

DEVELOPMENT, KNOWLEDGE,  
PARTNERSHIP, AND CHANGE  
In Search of Collaborative Approaches to  
Environmental Governance

*Peter Leigh Taylor*  
*Colorado State University*

**Minería, movimientos sociales y respuestas campesinas: Una ecología política de transformaciones territoriales.** Edited by Anthony Bebbington. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos and Centro Peruano de Estudios Sociales, 2007. Pp. 349. \$22.00 paper.

**Producing Knowledge, Protecting Forests: Rural Encounters with Gender, Ecotourism, and International Aid in the Dominican Republic.** By Light Carruyo. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press. 2007. Pp. viii + 128. \$45.00 cloth.

**Development with Identity: Community, Culture, and Sustainability in the Andes.** Edited by Robert Rhoades. Wallingford, U.K.: CABI Publishing, 2006. Pp. v + 325. \$115.00 cloth.

**Partnerships in Sustainable Forest Resource Management: Learning from Latin America.** Edited by Mirjam A. F. Ros-Tonen, Heleen Van Den Hoonaard, and Annelies Zoomers. Leiden: Brill, 2007. Pp. xv + 329. \$66.00 paper.

Over the past two decades, researchers and practitioners have raised profound questions about environmental governance and development in rural Latin America, about the role of scientific research, and about the place of collaboration among social actors across multiple scales in pursuit of ecologically and socially sustainable livelihoods. How and by whom should development be defined, and whom should it serve? What possibilities exist for more positive relationships between traditional Western science and traditional indigenous knowledge? What is the potential for effective collaboration among diverse social actors, and what are the challenges and trade-offs of managing the interests of development and environment? What possibilities exist for real change, given the larger political economy of established interests, practices, and ways of describing what is possible and impossible? This review essay explores the contributions

of four recent books that deal, each in different ways, with development, knowledge, and partnerships as they relate to reshaping the landscape of social and environmental change in rural Latin America.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

In an importance sense, all four books are about environmental governance in Latin America today. Environmental governance not only refers to state regulation and enforcement of conservation laws but also includes the political, organizational, and cultural frameworks through which highly diverse social actors and interests in natural and cultural resources are coordinated and controlled.<sup>1</sup> Environmental governance shapes not only which social groups participate in and control development but also how the concept of development itself may be conceived and reconceived.

Carruyo's case study, *Producing Knowledge, Protecting Forests*, explores how women and men in La Ciénaga, a community bordering the Dominican Republic's Armando Bermúdez National Park, engage development, create knowledge, and pursue their own well-being and that of their families. The twenty-one chapters of *Development with Identity* present a diverse set of natural and social science studies from a five-year collaborative research project in Cotacachi, Ecuador. *Partnerships in Sustainable Forest Resource Management* explores, in fourteen chapters, the possibilities and problems of the growing turn toward multiactor, cross-scale partnerships in international forest management. The seven chapters of *Minería, movimientos sociales y respuestas campesinas* provide both a critical theoretical framework and a detailed empirical examination of the territorial transformation set into motion by large-scale mining in Peru, Ecuador, and Guatemala.

#### CRITIQUING DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, a broad range of research has highlighted widespread disillusionment with traditional approaches to development. Building on critiques of modernization theory by Andre Gunder Frank, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, and Immanuel Wallerstein, among others, researchers have deconstructed the centralized methodology, objectives, and definition of development drawn from idealized understandings of

1. Peter Cronkleton, Peter Leigh Taylor, Deborah Barry, Samantha Stone-Jovicich, and Marianne Schmink, *Environmental Governance and the Emergence of Forest-Based Social Movements* (Bogor, Indonesia: Center for International Forestry Research, 2008); Jouni Paavola, "Institutions and Environmental Governance: A Reconceptualization," *Ecological Economics* 63 (2006): 93–103.

the industrialized global North.<sup>2</sup> Other researchers have analyzed the related and growing rejection of neoliberalism, privatization, and the privileging of global markets as a neutral allocator of costs and benefits.<sup>3</sup>

Carruyo frames her study within this critical literature. She draws especially on Gita Sen and Karen Grown's structural analysis of the gendered nature of development and on Arturo Escobar's contention that development itself is a first-world cultural construct.<sup>4</sup> Following the recommendation of both of these works to turn to the local, Carruyo focuses on women so as to understand how alternative development might be identified through ethnographic analysis of local practices. Carruyo studies people who stay in the community rather than those who migrate. How do such local people, especially women, negotiate a process of development controlled and defined from above and outside? She briefly examines two development projects in La Ciénega and concludes that both were flawed. A small-scale project introduced by a nongovernmental organization (NGO) had built a greenhouse that was not needed or wanted locally. A larger U.S. Agency for International Development–sponsored project to take advantage of trees felled by Hurricane George in 1998 benefited mainly a few local elites.

The Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources Management (SANREM) project headed by Rhoades aimed to address two concerns in international development: sustainability and the self-determination of indigenous communities. Explicitly trying to incorporate the priorities of these communities into its design, implementation, and research outcomes, this ambitious project brought interdisciplinary research to bear on place-based, nature-society interactions, and it sought to develop an interdisciplinary framework for a sustainability science that emphasized the full participation of multiple stakeholders in research and development outcomes.

2. Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Saturnino M. Borrás, Marc Edelman, and Cristóbal Kay, "Transnational Agrarian Movements: Origins, Politics, Campaigns, and Impact," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8 (2008): 169–204; Edward Lahiff, Saturnino M. Borrás, and Cristóbal Kay, "Market-Led Agrarian Reform: Policies, Performance and Prospects," *Third World Quarterly* 28 (2007): 1417–1436; Philip McMichael, "Peasants Make Their Own History, but Not Just as They Please," *Agrarian Change* 8 (2008): 205–228.

3. Susan Eckstein, "Power and Popular Protest in Latin America," *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements*, ed. Susan Eckstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1–60; Robert O. O'Brien, Anne Marie Goetz, Jan Aart Scholte, and Marc Williams, *Contesting Global Governance: Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

4. Gita Sen and Karen Grown, *Development, Crisis and Alternative Visions* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987); Escobar, *Encountering Development*.

Ros-Tonen's collection suggests that the focus of development in forest contexts has broadened from management for sustainable yields to include ecological, economic, and social concerns. Sustainable forest management is now a more dynamic concept that aims to identify and negotiate a balance between multiple land-use options. Tropical forest protection and management policies are no longer the domain of central governments; they are produced by the complex interplay of diverse actors and interests at multiple scales, including local and municipal governments; indigenous peoples; traditional users reclaiming rights to forest lands and resources; and international agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and other civil society entities.

More self-consciously theoretical than the other books under review, Bebbington's volume argues that, "in any given society, the dominant definition of 'development'—and also the desired relationship between development and the environment, is nothing more than an artifact of power" (28). For Bebbington and his contributors, globalization has introduced not only new actors but also new political discourses and controversies, among which the environment is prominent. The collection seeks to bring agency into political ecology, building on James C. Scott's theory of everyday resistance and Escobar's analysis of how social movements can directly shape larger-scale change.<sup>5</sup> Bury's two chapters on the Yanacocha mine in Peru (the largest gold mine in Latin America and the second largest in the world) examine how transnational mining firms are altering the local institutional and economic contexts in which they operate by, among other things, reclassifying land and resource rights, putting aside vertical peasant family-production strategies for intensive agriculture and animal raising at lower altitudes, and creating complex multiscale and multitemporal migration flows in and out of the region. A chapter by Bebbington, Bury, Humphreys Bebbington, Lingan, Muñoz, and Scurra compares resistance to mining in Cajamarca, Peru, and Cotacachi, Ecuador, to find that contending social actors have divergent visions of development. Social movements propose that governance of territorial development should be fundamentally democratic, whereas firms and government ministries argue that private subsoil property rights should allow owners to control the development of those spaces. Visions of development differ within social movements as well. Some participants would accept reductions in natural capital in exchange for more equitable distribution of benefits and governance; others reject such reductions as incompatible with sustainable development.

5. James C. Scott. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); Escobar, *Encountering Development*.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE  
IN COLLABORATION

Early pioneers in participatory rural development advocated recognition of communities' interest in sustainable resource management and their significant capacity to manage their own change.<sup>6</sup> Because local people have key knowledge and skills,<sup>7</sup> their participation in scientific investigation can not only encourage local ownership of research but also produce more accurate and valuable information and make positive project outcomes more likely and more economical.<sup>8</sup>

Carruyo remarks that discussions of development often either dismiss local knowledge as colonized knowledge or romanticize local knowledge in opposition to first-world knowledge. Both tendencies assume that there is a single, true knowledge. Carruyo argues against such polarization and sees knowledge as "situated, and constructed historically, fractured, fluid and contested" (11). In La Ciénaga, located near a protected, tourist-frequented area, local people's knowledge about development forms "part of the larger structures through which they are constituted and simultaneously constitute" (12). Carruyo frames her analysis within two historical-analytical concepts. On the one hand, national development policies that sought forcibly to modernize local people through sedentarization, freezing them into class hierarchies and also criminalizing shifting agricultural practices through conservation measures, produced the "immobilized peasant" (18). On the other hand, a "discourse of nothing" illuminates how local people negotiate the obstacles created by immobilization, mainly by telling tourists about their natural disaster-related plight and other hardships and by maintaining that they have received no assistance, even if they had. Carruyo asserts that this discourse is about getting things for free, yet it also reveals "the complicated relationship that residents have to visitors and projects" (56).

According to Rhoades, the SANREM project explicitly assumed that understanding human-society interactions in Cotacachi would require a

6. These pioneers include Robert Chambers, "Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis of Experience," *World Development* 22 (1994): 1253–1268; Michael Cernea, ed., *Putting People First* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1991); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973). Among later works, see Tania Murray Li, "Engaging Simplifications: Community-Based Resource Management, Market Processes and State Agendas in Upland Southeast Asia," *World Development* 30 (2002): 265–283.

7. Fikret Berkes, Johan Colding, and Carl Folke, "Rediscovery of Traditional Ecological Knowledge as Adaptive Management," *Ecological Applications* 10 (2000): 1251–1262; Marcus Colchester, "Sustaining the Forests: The Community-Based Approach in South and South-East Asia," *Development and Change* 25 (1994): 69–100.

8. L. D. Brown, "People-Centred Development and Participatory Research," *Harvard Educational Review* 55 (1985): 69–75; Jules N. Pretty, "Participatory Learning for Sustainable Agriculture," *World Development* 23 (1995): 1247–1263.

combination of scientific and, where possible, local perspectives on nature and livelihood. In their contribution to Rhoades's collection, Zehetner and Miller describe key geographical and physical characteristics that shape the region's soils and hydrology. Peñafiel, Tipán, Nolivos, and Vásquez examine biological diversity in Cotacachi's forests. Skarbo studies the decline of genetic agrobiodiversity. Addressing the interrelated problems of soils and water, Zehetner and Miller, as well as Zehetner, Miller, and Zapata Ríos explore the potential for suitable soil management and irrigation systems. Aragundi and Zapata Ríos, and Rodríguez and Southgate, address the serious environmental and health problems, respectively, of Cotacachi's declining water quality. On the social science side, Moates and Campbell and Zapata Ríos, Rhoades, Segovia, and Zehetner analyze how local people have historically developed complex production and resource management schemes to take advantage of Cotacachi's compact and vertically distributed ecosystems. Camacho examines local food and culture. Ruiz-Córdova, Duncan, Deutsch, and Gómez describe the success of a water-monitoring project jointly coordinated by SANREM and local community organizations.

Ros-Tonen's book addresses the relationship of scientific and indigenous knowledge more indirectly, as it affects the capacity to manage distinct perspectives arising from different interests among participants. In one chapter, Vermeulen and Mayer propose the establishment of principles for productive company-community partnerships, suggesting that these could aid each partner to use the other's language, either in local development and poverty reduction or in assessing enterprise opportunities and impacts.

The more macrotheoretical framework of Bebbington's collection does not address the relationship between scientific and local knowledge as systematically and directly as the other books, with some exceptions. Among the latter, Damonte Valencia's chapter on mining and politics builds on Scott's "weapons of the weak" and other subaltern approaches to agency in an effort to typify local perspectives on Andean mining (123).

#### PARTNERSHIPS AND CONTROL OVER DEVELOPMENT

During the 1980s, moved in part by disillusionment with ineffective and often repressive state-organized development assistance, there was a turn from "hard" technical programs provided by external experts to "soft" programs promoting development from below. Although NGOs were for a time viewed as a radical alternative, able to promote democratization and other transformations, it became clear that they also suffered problems of accountability, efficiency, and representation. Some researchers and practitioners demanded that scientific research and external assistance respond more effectively to local knowledge and interests so as to

minimize dependency.<sup>9</sup> Others held that agrarian and forest movements could better represent community interests, pressure states for improved services, channel external resources, and help manage development from the bottom up.<sup>10</sup> In general, there was a desire for more equitable partnerships among state, private, and civil society actors, so that their varied expertise might devise solutions to developmental and environmental problems that benefit common interests and negotiate among those interests when they conflict.

Rather than address partnerships per se, Carruyo focuses on social ties between residents of La Ciénaga and (in some sense) more powerful tourists and politicians. She argues that guides and their families use *lo da'ó* ("the given," or relationships based on gifts) with these patrons to obtain cash donations, assistance in finding urban jobs, help with legal problems, support with medical bills, and so on (45). *Lo da'ó* relationships bring access to resources and power, a Bourdieuan social capital. The so-called discourse of nothing mediates these relationships, providing a way for local residents to convince outsiders to aid them. Carruyo argues that getting things for free requires a lot of work, and it brings strings, accountability, and the need for future negotiation, not unlike the fund-raising work of development offices in universities and NGOs.

Rhoades explicitly locates SANREM's collaborations in the context of new schemes of global participation, including indigenous demands for greater rights, access, and sovereignty over ancestral land, knowledge, and resources. His introductory and final chapters argue that indigenous peoples rightly demand that scientific research address their interests and leave them with tangible benefits. He carefully traces how researchers negotiated at length with municipal and local authorities to gain access to native communities in Cotacachi, signing agreements to pursue topics relevant to local people, even when the latter often could not see the relevance of scientific study. Researchers complied, with mixed results, leaving behind not only copies of completed studies but also an open-access database of raw data to be used as local communities saw fit. The significant loss of control over how studies and data were used created difficulties, but on balance, Rhoades argues, data sharing was necessary to create a win-win situation for both scientists and residents.

9. Michael Edwards and David Hulme, "Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Nongovernmental Organizations," *World Development* 24 (1996): 961–973; Diana Mitlin, Sam Hickey, and Anthony Bebbington, "Reclaiming Development? NGOs and the Challenge of Alternatives," *World Development* 35 (2007): 1699–1720.

10. Brenda Baletti, Tamara M. Johnson, and Wendy Wolford, "Late Mobilization: Transnational Peasant Networks and Grassroots Organizing in Brazil and South Africa," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8 (2008): 290–314; Borras, Edelman, and Kay, "Transnational Agrarian Movements"; McMichael, "Peasants Make Their Own History"; Eckstein, "Power and Popular Protest."

Ros-Tonen and her collaborators define partnership as more or less formal arrangements between two or more parties from different sectors with (at least partly) shared goals and in the expectation that each party will profit. They classify these partnerships into six types: public-private, company-community, NGO-community, multisector, research, and political. Advocates of partnerships generally assume that all parties can benefit. Ros-Tonen cautions, however, that the term *partnership* may mask asymmetries in power, exploitation, and dominance by powerful interests. The essays by Rival on Ecuador's Choco rain forest, by Cleuren on Ecuador's emerging bamboo sector, by Hombergh on Costa Rica's forestry industry, and by Fairhead and Leach on timber production in Trinidad all examine the potential for new collaborative responses to forest degradation and livelihood needs, and highlight the complexities that the unequal power of participants introduces. Morsello and Adger question whether fair-trade markets in Brazil nuts have benefited indigenous U'Ukre Kayapo communities in Brazil. Finley-Brook's chapter on multiscale partnerships in the Miskitu forests of Nicaragua details obstacles to success that the involvement of multiple stakeholders poses, including the high costs of social networking, inadequate communication, and weak mechanisms of accountability. Focusing on extractive reserves in Rondônia, Brazil, Rosendo Sergio develops a useful political-ecology framework for analyzing the limitations of partnerships, including the clash of cultures, irreconcilable objectives, tensions between short- and longer-term strategies, failures of accountability, and poorly defined roles and expectations of participants. Although the collection lacks a synthetic conclusion, Colchester's critical-historical discussion of networks in international forestry reminds readers that new opportunities for local actors and voices can also bring new divisions and exclusions.

With regard to collaboration, Bebbington's volume highlights the importance of social movements organized in resistance to large-scale mining, a mode of collective action involving an alliance of local, national, and global actors, including communities, local and international NGOs, sympathetic state agencies, and international donors and development agencies. Such alliances have been key for strengthening indigenous and peasant causes, yet Damonte Valencia cautions that partners often have different political agendas and material interests. In a detailed, systematic comparison of shifting domestic, national, and international alliances forged by community-based movements in Cajamarca, Peru, and Cotacachi, Ecuador, Bebbington and colleagues note that transnational relations are a key resource for local activists, despite the frictions that inevitably arise among participants. Damonte Valencia suggests that the arrival of big mining, with its contradictory material and environmental impacts, actually facilitated the growth of community political power in Peru by encouraging external alliances with NGOs and political parties.

Holt-Giménez analyzes the World Bank's assisted agrarian reform program in Guatemala, arguing that its titling and market development of land favors foreign investment and extractive industry over rural subsistence. As a result, indigenous and landless people need to unite in resistance to produce proposals for territorial restructuring from below.

#### POLITICAL ECONOMY, AGENCY, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF RURAL CHANGE

What implications do these books hold for more environmentally and socially sustainable development, given larger structural contexts of opportunities and limits?

Carruyo's analysis of efforts to create and act on local knowledge about development shows that La Ciénega's residents are agents, even though more powerful forces and actors shape their possibilities for a better life. There is, however, a tension between the concept of immobilized peasants and the study's focus on residents as agents who continually negotiate and choose. Moreover, the discourse of nothing does reveal that people understand, analyze, and adapt to unequal relations with external actors and development models. Yet though Carruyo suggests that the discourse of nothing involves agency, it is unclear that it acts as a vehicle for empowerment. It may, instead, represent an unhappy, self-reproducing adaptation to a perpetual structure of relative weakness and dependency.

Rhoades's collection points the way to the rich possibilities of combining the strengths of science and local knowledge to further social and environmental objectives. Several essays show that it is possible to negotiate more equitable and reciprocal relations among researchers and local communities, and that these arrangements can recognize the diverse interests rooted in the generation of knowledge about human nature interfaces. But, in many chapters, it was not clear to what degree communities were involved in or benefited from research, beyond having it available to them. A follow-up study might yield interesting and unanticipated information as to what sort of project-generated knowledge has been useful, where, and how.

*Partnerships in Sustainable Forest Resource Management* nicely and systematically lays out the principal types of partnership available, their strengths and weaknesses, and the contexts in which they appear. Nevertheless, the descriptive classification of partnerships and underlying paradigms stops short of providing a critical analytical framework, despite the suggestion of an underlying value orientation: "rights (for instance to a sustainable livelihood) rather than stakes should be the leading principle in negotiating the aims of a partnership" (27). A final, synthetic chapter could have built on the various case studies to help readers make judgments about which partnership option to pursue.

Of the four books, Bebbington's collection most systematically develops a framework for critical thinking about action and change. In his conclusion, Bebbington identifies several large, multiscalar processes that structure relations among mining, development, and democracy. The territorial transformation under way in mining regions of Latin America is shaped by the impact of neoliberalism on the institutions that govern rights and access to natural resources; the importance that transnationalization has given to global actors in local changes; the mobilization of new forms of collective action; the disintegration of solidary ties among area residents as the uncertainty and vulnerability of livelihoods increase; and reterritorialization as the boundaries between global and local spaces, and between regimes of governance, blur, a process referred to elsewhere in the book as "glocalization" (34). Bebbington and his coauthors repeatedly highlight the growing importance of social movements in shaping the possibility of more environmentally and socially sustainable resource governance. The focus on social movements dovetails with the work of other researchers, such as McMichael and Healey,<sup>11</sup> who argue that peasant movements are at the forefront of change rather than a vestige of the past. However, the tightly organized theoretical framework of the volume and its combined focus on political economy and political ecology may encourage the relative neglect of two important aspects of rural social movements: they are internally as well as externally contested processes, with participants often holding contradictory views of their ideal future, and social movements can emerge from below and from above to work against progressive objectives like sustainability.<sup>12</sup>

These four books will be of significant interest to researchers, practitioners, and students interested in the political, economic, social, and cultural forces that together shape environment and development in Latin America. Their complementarity and divergence in addressing issues such as the conceptualization of development, the nature of authoritative knowledge, the politics of collaboration, and the possibility of change help unpack the complexity and the promise of environmental governance in the region today.

11. McMichael, "Peasants Make Their Own History"; Susan Healey, "Rural Social Movements and the Prospects for Sustainable Rural Communities: Evidence from Bolivia," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 26 (2005): 151–173.

12. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997).