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Environment and citizenship in Latin America: natures, subjects and struggles, edited by Alex Latta and Hannah Wittman, New York and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2012, viii + 254 pp., US\$70 or £43 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-85745-747-9

Most Latin American countries suffered brutal military dictatorships during the second half of the twentieth century, and so the rise of environmentalist discourses since the 1970s and

1980s has been intrinsically related to struggles for democracy in the region. The volume edited by Latta and Wittman collects contributions that demonstrate these connections, underscoring endogenous dynamics of socio-environmental struggles in Latin America and revealing the inadequacy of environmental concepts and practices of environmental citizenship imported from the US and Europe. These revelations should be disconcerting for promoters of environmental conservation from the Global North, especially those who embrace neoliberal forms of market-based governance. In this regard, the volume successfully reveals and transcends some fundamental limitations of the Anglophone literature on environmental citizenship. Instead of presenting a normative theoretical project that seeks to cultivate 'environmentally responsible citizenship', the collection investigates how struggles for social inclusion have simultaneously been struggles for access to natural resources and environmental wellbeing, while maintaining some skepticism towards the very notion of citizenship in the face of state institutions that were never (or are only now beginning to become, with many limitations and contradictions) inclusive spaces for the indigenous, poor and marginalized people of Latin America. In fact, it demonstrates that many recent environmental projects have reproduced social marginalization through the consolidation of neoliberal governance regimes that stifle democratic aspirations.

Important examples are found in the chapters that scrutinize territorial management regimes for reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) and other forms of environmental conservation conceived and implemented by agents from the Global North in Latin America. Baldwin and Meltzer's chapter on REDD in the Peruvian Amazon, Castro's chapter on REDD in the Brazilian Amazon and Sundberg's chapter on the Maya Biosphere Reserve all demonstrate how indigenous and other traditional communities are recruited as custodians of nature (even if 'nature' is reduced and commodified into carbon credits). As a result of their inclusion, these communities often wind up facing new forms of restrictions on their own land-use rights, marginalization, and silencing by their supposed allies from international environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Instead of becoming empowered and incorporated as citizens into their governments, they often find themselves increasingly targeted by more traditional state security apparatuses. But taken as a whole, these contributions do not simplistically cast 'blame' upon actors from the Global North, regardless of their intentions. As Henne and Gabrielson's chapter on Chile's forests demonstrates, domestic NGOs and timber industry construct specific nationalist and technocratic discourses of 'sustainable development' that legitimate the expulsion of the Mapuche indigenous people from their own territory as well.

The editors, more so than many of the contributing authors, sought to engage directly with debates about environmental citizenship coming out of the Global North in the field of environmental politics. These debates range from contending philosophical views of 'citizenship' (whether rooted in republican virtues, liberal rights or participatory deliberation) to important issues of scale (e.g. the disjuncture between the scale of citizenship prerogatives/obligations within 'nation-states' and the polymorphous or global scope of ecological problems and conflicts). Those following and contributing to this literature certainly have a trove of empirical information in this volume with which to supplement and deepen these debates. Moreover, by bringing attention to concrete and contested practices of *democratization* that imbue environmental governance in Latin America, this volume challenges the apparent universality of questions about the philosophical foundations of citizenship and the concerns over multi-scalar responsibilities; chapter after chapter demonstrates that environmental politics are much more attuned to local and domestic struggles than to any philosophical principles or transnational concerns. Following upon similar studies that have brought these considerations to the political and social sciences (e.g. Hochstetler

and Keck 2007), perhaps this volume might have gone further in its engagement with additional literature and debates over the multiplicity of environmental discourses and practices in Latin America, particularly in light of the prominent and contentious argument that the 'environmentalism of the poor' transcends and/or opposes the 'Northern' notions of environmentalism that oscillate between a presumption that nature is a 'pristine wilderness' to be conserved and a resource to be efficiently and sustainably exploited (Martinez-Alier 2003).

A weakness of the collected volume, recognized by the editors, is the relative paucity of analyses of environmental questions in the cities of a continent that is overwhelmingly urban. Recent mass mobilizations in urban areas of Latin America, far more than the development of urban political ecology in the Global North, demand further attention to these concerns. In this volume, only two contributions take up this challenge. Silva demonstrates the incongruity between the increased capacity of the Chilean state to plan infrastructure developments and its inability to negotiate the terms of these developments with its citizens. He analyzes working-class neighborhoods of southern Santiago that gained property rights in an earlier stage of urban planning, but consequently became marred by individualism and self-interest, which precluded their ability to struggle collectively against a highway development that tore apart their neighborhood. In the following chapter, Merlinksy and Latta discuss forms of resistance to water pollution in Argentina that enabled some citizens to become counter-experts and expanded the juridical avenues for institutional change but ultimately excluded other citizens less fluent in scientific or legal terms. In both cases analyzed, citizens failed to prevent new polluting industries from being constructed, and failed to clean up the watershed that runs through poor neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. The authors conclude that a healthy environment remains a privilege of those wealthy enough to insulate themselves from the 'externalities' of industrialization. Thus, a partially fulfilled goal of this book is the effort to bring an environmental lens to the study of 'insurgent citizenship' that demands better quality of life in Latin American cities (Holston 2008). I would argue that such efforts should not halt at the horizons set by advocates of 'rights to the city' (and urban protests for free public transportation, healthcare and education) but must also take seriously popular calls for healthy food, agroecology and agrarian reform, which fundamentally challenge the process and vision of urbanization-as-modernization and the urban/rural divide as the cornerstone of social inequality (Carter 2014). In this regard, Richard's chapter on Mexico's food sovereignty movement stands out from the remainder of the collection.

Political ecologists and others working in critical agrarian studies will find this collection useful for its nuanced analyses of current extractivist and conservationist practices transforming Latin American forests and forest peoples (with three chapters on the Peruvian and Brazilian Amazon, and others on Guatemala's, Argentina's and Chile's forests). These chapters contribute to a growing debate on the social life of forests (Hecht *et al.* 2014) that shuns the conventional narratives that tropical and sub-tropical forests are in general decline, undergoing both degradation and deforestation due to human interference, and that these 'pristine wildernesses' must therefore be set aside for conservation by new environmental subjects. These narratives set up a predicament for countries in the Global South, which much chose between using forest resources for development and conserving them for the global good while chasing the illusive goal of undergoing a similar 'forest transition' that has taken place in industrialized countries. By stressing the linkages between environmental governance and social inclusion/marginality, however, this collected volume shows that forest inhabitants are diverse and complex agents whose livelihoods

are intertwined with political struggles over working forest landscapes, resisting characterization as either agents of degradation or as docile stewards of nature conservation.

The volume also includes interesting selections on power/knowledge regarding ecological concerns (particularly Taddei's chapter on the political contestation/cooption of climate knowledge in northeastern Brazil and Pinto's chapter on the critiques of *buen vivir* in Ecuador's 2008 constitution). Above all, the book provides insight into how environmental struggles may transform state institutions, sometimes producing post-neoliberal forms of environmental governance (most notably through the indigenous take-over of the state in Bolivia, discussed in Tockman's chapter), but more often transforming legal incorporation or even economic gains into new forms of socio-ecological exclusion. The latter is illustrated most forcefully in the chapters on rural settings, which show that territorial gains have been burdened with new forms of neoliberal governmentality, while the chapters on urban struggles against industrial development demonstrate how the institutionalization and 'juridification' of ecological questions provided new avenues for citizen participation but ultimately diluted collective resistance and reproduced socio-ecological inequalities. Unfortunately underexplored, however, are the connections and debates with the literature on environmentality (Agrawal 2005), even though most contributions to this volume are less concerned with the philosophical views and issues of scale that predominate in the literature on environmental citizenship than with the new subjectivities and their associated ecological practices, struggles and forms of governmentality that are currently emerging in Latin America.

Unlike much Anglophone literature on environmental citizenship, most contributions to the collected volume discuss citizenship as a dynamic space of struggle – struggles over territory and livelihoods as much as access and incorporation into public governance – rather than a depoliticized set of rights and duties that reaches its extreme in neoliberal logics of 'green' consumer practices. These contributions also address questions of gender, race, ethnicity and other aspects of socio-political life in a manner that reveals counter-hegemonic projects to development, modernization and globalization. In doing so, these contributions are not exactly demonstrating the application of 'environmental justice' in Latin American contexts, as another recent collected volume intended to do (Carruthers 2008). They are actually undermining the theoretical foundations of liberal ideologies upon which most literature on environmental justice and citizenship in the Global North rest. This deeper and more radical critique is very timely and welcome, and it should have been further highlighted by the editors, who admit the literature on environmental citizenship 'needs to increase its level of skepticism towards the concept of citizenship itself' (16). However, the editors structured the volume and their introductory chapter around connections between environmental citizenship, environmental justice and environmental governance, even though the compatibility between these three sets of literature becomes a moot point in face of deeper critiques of development and modernization. The editors also consider that it might be important to engage further with discussions of nature as an 'actant' within a larger socio-environmental system and raise questions about what citizenship might mean in face of hybrid socio-environmental networks. But the contributions collected here might make us hesitate from following too confidently in this direction: efforts to bring 'rights for nature' to bear upon concrete socio-environmental disputes have so far failed to produce many encouraging results (even the most positive examples in Bolivia and Ecuador are fraught with contradictions, according to the chapters by Tockman and Pinto), and almost all chapters demonstrate how innovative environmental ideologies and institutions have not prevented the reproduction of old social inequalities. This is not to deny that important victories have been obtained in terms of access and

control over environmental resources and state institutions, and that innovative practices and ideas arise from these struggles, as this book also illustrates. But the gestalt here appears to show that we should be careful when imagining that the latest theoretical innovation of an intelligentsia rooted in the Global North can adequately explain, much less orient, the struggles of poor and marginalized people over their territories, governments and daily lives.

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