lead the reader in a more empirical direction, with a series of case studies from Latin America and the Caribbean. Part II presents four studies concerning social mobilisation around environmental hazards caused by largely unregulated processes of industrial development imposed by hegemonic private interests and public policies that neglect its consequences to human, social and environmental health. Carlos Reboratti analyses a series of environmental conflicts in Argentina with similar social and political tensions over an array of industrial and infrastructural ‘mega development’ projects. Sarah Moore’s study of environmental risks and solid waste in Oaxaca offers a sobering assessment of the limited quality of citizenship in the Mexican policy process. Carruthers’s study on industrial-waste hazards of the Mexico border’s export assembly plants and on the country’s role as an energy exporter to supply foreign demand offers a very powerful local illustration of global injustices in the distribution of environmental risks. Also as part of this discussion, Díez and Rodríguez discuss the consequences of the absence of environmental justice mobilisation in a community facing serious health hazards due to pollution from a northern Mexican mineral and chemical enterprise.

Part III emphasises the book’s assertion that there is indeed a distinctively Latin American environmental justice framework that emerges from struggles concerning uneven access to land and natural resources. Michele Zebich-Knos analyses the competition for land between environmental values and traditional extractive industries. She argues that the expansion of national parklands may present opportunities for more equitable revenue sharing, particularly through ecological tourism. Wendy Wolford discusses the development of the Brazilian Cerrado as an environmental justice issue within the context of the country’s inequitable structure of land distribution and the world’s agro-food production system. Tom Perreault reports how Bolivians are asserting livelihood rights with a variety of resistance strategies to challenge the privatisation of natural gas and water. Katherine McCaffrey shows how the conversion of a former bombing range to a wildlife preserve in Vieques, Puerto Rico, continues to exclude local citizens from their land and has reduced the US military’s liability for the dangerous and toxic legacy left in the island. The volume is closed with a comparative examination of water resource management models in Chile, Bolivia and Mexico by Stephanie Wickstrom, exploring the politics of control, access and exclusion through an analysis meant to assess the limits and possibilities of environmental justice in the region as a fuel for social change.

The collection of selected cases presented in this book stand as an original effort to explore, both conceptually and empirically, the translation of the environmental justice concept in Latin America. As a social practice that goes far beyond the discourse, this book builds up a very consistent argument that environmental justice will continue to present growing opportunities for a more just and sustainable future for Latin America and the Caribbean.

*Catholic University of Minas Gerais, Brazil*

ROGERIO PALHARES DE ARAUJO