intellectually and politically enriching. Yet this is also a challenging endeavour. I want
to highlight three of these challenges that were not as fully addressed as they might
have been, and that may inspire future work. First, the book proposes a reflection
on difference, alterity and the plurality of knowledge. But it is surprising that not a
single Latin America-based scholar/activist is included in this collection as an
author. More positively, it is important to highlight the significant contribution of
female scholars in the book. Secondly, the recognition of Afro-Latin Americans as
ethnic subjects has also shaped the politics of difference and the environment in
Latin America. Although the book emphasises the importance of indigenous (and,
to a lesser extent, peasant) environmental epistemologies, it does not do the same in
the case of Afro-Latin Americans. Thirdly, the concept of ‘territory’ is one of the
most meaningful conceptual contributions of Latin American activists and social
movements and it is important to our understanding of the relationships between
the environment and society. The concept was not invented in Latin America, but
it acquired an alternative political meaning there, beyond and outside the state and
other dominant configurations of power. Grassroots movements have deployed the
concept of territory as a conceptual tool to fight against resource dispossession, the pri-
vatisation of nature and inequality at large. The book insists on the importance of new
conceptualisations in Latin America, but it does not give adequate space to crucial con-
cepts such as territory. In spite of this, Provincialising Nature is an important tool for
those interested in having a broader perspective on the main problems, actors and
debates that currently animate the politics of the environment in Latin America.

Fábio de Castro, Barbara Hogenboom and Michiel Baud (eds.), Environmental
Governance in Latin America (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan,
2016), pp. xii + 338, £20.00, £15.00 pb.

This edited collection by Fábio de Castro, Barbara Hogenboom and Michiel Baud provides
a thorough and important contribution to literatures dealing with socio-environmental
issues. It will prove especially useful as an introduction to regional natural resource govern-
ance themes for undergraduate and graduate students, as it successfully provides a necessary
balance of critical literature review and new, in-depth case studies. In the introduction the
editors note that the interdisciplinary approach adopted is key to uncovering the ‘multi-
scalar, multi-actor and dialectical nature’ (p. 3) of environmental governance issues. These
include the material realities of extractivism, historic and contemporary environmental
governance policies, how elite groups and institutions have shaped these policies, formal
and informal environmental management, as well as environmental discourses and how
they influence political and ecological approaches to environmental protection.

The substantive content is divided into three sections. Part I, entitled ‘Setting the
Stage’, begins with a chapter by Joan Martinez-Alier, Baud and Héctor Sejenovich,
who analyse the origins of environmentalism in Latin America and find that environ-
mental concern is ‘a local tradition’ (p. 35) with a long intellectual history of environ-
mental thought in the region. They note, however, that this has not been matched at the
political governance level, which continues to suffer from ‘a lack of a sense of urgency
about the continuing destruction of biodiversity and climate change’ (p. 43). Chapter 2
by Martinez-Alier and Mariana Walter examines the material reality of natural resource
extraction. They identify a significant imbalance in material flows between Latin America and the wider world yet, despite exporting more than it imports, the terms of trade are such that the region’s exports do not generate sufficient revenue to support additional imports. Thus, there are continued ‘internal and external pressures’ to further expand the extractive economy, ‘exacerbating the primarisation of Latin America’ (p. 65). These pressures have been central to the emergence of resource conflicts at all stages of the extraction process. The tensions between environmentalism and rural development are explored in Chapter 3 by Mina Kleiche-Dray and Roland Waast, who investigate the relationship between indigenous knowledge and development in Mexico. They conclude that the ‘coloniality of nature’ has disrupted indigenous ecosystems (p. 89), a process underwritten by the promotion of ‘scientific knowledge’ over ‘traditional’, ‘local’ or ‘indigenous’ knowledge and practice (p. 90).

Part II deals with ‘New Politics of Natural Resources’ and begins with an essay by Pablo Andrade, who examines ‘post-neoliberal environmental governance’ under two of the region’s more left-leaning administrations, those of Bolivia and Ecuador. Andrade explains that the extraction of natural resources ‘has a negative impact on the development of political institutions’ (p. 114). After weighing the rhetorical commitments of both countries against the policies pursued, he concludes that ‘the environmental issue’ has been incorporated more into Ecuadorian than Bolivian policy (p. 125). In Chapter 5, Benedita Bull and Mariel Aguilar-Stoën return to a more generalised survey of the changing faces of elites on the continent and their influence on environmental governance, reflecting on how this variegated group has historically ‘hindered structural transformations towards’ more sustainable and equitable environmental governance (p. 139). They note that new elite groups, often connected to transnational corporations, have directly profited from challenging the stronghold of ‘traditional elites’ as their interests converge with national development goals. Chapter 6 by Cristián Parker, Gloria Baigorrotegui and Fernando Estenssoro investigates the consumption of water and energy in the mining sector, exploring the differing concerns and roles of key stakeholders, while noting that most ‘defend the expanded reproduction of the water–energy–mining complex’ and are more focused on short-term gains than long-term ecological and global impacts (p. 180). Finally, in Chapter 7 Sejenovich argues that the ‘institutional legal structure in Latin America is essentially developmentalist’, therefore favouring the ‘dynamics of production’ (p. 197). Like many of the authors in this section, he argues that, at the state level, despite an apparent shift in discourse in some countries, the developmentalist direction of the continent has not changed.

The final substantive section, ‘Part III: New Projects of Environmental Governance’, begins with Aguilar-Stoën, Fabiano Toni and Cecilie Hirsch offering a critical analysis of the implementation of the UN/World Bank REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the sustainable management of forests, and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks) neo-liberal forest conservation mechanism in Latin America. Rather than the programme being an ‘apolitical technological fix’, as some have claimed (p. 206), these authors point to the numerous objections raised by indigenous groups, most notably in Bolivia, where the project has been less than popular, and also in Venezuela and French Guyana, which do not participate in any REDD initiatives (p. 210). In Chapter 9, Leticia Merino paints a more optimistic picture, however, pointing to a positive correlation between forest conservation and development in Mexico, where some 70 per cent of forests are ‘under collective tenure’ (p. 237). The author reveals a clear correlation between strong grassroots-level organisations, institutional strength and effective conservation
(p. 249), while also recognizing the crucial need for favourable national policy and legal frameworks to promote the development of local governance and environmental citizenship. In Chapter 10, David Barkin and Blanca Lemus also investigate the centrality of local solutions for gaining environmental justice. They underline the fact that local projects have been key to integrating old knowledge with new technology and note that these local initiatives have presented ‘an audacious challenge to the prevailing model of governance … and its marriage with the free market’ (p. 270). The final chapter in Part III, by Walter and Leire Urkidi, reviews local responses to large-scale mining and emphasises the hybrid nature of environmental governance in Latin America, described as an ‘institutional bricolage’ (p. 288). Consultations are very much a part of this bricolage. They are an often ‘innovative form of protest that aims to foster participation’ (p. 314) and challenge ‘official decision-making institutions’ (p. 320) but, nonetheless, these must interface with government institutions in order to achieve legitimacy.

The volume is brought to a close with an afterword from Eduardo Silva, who considers the volume ‘a milestone in the political ecology of environmental governance in Latin America’ (p. 326): it is difficult to argue with such an assessment. At the same time, while the content does portray a significant shift in thinking, the structure of the volume is less satisfactory. There is no clear rationale for dividing the book into three parts, nor for how the parts and the chapters within them relate to each other. This was especially problematic in Part I, which purported to set out general debates in the field of environmental governance, yet included an in-depth case study on Mexico. It was also unclear how poverty alleviation through sustainable development was a particularly ‘new’ project, since permutations of such discussions have been abundant within the literature on Latin America for decades. This confusion might have been avoided by providing a short introduction at the beginning of each section and is to some extent mitigated by Eduardo Silva’s afterword, which does a fine job of drawing out the central lessons and most enduring tensions that emerge from the volume.

Nevertheless, an effective overview and analysis of the key debates is provided, with the inclusion of information on the most recent political happenings. Newer political projects at national state level were interestingly placed in the historical trajectory of environmental governance on the continent, and inter- and intra-national power struggles were clearly conveyed. This volume is an essential read for all those interested in the tensions and obstacles that lie before a socially and ecologically just environmental governance in Latin America. It has been very well received and used by students at the University College London Institute of the Americas, not least because it has been made open access: a further achievement on which the editors and the publisher should be congratulated.

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JASKIRAN CHOHAN AND GRAHAM WOODGATE


Barry Cannon is widely known in Ireland because of his scholarly work and public statements on Bolivarian Venezuela. But in this book he has shifted his focus from chavistas and the Latin American ‘pink tide’ more generally to the Left’s fierce