

UCLA

Electronic Green Journal

Title

Review: Ecologies of Comparison: An Ethnography of Endangerment in Hong Kong

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9hf45648>

Journal

Electronic Green Journal, 1(35)

Author

Little, Peter C.

Publication Date

2013

DOI

10.5070/G313517531

Copyright Information

Copyright 2013 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

Review: Ecologies of Comparison: An Ethnography of Endangerment in Hong Kong
By Tim Choy

Reviewed By Peter C. Little
Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, USA

Choy, Tim. *Ecologies of Comparison: An Ethnography of Endangerment in Hong Kong*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 2011. ISBN 9780822349525. US\$22.95. Paperback.

Ecologies of Comparison is a challenging book about postcolonial environmentalism that grapples with the complex analysis of “the specificity of environmental activity in Hong Kong” (p.17). Choy sets out to explore a critical question: “How had the *notion* of specificity—and the knowledge-making projects of substantiating specificity—come to be so important for Hong Kongers and for cultural analysts such as myself, and what political work did it do?” (p.17). Focusing on the meshed discourses of cultural and natural “endangerment,” *Ecologies of Comparison*, like other scholarship within the field of political ecology and environmental anthropology, reminds us that “Environmental politics are inseparable from the practice and development of environmental science, whether arguing for the importance of protecting particular plants, animals, or landscapes, or proving the reality and implications of global climate change” (p.11).

The book has a poetic structure. Between chapters are short vignettes of environmental activists which showcase the personal navigations of these ecological agents and subjects. Choy’s ethnography shows how the endangerment of a species of white dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*), the protection of a fishing village, anti-incinerator activism, urban air pollution politics in Hong Kong invoke discussion of the value of “comparison” within environmental thinking and political action. As Choy puts it: “Ecologies work through comparisons, and comparisons work through ecologies” (p.12).

Ecologies of Comparison is a stimulating ethnography that takes a serious look at post-Marxist political philosophy—Judith Butler, Slavoj Žižek, and Ernesto Laclau—to theorize the interplay of the moral and universal interests of environmental politics and how this interplay informs the poetics of environmentalism unfolding in Hong Kong. The book will be of interest to anthropologists, sociologists, science studies scholars, and Asian studies scholars alike.

Peter C. Little, <littlepe@onid.orst.edu>, Department of Anthropology, Oregon State University, 2809 NW Lincoln Ave, Corvallis, OR 97330, USA.