GREEN GOVERNANCE, GREEN PEACE

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE, COMMUNITY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Green Governance, Green Peace:
Environmental Governance, Community Resource
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AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY WITH A GENERAL OVERVIEW

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General Overview

Introduction

This annotated bibliography is part of a broader effort to address issues of environmental governance through collaboration and exchange between the University of California, Berkeley, and research institutions in Indonesia, Nigeria, and Brazil. The “Green Governance, Green Peace” program involves “research and instruction on new approaches to environmental policy and law, conflict resolution, and local resource management. Substantively, the project will focus on three strategic and key resource/environments common to each country: forests, minerals/energy, and water.”

The specific purpose of the bibliography (and the selection of readings in the reader that accompanies it) within the larger program is to provide some common theoretical and empirical ground for building future collaboration and debates. As such, the annotated bibliography should be seen as a work in progress which can be actively utilized, debated, and further developed by program participants. To encourage and facilitate the process of collaboration and exchange, the bibliography has been divided into three main sections:

First, an essay that provides background on some of the main debates among academics and practitioners who have studied issues of governance, decentralized and community-based resource control, and/or environment and conflict. The goal of the essay is not to advance a particular position, but instead to provide a general review of some of the important arguments being made in these fields. The essay includes articles from the selection of readings in the reader and from the readings that are annotated in the bibliography. It addresses three key areas: 1) meanings of governance, 2) models of governance, and 3) the question of “What difference does nature make”?

Second, annotations of some of the key recent articles on the topics of interest. These annotations attempt to fully describe the argument being made in each of the readings, outlining the methodology and principle findings of the authors. Because the bibliography generally seeks to promote debate, space has been devoted to providing fuller descriptions of each reading rather than to providing critique of the different articles reviewed.

Third, a list of additional resources that were not selected for the reader or for annotation, but that may be of use to program participants in their own research efforts or in their collaboration with other participants. This list also focuses on recent writing, generally including selections written between 1990 and the present.

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Meanings of governance

Current emphasis on governance on the part of academics and practitioners is, in large part, due to social, political and economic changes that have occurred internationally over the past several decades. As Peet and Watts (1996) point out, the exploration of new governance structures springs from a new emphasis on “nature-society relations” that is related to the collapse of socialisms and the rise of a neo-liberal hegemony, the resurgence of environmental concerns, and the rise of political ecology. Environmental concerns are no longer limited to conservation narrowly conceived, but instead have broadened to include concerns for development, social movements and international institutions.

These broad changes, often referred to as globalization, have changed the ways that states function, necessitating the development of new analytical frameworks. According to Ong (2000), these changes have not reduced the importance of the state, but have instead changed the role that the state takes in relation to civil society. Her study of states in South-East Asia shows that globalization has led states to adopt a mix of “governing practices and military repression.” The resulting system of state-society interactions, which she calls “graduated sovereignty”, has two main characteristics: 1.) “the differential state treatment of segments of the population in relation to market calculations, thus intensifying the fragmentation of citizenship already pre-formed by social distinctions of race, ethnicity, gender, class and region; 2.) the state-transnational network whereby some aspects of state power and authority are taken up by foreign corporations located in special economic zones.” (Ong 2000, p. 57) In this model the state invests heavily in some activities and populations, while at the same time further marginalizing populations that are not amenable to integration into the new economic systems.

In other words, globalization has changed the way states react both to transnational forces and to their own citizens: in some respects this heightens the powers of the state and in other ways it reduces them. In any case, it is clear that understanding of how authority is exercised now requires examination of the interactions between local, national, regional and international state and non-state actors. This observation has led many analysts to propose the study of “governance” rather than “government.” As Stoker (1998) highlights, “government” generally refers to formal state institutions, while “governance” instead refers to all sorts of new arrangements for creating order and structuring collective action.

Conceptually, the value of the concept of governance is that it provides “a framework for understanding changing processes of governing.” (Stoker 1998, p. 18) According to Stoker, the concept encompasses the following objects of study: sets of institutions from government and beyond, the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for addressing social issues, the collaboration between different sectors, autonomous self-governing networks, and the capacity to get things done without relying primarily on state actors. Stoker argues that study of these sorts of relationships would produce more adequate
understanding of how power and authority are currently exercised, as well as providing valuable inputs for the policy process.

In her empirical research on the forest sector in Bolivia, Andersson (2004) finds that developing an adequate explanation for successful environmental management requires the study of governance, rather than government. In fact, Andersson found that successful management was best predicted by analyzing the strength of linkages between local governments and other non-state actors. The results of her study mirror the findings of many researchers who argue that successful collaboration between different sectors is necessary for policy success in a now globalized world.

In this respect, Peter Evans (2002) suggests that the creation of collaborative arrangements – which he calls state-society synergies – is essential for constructing improved public policy outcomes. Evans believes that “normally, the coalitions of private and public actors that construct markets have socially minimalist goals, the most important being preserving the property rights of the most powerful market. Replacing these ‘minimalist markets’ with ones whose rules take livability into account is at the core of any quest for more livable cities. It is primarily a political task.” (Evans 2002, p. 6) Key to Evans’ conceptualization is the ability to construct productive relationships between communities, NGOs, political parties, the state, and other actors to address social and environmental issues. The study of these relationships is at the core of the study of governance.

However, like all concepts in social science, the term governance is not always utilized to refer to the same set of issues. As analysis by Hewitt de Alcántara details, the term has been used by different forces for widely varied goals. The international financial institutions have used the term as a sort of euphemism for reducing the role of the state: during the heyday of structural adjustment programs it was much more politically palatable to speak of “improving governance” than to speak of “state reform.” However, for bilateral agencies and others, the term governance has been shorthand for all sorts of projects meant to advance participatory democracy, promote human rights, and strengthen civil society. Hewitt de Alcántara suggests that the concept is key to coming to terms with changes brought about by globalization “Precisely because ‘governance’ suggests creating structures of authority at various levels of society, within the state and below it, the term is proving indispensable in coming to grips with transnational processes that require a creative institutional response.” (Hewitt de Alcántara 1998, p. 111)

While many studies of governance focus on aspects of decentralization and/or community-based management that will be reviewed later in this essay, a few focus specifically on the role of global institutions. Those who study environmental politics have noted an historical transition in arguments regarding the global governance of environmental resources. Paterson (1999) divides debates into three main periods. During the first period it was argued that global governance was required to address environmental degradation, since the environmental processes involved went beyond national boundaries and therefore could not be resolved by individual states. During the
second period a new argument emerged in favor of the capability of existing international institutions to resolve the problems of degradation. The third period includes more recent work that argues in favor of combining diverse approaches to solve complex problems. At stake here is whether the environmental problems facing the world can be adequately addressed by existing forms of governance, or whether new forms of governance are necessary to meet the challenges posed by global environmental change.

In this regard, examination of international governance institutions in general provides valuable insights. Bodansky points out that one of the key challenges facing international institutions is the issue of legitimacy (1999). To date, international institutions have been relatively weak and have depended upon voluntary compliance of states, since enforcement mechanisms are virtually non-existent. These consent-based systems are unlikely to work in the case of many environmental problems, especially those in which states may have interests contrary to conservation or opposite those of other states. In addition, where environmental management requires application of scientific knowledge, existing governance models do not seem to provide an adequate framework for adopting changes based on scientific recommendations. All of this means that developing appropriate models for global environmental governance will require increased attention to the issue of legitimacy.

Models of governance

The collaboration between state and non-state actors at the local, national, regional and international levels takes many different forms and involves varied mechanisms. This involves multiple shifts in existing power structures: national governments devolve powers to local governments, activist groups form new linkages locally and internationally, and corporate interests implement voluntary codes of behavior. While not all of the changes have produced clear models that can be adopted by others, emerging work on governance does suggest that the changes are having significant impacts that need to be better understood.

In true dialectical fashion, increasing economic globalization has taken place concurrent with a rather contrary movement in the political sphere: increasing decentralization of national governments. The theoretical proposition driving the decentralizations seems logically consistent: “IF institutional arrangements include local authorities who represent and are accountable to the local population and who hold discretionary powers over public resources, THEN the decisions they make will lead to more efficient and equitable outcomes than if central authorities made those decisions.” (Ribot 2004, p. 1) Unfortunately, as Ribot points out, in practice most decentralizations have been incomplete and therefore the discretionary powers over local resources are often not turned over to local populations. While research has shown that in cases of more complete decentralization the management results have been positive, in the vast majority of cases decentralization has remained incomplete, often leading to elite capture of resources rather than more effective management that benefits local populations (Ribot 2004).
In their examination of four cases of decentralization in India and Nepal, Agrawal and Ostrom find that the most successful models combine state-initiated decentralization reforms with active participation and lobbying on the part of local populations to make these reforms work for their interests. The authors are particularly interested in changes in property rights, defined as “relationships among actors with respect to things such as natural resources.” (p. 488) They find that in order for decentralization to promote long-term sustainable resource management, local populations must be given the power to make decisions about how to manage resources, who has access, and how the rules for use can be changed. It is clear from their work that although local people had little control over whether decentralization reforms were launched, they were able to make important changes in the scope of the reforms in several cases.

Work on decentralization of water resources in Brazil reaches similar conclusions. In their study of Ceará, Northeast Brazil, Lemos and Farias de Oliveira find that the more far-reaching components of reform were maintained during moments of adversity due to three main mechanisms: the kinds of institutional networks responsible for implementing reforms, the support that these networks garnered outside the local setting, and the ability of the networks to effectively counter their opposition. This suggests that although the reforms themselves may be catalyzed by actors within the national state, once set in motion, the reforms may be controlled and protected by the local interests implementing the changes. Abers (2005) likewise finds that coordination in two cases of successful reform in Brazil was mainly the result of complex organizing practices – not of formal organizational structures. This work suggests the need for further understanding of the complex forms of collaboration at work in the power shifts that accompany decentralization reforms.

Also focusing on the case of Ceará in Brazil, Tendler (1997) argues that decentralization does not automatically produce positive results as some have posited. Instead, Tendler found that improvements in governance with decentralization were the result of coordination between local government, central government and civil society. She also found that civil society contributions were only possible due to previous government actions. The line between government and non-government was not so clear: the two seemed to be mutually constitutive. Finally, she found that NGOs were really no more flexible and client-friendly, necessarily, than government.

In terms of environmental management, it appears that the pressure placed by civil society groups is particularly important to creating improved management outcomes. In work on Vietnam, O’Rourke (2002) finds that effective government action on environmental regulation took place mainly in cases where communities actively organized and placed constant pressure on officials to act. Examining six different cases of industrial pollution in different contexts, O’Rourke finds that the regulatory action is most likely to be effective in cases where a cohesive and organized community confronts the industry and lobbies the state regulating agencies, where state agencies have some power to respond effectively, and where the local community and the local government have strong linkages.
These relationships between local citizens and local governments involve complex power relationships. As Baviskar (2001) points out, this involves use of both traditional status categories and of formation of relationships between local and international activists. In her two cases, Baviskar finds that the state treats one group of activists deferentially because they at are able to reach international audiences and portray their movement as an environmental cause involving violations of human rights. Meanwhile, the state represses a similar group of activists, using traditional discourses to portray them as lower-caste rebels naturally prone to violence and potentially seeking to incite rebellion. Her work suggests that not all groups of citizens will have the same opportunities to influence social and political processes, given status differences. It also points out the increasing importance of collaboration between activists at the international level.

In this regard, O’Neill charts the history of the Northern environmental movement, showing how it has become increasingly influenced by critiques made by activists in the Global South. O’Neill provides a history of the shift in the Environmental movement, providing a summary of critiques leveled against the original model: first, it privileged the global over the local; second, it prioritized a set of Northern issues over all others (ie climate instead of clean drinking water); third, it discounted Southern forms of environmentalism more based on survival and overcoming environmental pressures; fourth, there were questions about representation – were Northern groups speaking for Southern groups?; last, the Northern groups never addressed consumption, a key issue for Southern groups. O’Neill sees the transnational nature of the environmental movement as extremely important in terms of generating new ideas and opportunities, including the opportunity to frame the environmental movement as anti-globalization and therefore to advocate for a more global civil society with unity of purpose.

This newly emerging global civil society forms links with a broad range of actors: international institutions, bilateral development organizations, bilateral and multilateral lending institutions, governments, private organizations and others. These sets of actors collaborate in the governance of environmental resources. The key to the success of collaborative arrangements in conservation goals, according to Brechin, Wilshusen and Benjamin(2003), is the ability of those involved to come together and to craft mutually acceptable rules governing resource use. In their view, this is dependent upon social capital, or “directly proportional to increases in the quantity (or ‘density’) and quality of social ties.” (p. 181)

While this model of cooperation is often advanced as an ideal, it is also clear that not all actors are equally engaged, nor do they have similar incentives to participate. Transnational corporations are a special category of actor in this regard. Simons (2004) analyzes corporations that operate in conflict zones and under repressive regimes to determine what sorts of mechanisms can be effective given the “governance gap” in regulations that set rules for corporate behavior. She finds that voluntary codes of conduct have been adopted because of the hostility towards legally binding mechanisms of regulation on the part of the transnational corporations. All of the voluntary codes of conduct she reviews were insufficient in terms of providing protections of human rights and addressing environmental concerns. Likewise, there are currently no effective
systems to adequately monitor compliance with codes. Simons believes government action is required to make governance of the private sector work effectively.

**What difference does nature make?**

The literature that responds most poignantly to the question of what difference nature makes in terms of the development of systems of good governance comes from two different foci: the first is literature on community-based management of resources, particularly of common-property regimes; the second is literature on environment and violence. The community-based management literature looks closely at how people cooperate to manage environmental resource at the local level. In contrast, the literature on environment and violence looks at how resources can lead to the emergence, continuation, amplification or lengthening of social and political conflicts. As such, these two perspectives look directly at different aspects of the impacts that environmental resources may have on human behavior, in terms of catalyzing either conflict or order.

**Community-based resource management**

Much recent writing about community-based resource management begins by discussing definitions of “community” and critiquing previous approaches. Much like the discourse used to advance decentralization, the movement toward community-based resource management sprung out of disillusionment with the results of national-led development. Where large-scale, national-level planning had failed, it was argued that community management could succeed since it was those who were closest to the resource who knew best how to manage it and who had most interest in guaranteeing sustainable use. This discourse necessarily pitted “community” against state and market.

For Li (2002), the problem with earlier definitions of “community” is that they are “strategic simplifications” that are designed mainly to help advocates gain support in the policy arena. For Li, community-based natural resource management sees the target population as poor, indigenous, subsistence-based peoples dependent on the resources in question for survival. In practice, Li finds it difficult to locate communities with these characteristics. However, these definitions have led some communities to re-define themselves, since some of the rights over land use have become dependent upon them fitting into these categories. On the ground, Li finds that local populations are continuously engaged in constructing their identities. The “indigenous” identity is therefore less a fixed category than a social construction. In her conceptualization, people normally choose to construct this identity as part of their positioning within society: in other words, it is the way groups place themselves in relation to the nation, government and other social groups (2000). At the same time, Li finds that rather than being contrary to the state and market as many previous discourses have suggested, communities have often formed in relation to the state and market (2001). The implication is that for conservation efforts to be successful, they should acknowledge that rural people “are fully implicated in economic and political processes of a powerful and sometimes overwhelming nature” (p. 175), instead of seeing rural communities as bucolic settings removed from these powerful forces.
According to Agrawal and Gibson (1999), the problem is that “community” has commonly been defined as a small spatial unit that is homogenous and governed by shared norms. Under this logic, good management practices automatically result when “communities” are in charge: this definition assumes that the community is intimately acquainted with the resources they are to manage, that members can all agree easily on management plans given their shared characteristics and therefore their shared interests, and that the norms that they share favor conservation and sustainable use. The authors argue that these conditions are not often found in real communities. Therefore, study of community-based management should instead examine actors, interactions and institutions to see how different interests express themselves, how rules are set and disputes are resolved, and how institutions permit or constrain outcomes.

Much work in this vein has been carried out by those studying common property regimes. Schlager and Ostrom (1992) point out that in the case of collective ownership or control over resources there are two basic rights: access (you can enter) and withdrawl (you can take resources). There are also three levels of decisions that can be made collectively: management is the right to regulate use and transform property, exclusion is the right to decide who may have access and how it can be transferred, and alienation is the right to lease or sell either of the above collective-choice rights. Given these differences, they then identify four different types of bundles of property rights. They hypothesize that the bundle of rights someone has may determine how much they are willing to invest in the property. They conclude that the establishment of effective management regimes must take these levels into account in creating adequate incentives.

However, as Ribot and Peluso argue (2003), access is often more important than formal rights. The authors see a need for an improved definition of “access”, given the past tendency to conflate access with property. They argue that access is more like a bundle of powers and property is more like a bundle of rights. This new definitions allows for more careful examination of “means, relations, and processes that enable various actors to derive benefits from resources.” (p. 153) Access is “the ability to benefit from things – including material objects, persons, institutions, and symbols.” (p. 153) The focus on ability rather than rights allow for analysis of social relationships that permit or constrain someone from benefiting from a resource. The goal is to see clearly who benefits from things, and who doesn’t. It helps one understand “why some people or institutions benefit from resources, whether or not they have rights to them.” (p. 154) They argue that property mechanisms are just one way that people gain access, and perhaps not the most important. The access framework they present can be used to “analyze specific resource conflicts to understand how those conflicts can become the very means by which different actors gain or lose the benefits from tangible and intangible resources.” (p. 173)

As McKean points out (2002), these regimes are often incorrectly conflated with common-pool resources, which she defines as “open-access resources available to anyone – very difficult to protect and very easy to deplete.” (p. 29) In contrast, a common property regime “is a property-rights arrangement in which a group of resource users share rights and duties toward a resource.” (p. 30) McKean notes that “when a group of
individuals and the property rights they share are well defined, common property should be classified as shared private property – a form of ownership; that should be of great interest to anyone who believes that private property rights promote long time horizons and responsible stewardship of resources.” (p. 30)

Study of these regimes has shown that – contrary to what proponents of the “free-rider” problem might suggest – people engaged in common property regimes will normally collaborate in collective action whenever they expect the benefits of collaboration to exceed the costs of organizing (Gibson, Ostrom and McKean, 2000). This is important since other research by Gibson and Ostrom (2005) has found that adequate rule enforcement and good forest management are highly correlated, even when controlling for other variables. In fact, experimental research has continually questioned simple rational choice models that would predict very limited possibilities for cooperation, showing that people generally collaborate far more than these economistic models would predict (Ostrom 1998).

Environment and violence

Much of the recent writing in this area emphasizes how the relationships between environment and violence are mediated by social, political and economic concerns, showing that it is not the mere presence or scarcity of a resource that provokes conflict. To fully explain the links, Peluso and Watts argue for a political ecology that focuses on examination of a broad variety of actors in different historical periods and in “culturally constituted fields of power.” (2001, p. 25) This allows them to focus on appropriation. They “treat violence as a site-specific phenomena deeply rooted in local histories and social relations but also connected to transitional processes of material change, political power relations, and historical conjuncture.” (p. 30) In this scheme, the environment figures into the analysis not only as the basis for material change, but also as an essential part of how local life is structured.

In this vein, Bobrow-Strain argues against the common idea that land invasions in Chiapas represent a simple case where resource scarcity causes conflict. In the area of Chiapas the author studied, the main thing that was scarce was not land but rather state support for increased production. It was when national economic reforms combined with downturns in certain international commodity markets that conflict over land resources erupted. The author concludes that scarcity alone does not trigger violence: that more detailed research on the historical and political circumstances of each case is needed to advance understanding.

In work on the case of the Bhopal gas disaster, Rajan (2001) attempts to understand environmental violence as a societal phenomena. He identifies five types of violence that were present in the disaster: technological, corporate, distributive, bureaucratic and discursive. According to the author, effective treatment of these forms of violence requires government and citizen action, as well as more open and democratic debates about the nature of development. To address the corporate and distributive aspects of the violence current concepts of human rights will need to be reworked. In short, responding
to environmental violence like this requires new forms of governance that can address all five forms of violence.

The connection of corporations to violent forms of expropriation is the focus of Kemedi’s work on the Niger Delta (2003). Kemedi explores three different cases of community conflict in the Delta to show how the practices of oil companies, coupled with the inadequate policy responses of the state, have led to the breakdown in traditional community structure, generating violent conflict. His work shows that the choices that corporations, communities and governments make have a clear impact on situations of potential violence the result from the particular conditions that surround the exploitation of petroleum resources.

Watts points out that most academic literature on oil and conflict is problematic because it does not begin by specifying the characteristics of oil that may influence the relationships that develop between oil exploitation, economic growth, democracy and civil war (2004). In the case of Nigeria, Watts argues that an “oil complex” was created: this complex involved the formation of legal monopolies over oil exploitation, a nationalized oil company, state support for the industry, and a mechanism to redistribute federal earnings back to the regions. This “oil complex” restructures existing forms of governance, leading to the expansion of violence.

Those who have studied the role of natural resources in civil war or armed conflict have generally found that there is a relationship, although the factors surrounding the relations are extremely complex. Le Billon finds that “armed conflict and natural resources can be directly related in two main ways: armed conflicts motivated by the control of resources, and resources integrated into the financing of armed conflicts.” (2001, p. 580) Ross (2004) looks at evidence from 13 recent cases of civil wars and does not find that resource wealth was a generator of conflict in any of the cases. However, once conflicts had started, the presence of resources did tend to make civil wars more intense and more long-lasting – suggesting support for Le Billon’s second hypothesis. Ross advances four main ways that resource wealth contribute to conflict: resource dependence tends to reduce economic growth and increase rates of poverty; governments of resource-rich regions tend to suffer from corruption, state weakness and lack of accountability; it gives local residents reason to support formation of separatist states; and it finances many rebel movements (2003).

Bannon and Collier (2003) advance a number of specific policy recommendations to prevent these sorts of conflicts, including economic diversification in resource dependent regions, international institutions to cushion commodity price shocks, public transparency of information about resource exploitation, and systems for preventing trade in conflict resources. Le Billon (2003) argues that since natural resource have provided the bulk of financing for most wars since the end of the Cold War, control of trade in resources that finance conflict should be a policy priority. Despite the challenges, Le Billon argues that there are international enforcement instruments available to prevent or limit the trade such as sanctions, judicial instruments, trade conditionality, economic supervision, corporate conduct codes, and other international governance institutions.
Bibliographic Sources for the Reader


O’Neill, Kate and Stacy Van Deveer. “Transnational Environmental Activism after Seattle: Between Emancipation and Arrogance.”


In this book introduction, Agrawal and Gibson attempt to give the concept of community the analytical attention it warrants. In the wake of unsuccessful conservation policies that were often forced upon local people, “current writing champions the role of community in bringing about decentralization, meaningful participation, cultural autonomy, and conservation” (1). However, many claims for community are made from an uncritical perspective that does not adequately define the concept of community or other key concepts. This volume seeks to fill this gap in the literature on community and environment.

The authors define communities as “complex entities containing individuals differentiated by status, political and economic power, religion and social prestige, and intentions. Although some may operate harmoniously, others do not” (1). The authors point out that most existing literature defines community as either a small spatial unit, a homogenous social structure, or as shared norms. They argue that it is more fruitful to focus on multiple interests, on decision-making processes, and on how institutions shape these processes. Community-based conservation efforts should “be founded on images of community that recognize their internal differences and processes, their relations with external actors, and the institutions that affect both” (2).

After reviewing the historical roots of modern conceptualizations of community and the links between community and conservation, the authors argue that the vision of communities as ideal managers – based on an image of small, homogenous communities using their own norms and rules to govern resources that they have intimate knowledge of – is attractive but likely to be largely mythical. This vision ignores local differences, politics and power relations. Small communities may not even be efficient for managing certain resources (a large forest area, for example, where the area would be too large for a small community group to enforce). They are also not usually homogenous – stratification of some sort exists in all social groups. Finally, shared norms may not exist, or where they do they may not be based in a vision of conservation.

The authors argue for an approach more based on looking at actors, interactions and institutions. First, they believe communities should be seen as populated by multiple interests and actors, whose interactions are therefore driven by a variety of factors. Second, they argue for the need to closely examine the processes by which resource management is negotiated – how rules are set and how disputes are resolved. Finally, they believe future research should examine how the institutions operating in the area permit or constrain certain types of interactions, decisions and outcomes.
Agrawal and Gibson believe that the current perspective on community springs from a disillusionment with traditional top-down development approaches and a loss of faith in progress. It also reflects a loss of faith in the state and the market. However, adequate research and policy action should not romanticize notions of community in ways that impede realization of sound conservation policies.


The authors examine four different cases of decentralization of central state control over natural resource management in India and Nepal, focusing on forests. Their aim is to answer two questions regarding the relationships between decentralization and property rights: “When do governments decentralize environmental decision making? And Which types of rights must be devolved if decentralized decision making is to be effective?”

(485) They see addressing these two questions as key to filling gaps in previous research, which does not tell us why central states sometimes have an interest in giving up some authority, nor does it tell us what sorts of property rights need to be conceded in order for decentralization to be successful.

They first concern themselves with exploring the role that local populations take in processes of decentralization. Decentralization aims to fulfill aspirations for democratization, as well a redistributing power and resources within the state’s administrative apparatus. The authors find that in the current context, international institutions, NGOs, local organizations, and central governments all play an important role in decentralization processes. For this reason, understanding of why the state undertakes decentralization in some cases and not others must spring from analysis of the political interactions between these sets of actors. They find that, because central governments are made up of a multitude of interests, certain sectors within the state are most likely to decentralize when such a move would allow them “to reduce costs, deflect blame, or extend state reach further into social processes.” (488) Although local mobilization appears key in the implementation process, decentralization is most often initiated from the central government level. The most successful models combine action of the central state with active local lobbying to guarantee participation of local actors in the shaping of the decentralization process.

Decentralization is “any act by which a central government cedes rights of decision making over resources to actors and institutions at lower levels in a politico-administrative and territorial hierarchy.” (488) This necessarily involves changes in property rights, which “can be defined as relationships among actors with respect to things such as natural resources.” (488) The authors examine four types of property rights: withdrawal, management, exclusions and alienation. This allows them to make a distinction between operational rights – basically the right to withdraw – and constitutional rights – which includes the other three categories. Given these differences, they then identify four different types users (based on level of property rights granted):
authorized users (right to access and withdrawl), claimants (right to access and withdrawl, and also to management), proprietors (right to access and withdrawl, and also to management, and right to exclusion), and owners (all four rights). They then go on to argue that the outcomes of decentralization are highly dependent upon how much certainty users have regarding their rights. They find that if decentralization is to promote long-term sustainable resource management, then it is necessary to devolve constitutional rights, not only operational rights.

The authors then examine their four cases: Forest Councils in Kumaon, India, Joint Forest Management in India, Community Forestry in Nepal’s Middle Hills, and the Parks and People Program in the Terai region of Nepal. They find that the outcomes of the decentralization programs are closely linked to their origins. The efforts or demands of local people played very little role in launching decentralization programs, however, participation by local people afterwards did impact which rights were devolved and how that process unfolded. Evidence suggests that as more rights are successfully devolved, the conditions of forests have improved more – suggesting that giving constitutional level rights to local people produces the strongest positive environmental impacts. Without involvement and pressure by local groups, decentralization is unlikely to “move beyond the control of elite actors.” (509)


The authors examine survey data from a 2002 survey of 450 ejidos (rural communities with land rights that were created by reforms after the Mexican Revolution and that include both individual parcels and commons) in order to examine potential causes and policy responses to deforestation in Mexico. Ejidos are important to study because 80% of Mexico’s remaining forest is located on ejido land. The level of biodiversity in Mexico makes it an important site for conservation efforts. The study sees decisions about use of forest resources as an interaction between individual and collective decision-making. It examines forestry and non-forestry ejidos to see what factors contribute to deforestation and what factors contribute to conservation.

The authors find there is notable difference in behaviors between those communities that manage their forest to extract wood for sale and those that simply utilize standing forests as commons, but are dedicated to agricultural pursuits. They find that this heterogeneity in community choices and management regimes must be recognized and addressed by policies in order to decrease rates of deforestation. Specifically, they find that in forestry ejidos, projects can generate funds for public investment that can increase the value of standing forest – in this case deforestation is decreased. However, without this public investment forestry projects may actually increase rates of deforestation. In non-forestry ejidos, deforestation increases when community members with different interest form a coalition that collaborates in clearing forest to make way for other land uses (primarily
The smaller the community and the more experienced the leaders, the more likely they will form this sort of coalition.


This study argues that the unit of analysis in studies on decentralization should be expanded from government to governance. The author uses data from the forest sector in Bolivia to show how linkages between different actors involved in forest governance contributes to the management outcomes. The principle finding is that both vertical and horizontal linkages have a significant positive impact on management outcomes, although horizontal linkages are four times more significant statistically. This suggests that the more local actors talk amongst themselves (and with beneficiaries of forestry projects); the more successful are governance efforts.

As local governments all over the world are being expected to manage an increasingly large area of natural resources, it has become clear that decentralization “is neither a public policy panacea nor an inevitable tragedy” (233). This article attempts to identify some of the reasons for the mixed results of decentralization reforms: the author starts with two very common findings – first, that success depends upon the degree to which local governments involve local resource users in planning and implementing programs; and second, that lack of success is often attributed to the limited resources of local governments in developing countries. Because the range of institutions involved in natural resource management often goes beyond municipal governments, the author finds that analysis of the governance structures can provide more information about how local governments utilize other political, social and financial resources to improve management outcomes.

The authors hypothesis is that “municipalities that have developed institutions for repeated face-to-face communication between actors at different levels of governance enjoy better conditions for learning and cooperating in public service provision than those municipalities where such institutions are not as well developed” (238-9). Her data includes interviews with three different forestry sector actors in 50 randomly selected municipalities in the Bolivian Lowlands (the municipal forestry officer, the mayor, and the president of the Municipal Oversight Committee).

She finds that local resource users are more likely to rate governance as positive in cases where there has been more vertical interaction: the more monthly meetings groups had, the more positively they rated governance programs for forestry resources. In addition, program success was highly dependent upon horizontal interaction: in the amount of contact municipal authorities had with other entities involved on forest management. This was particularly true of contacts with NGOs. In fact, she found that communication with NGOs was more important than overall level of financial resources available to the municipal government.
Andersson reaches the conclusion that the effectiveness of forest management is related to the “performance of the governance system as a whole” (246), not just to the local government. In this regard, trust between various institutions and groups capable of intervening in forest management practices is the key to promoting more successful decentralization reforms.


The authors make a case that civil wars disproportionately affect noncombatants, that they obstruct development efforts, and that they have negative impacts regionally and internationally. In order to prevent or resolve these conflicts, they argue it is necessary to understand what drives them. They suggest that three factors are particularly significant (following a model developed by Collier and Hoeffler): “the level of income per capita, rate of economic growth, and structure of the economy, namely, dependence on primary commodity exports” (2). They also point out that rebel groups need to finance their acquisition of arms – they must become a sort of business organization. Unless they can get significant funds from foreign governments, Diaspora or other sources, rebel groups – which tend to be based on rural areas – often seem to turn to extortion or to trade in primary commodities as a source of financing.

Where high rents can be had from extracting a commodity found in a rebel controlled area, direct participation in the extraction may be organized. Rebels can also take advantage of existing extractive industries by taxing them, engaging in extortion, or by threatening infrastructure. Natural resource wealth also increases the likelihood of violent secessionist movements. These movements are also more likely in conditions of poor governance or corruption.

Yet given the existing level of understanding it is possible to take concerted policy action to ameliorate these conflicts. The authors suggest a number of policy interventions:

- Increasing economic growth through good national policy and well-targeted international aid,
- Encourage economic diversification for primary commodity exporting countries, in particular through the OECD removal of tariffs and non-tariff barriers to value added products,
- Build cushioning from primary commodity price shocks into international financial institutions to help countries minimize risks associated with price fluctuations,
- Increase transparency of reporting on natural resource revenues – as suggested by the Publish What You Pay campaign,
- Attempt to shut rebel organizations out of global markets for products that they exploit at the cost of grave conflicts, much like in the Kimberley Certification Process for conflict diamonds,
- Increasing scrutiny of illicit payments for booty futures and for “facilitation payments”,
- Ban ransom insurance to discourage kidnappings,
- Attracting reputable companies to risky environments, in particular through World Bank approval of natural resource governance structures (a sort of insurance for multi-nationals).


Baviskar examines two environmental movements in India to explore the question of why the state responded differently their mobilizations: actively repressing one movement, while creating political spaces for dialogue and exchange with the other. Baviskar begins by pointing out that the “sublime” version of the state as promoter of development – which is meant to legitimate the domination of the state – also creates the possibilities for resistance by giving activists an “ideal” against which to measure the real performance of state institutions. The author finds that the success of one resistance movement relied upon their ability to portray members as “natural” communities with virtuous ancestries” (356), and to place its claims within a framework recognized by global audiences as an environmental movement. These factors allowed the movement to avoid falling into local structures of power, while simultaneously allowing the movement to negotiate with the state and to take advantage of differences in the different levels of the state.

In Baviskar’s account, the state and civil society are mutually constituting: “competing factions within the state and the necessity of maintaining legitimacy at different levels create opportunities for playing one set of actors against another. These fault lines within the state and the tensions inherent in them, together with the pressure of opposing forces, enable political changes that go against the interest of the state. Social movements that engage with the state at different levels try to choose an arena for action that suits their ideology and capacity, even as the state attempts to preempt that choice.” (357) Violence is structured by both the state and by civil society.

In comparing the two movements, Baviskar highlights elements that made the first case (the NBA opposing a dam project) so successful: ability to reach international audiences, ability to portray the project as a violation of human rights, ability to draw on historical movement imagery (from independence struggles, etc), effectiveness of media campaigning, and broad coalition building. By contrast, in the case of AMS mobilizations around forest land, state response was generally repressive. Baviskar argues that this was due to social discrimination against movement protagonists, to social conflicts within the group of protagonists (causing one part of the community to support violence against the other part), and active efforts of the state to normalize their violence using claims about the protagonists based upon these first two factors. In other words, negative stereotypes of the movement activists (*adavasis* or tribal people) made it possible for the state to justify violence based on their status or to argue that violence among them was part of their “natural” state. Violence is thus portrayed by the state as normal for members of the AMS, allowing the state to escape responsibility.
In this account, both movements “try to problematize categories and concepts such as tribe, forest, development and environment”, and both show how “violence is embedded in the categories themselves, produced by those in power.” (377) In both cases the state attempts to repress the movement – although in the case of the NBA the state must limit itself since violence would be seen a “pathological” given the forms of social capital that the movement is able to mobilize. By contrast, the state can “unleash its full violent potential” against the AMS because they have little ability to counter state claims that they are backwards, feuding people, or are part of the armed Naxalite revolution. These cases show how movements can force the state to surrender part of its power, while simultaneously showing how in certain conditions the state can act violently with little concern about losing legitimacy.


Bobrow-Strain examines the case of land invasions in post-Zapatista uprising Chiapas in order to analyze the links between environmental scarcity and violent conflict. Although land invasions have a long history as a peasant strategy in Chiapas, the author looks specifically at the invasions that took place in spring of 1994 on the northwestern edge of the Lancandon rainforest. He argues that the conflicts over land are not the simple result of too many people competing for too little land, as others might argue, but are instead caused by “the confluence of national economic reforms, changes in international commodity markets, and local histories of violence and insecurity that reduce both ranchers and peasants’ capacity to use land intensively and effectively.” (157) Land invasions, rather than being a sort of “natural” response to conditions of scarcity, instead represent a form of political mobilization that has formed out of the historical circumstances of the region. As such, the author aims to re-politicize these invasions and thereby argue against analysts like Homer-Dixon who see scarcity as naturally leading to violent conclusions.

Even before 1994 there was a long history of use of land invasions as a political tactic in the Chiapan countryside. Those participating in 1994 spanned the political spectrum, including independent and corporatist peasant organizations. Although the spring invasions were relatively non-violent, they led to more than two thousand detentions, at least a dozen deaths, and many more injuries, as clashes between invaders, state forces, paramilitary forces and private security took their toll. However, the general response of the Mexican State was to create credit funds and to try to convince landowners to sell their land to the invaders. Many landowners sold and a significant portion of land was redistributed.

Scarcity is difficult to establish in Chiapas, since despite population growth the density is still far below that of many other Mexican states. Also, degradation is not absolute. So what matters, according to the author, is people’s ability to produce on the land.
Although many report that land reform never reached Chiapas, the author shows that a significant amount of land was redistributed there (although an administrative backlog of land claims built up there over the years – a problem common across Mexico). Yet the agrarian struggle of the 70s and 80s was motivated by the same issues as elsewhere in Mexico: stagnation of the agricultural sector resulting from Mexico’s Import Substitution Industrialization policies, a lack of faith in the possibility of obtaining land legally (due to the administrative delays), and population growth combined with the spread of ranching.

Thus, the “scarcity” is not scarcity of land, according to Bobrow-Strain, but rather a scarcity of “state support for increased production.” (174) This was the result of liberalizing policies that removed supports to the agricultural sector in Mexico, particularly the “social sector” (small plots of redistributed or colonized land, traditionally held as common property). State policy instead has supported the expansion of ranching, which then was negatively impacted by NAFTA. Ranchers in Chiapas also are reluctant to invest, since the rampant land invasions create an atmosphere of insecurity unfavorable to intensification of production.

The author argues that although land is at the center of conflicts, “violence in Chiapas is forged, in part, in arenas of power struggles peripheral to the political-economic battle for direct control of productive land. Land and land invasions are central parts of multiple arenas of contestation, not merely the struggle over productive resources.” (180) Land invasions thus become “central elements in struggles for political power at the municipal level and among rival peasant organizations”, as well as producing “a history of violence that itself reshapes trajectories of conflict.” (180) Land is also central because it has special meaning – as a legacy, and as a “marker of identity and distinction”. Given these factors, the author concludes that scarcity alone does not necessarily trigger violence, and argues for more detailed explorations of cases rooted in historical and political circumstances specific to each case.


Past efforts of international environmental lawyers have tended to focus on what sorts of environmental standards are needed and how to create mechanisms to enforce those standards. However, with the advance of globalization and with new focus on international organizations and regimes in the environmental governance field, the question of legitimacy is likely to emerge as a key challenge in future efforts to develop international environmental law.

Until now, most of the international institutions have been weak and although they do exert some pressure on state behavior, in general these systems have been self-imposed systems of regulation which therefore, by nature, do not raise questions about legitimacy. Because there are few well developed examples of international institutional coordination
on issues of environmental governance, the author uses comparison with the European Union to illustrate why legitimacy problems are likely to arise.

For the author, “‘legitimacy’ refers to the justification of authority” (601). Legitimacy can be popular – based on acceptance by some group – or normative – based on whether it can be objectively justified (by laws, ethics, procedures, etc.) Up until now, international law has been developed based on consent (generally of states that are party to an agreement), and therefore legitimacy has not been such a concern since legitimacy usually is thought to apply to systems of domination rather than consent. States can consent specifically to an agreement (the Kyoto Agreement), or they can consent generally to an institutional framework and set of rules for establishing and exercising authority (the UN charter). While this has worked relatively well until now, the author argues that it is unlikely to provide a solid basis for the future, since the types of environmental problems that must be managed will likely require more rapid decision-making capabilities and more flexibility to adapt terms of agreements given scientific evidence. In addition, state consent may have little legitimating effect, which could pose grave difficulties for the effectiveness of international law.

Part of the problem arises due to the difficulties of consensus decision-making. While the state consent model relies upon the ability of states to reach consensus on agreements, the varied and conflicting interests of states on many issues involving global environmental regulation make agreements of this sort seem increasingly unwieldy and even unlikely. On the other hand, general consent systems like the EU and the UN Security Council have faced strong criticism, making it difficult to imagine how a general consent system could work. Another problem is that state actors would be making agreements to govern not only their own behavior, but the behavior of other non-state actors of which they may or may not be representative (citizens, corporations, etc). In this context, concerns about the democratic structure of these arrangements will no doubt be raised.

The author explains that authority can be legitimated by its source (religion, tradition), by procedures judged to be fair (the judicial system), or by its ability to obtain desired results (government programs effective at addressing a certain problem). In the modern world, democracy is widely considered legitimate – it can be justified in terms of all three ways of legitimating authority. However, democracy at the international level is not the same as democracy at the national level – it is more difficult to establish what it would mean. In international law, people use the term democracy to talk about different things: it can refer broadly to representative forms of governance with popular elections and majority voting, to political equality among states, or to features of governance like transparency and public participation.

For Bodansky, some of these meanings are problematic: it is difficult to argue that each state should have one vote when the population of states varies so widely; as scale of government increases it is more and more difficult for citizens to participate; and the legitimacy of democratic rule depends upon *demos*, some sense of political community which motivates a minority to accept majority decisions. Finally, there are some aspects
of environmental governance which depend upon expert knowledge – and this often runs counter to proposals to make decisions based on popular participation.

The author concludes that in order to construct effective international institutions, much greater attention will need to be paid to resolving questions of legitimacy.


It is very difficult to craft institutions for conserving biodiversity, in part because of all the actors involved: international conservation NGOs, development agencies linked to the UN, bilateral development organizations, multilateral lending organizations, and global institutions like Conventions, along with national, regional and local counterparts (governments, cooperative, private organizations, social movements, etc). To successfully manage conservation, collaboration is required between these different groups. In this essay, the authors analyze 1) work on formal complex organizations to identify common points of failure, 2) institutional design principles based on learning from common property regimes and from international relations literature, and 3) work on social capital which suggests that building adequate institutional and organizational structures requires the construction of spaces for ongoing negotiation between stakeholders.

Formal organizations have several key components, including goals, structure, participants, core technology, environment and culture. In general, organizations form and continue in order to reach goals, although often they generate unanticipated consequences that may even be contrary to their own goals. Organizations can fail in several different ways: the authors look at normal failures and at what they call pathologies, which are failings that are built into the system. The authors argue that organizations commonly fail because of structural inefficiencies: for example, the organization can be too centralized, or decision-makers can be too removed from action to make good decisions. Pathological failings commonly fall into two categories: excessive rigidity and resistance to innovation. Rigidity makes organizations orient toward internal rules rather than performance goals. Resistance to innovation makes organizations see new ideas as threats, preventing organizations from adopting good practices.

The authors go on to argue that to function well given the challenges they face, the structure of conservation organizations should be less hierarchical, more informal and holistic, and more flexible. They suggest there should be more field offices and more decentralization, since decisions are likely best made from close proximity to the field sites. The also suggest that learning organizations need to be built, where the routines
and practices of an organization institutionalize learning and application of learning. In addition, collaboration between different stakeholders – both in decision-making and in implementation – will be required to make conservation efforts work.

In the end, conservation will rely upon the ability of actors to come together and craft sets of mutually acceptable rules to govern resource use. These rules may be operational, collective choice, or constitutional: the point of the authors is simply that the same mechanisms used in managing common property resources at more local levels could be applied internationally. The authors then examine the cases of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and of common-pool resource management of forests in Mali “to illustrate the role of governance regimes in shaping biodiversity conservation” (174). They find that the CBD attempts sustainable, equitable resource use with conservation – and that compliance has relied largely on national public opinion, peer pressure from other states involved in the treaty, and pressure from the international secretariat. In the case of forest management in Mali, outside forces worked to organize local people to develop management rules: the authors argue that because they built on an understanding of existing local institutions, the resulting governance frameworks have been largely successful.

They go on to discuss the implications of social capital, which they define as: “The ability of social actors to secure ‘actual or potential resources’ as a result of participating in ‘a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition’” (179). For the authors, this is key to the development and enforcement of collective rules, following on Portes’ definition of social capital as having four types of rules and norms: internalized norms, norms of reciprocity, bounded solidarity, and enforceable trust. Following on Portes, they suggest that the ability to reach governance goals is “directly proportional to increases in the quantity (or ‘density’) and quality of social ties” (181).


This article responds to the loose transnational movement that attempts to link environmental and social justice concerns, largely through promotion of community-based natural resource management. While they see many positive outcomes of this movement, authors also raise questions relating to the key concepts driving this model: community, territory, conservation, and indigenous are the key terms in question.

In general, community-based natural resource management programs spring from the assumption that local people have better knowledge and more interest in sustainable resource management than do outside entities. However, different promoters of the model have different visions. Conservationists aim mainly to protect biological diversity and habitat integrity, using local people as stewards in the process. Meanwhile, development organizations seek to involve local people in projects that can lead to
environmentally sustainable development – advancing the economic status of marginal populations. Populist groups hope to “empower local groups in their conflicts with state resource management agencies and national and transnational capital” (158). Finally, indigenous peoples’ advocates “argue for a new respect for local rights, knowledge and culture.” (159)

Their article is a summary of a proposal for a conference to bring together scholars and advocates of community-based natural resource management. The goal is to seek more common ground between practitioners and researchers in a field where practitioners find use of such concepts as community, territory, conservation, and indigenous to be extremely useful in their promotion efforts, while scholars increasingly question the validity of these concepts. A particular problem for the authors is the “genericization” that the use of these concepts can bring. For advocates, to the extent that these concepts are broadly legitimate at the international level, use of the concepts can substitute for real efforts to empower local people involved in resource management. For scholars, a critical stance on use of these concepts can easily ignore the positioning of these arguments within conservative agendas.

The authors suggest four broad themes as important to the study and advancement of the field of community-based natural resource management. The first areas focuses on concrete models of community-based resource management, asking about “the histories of specific projects in which models of community-based natural resource management have been formed, promoted, and institutionalized by local, national and transnational organizations.” (160) The second area focuses on the technical aspects of making this type of management function. The third area relates to how community-based natural resource management has “become part of a strategy for bringing nations into line with global natural resource management initiatives.” (163) Finally, they raise a number of additional questions: how international institutions have appropriated the discourse of community-based natural resource management; how concepts such as community, territory, indigenous and traditional are used to shift authority back to minority cultures and to legitimize their management practices; and how terms like community, collective rights, sovereignty and citizenship have been defined and utilized.


This article examines the practical and theoretical implications of the spread of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods, a combination of approaches that involve local people in gathering data about their life conditions, usually as a way of involving them in participatory development planning. The author examines how these approaches have spread, how quality can be assured with use of the methods, the dangers and potentials of the strategy, and the paradigmatic significance of the shift towards greater adoption of PRA.
PRA has three basic components: methods, behavior and attitudes, and sharing. The methods aims to involve local people in generating their own data by involving them in numerous activities that produce meaningful information (like mapping, transect walks, matrix scoring, wealth ranking, seasonal calendars, etc.). Many of these methods are visual and group oriented. Some also produce tables and figures that fit well within the expectations of more mainstream survey research practices. The behavior and attitudes component aims to encourage outsiders to learn from local people by allowing local residents to take the lead. Outsiders are encouraged to listen rather than talking or sharing their “expertise.” Finally, the model promotes sharing of information: local people share knowledge with each other and with outside researchers, and outsiders share what they have learned with local people. The model has generally spread not through top-down processes common in these settings, but rather through field learning experiences, through informal and formal workshops that demonstrate methods, through dissemination materials, and through contact between villagers themselves.

This process has involved several dangers. The first is that it has become fashionable and therefore can be appropriated in ways that do not reflect all the components of the model – leading to rather non-participatory processes getting labeled as PRA simply because it is fashionable. There is also a danger with the word “rapid” (PRA springs out of RRA, rapid rural appraisal) which could lead to a sort of “rural development tourism” that would not be able to capture realities of different field sites. “Hurried rural visits, insensitivity to social context, and lack of commitment compound errors, and can mean that the poorest are, once again, neither seen, listened to, nor learnt from.” (1441) A further danger is the use of manuals: while it is important to record experiences and disseminate useful models, one does not learn PRA from manuals but rather from field experience. Finally, there is a danger that trainers and practitioners can get into ruts and routines that negatively impact the process.

The model faces several challenges. First, rural farmers have a host of knowledge that they could profitably share with scientists – however, the PRA exercises and methods required for this to happen need to be developed further so that farmers can better do their own analysis and “make their needs and priorities known to scientists.” (1442) The second is that PRA models could be used to replace some of the costly and inaccurate rural survey methods, but there are problems relating to comparability of data that would need to be resolved. It is clear that the methods can produce data that has more depth and is more accurate than large-scale surveys, which have been widely criticized as expensive and ineffective. The methods can be particularly effective for issues of monitoring and evaluation. However, the data generated are often difficult for central planners to incorporate since each location may present different types of information.

The third danger is of “naïve populism”, where participation is seen as good regardless of who is participating or who is benefiting from those patterns of participation. This can be addressed by doing ranking activities first and then by forming different focus groups to give people of different gender or status groups each their own spaces to generate further information and findings. A fourth challenges relates to how to train local people in disseminating the models on their own – since they are often better facilitators than the
outsiders who have traditionally participated in leading workshops. There are some examples of spread of methods from village to village but it is unclear how this could be expanded. There is also a need to reflect on how PRA can impact planning processes – although the author cites numerous examples where findings of PRA exercises were shared with policy makers, it is unclear whether that sharing produced any changes. It’s also necessary to learn more about how PRA may produce change in attitudes at the local level, particularly of policy makers. And finally, it is necessary to understand how PRA may change the organizational cultures within the development sector.

The author notes that the growth of PRA coincides with other paradigm shifts taking place. In the social and natural sciences, this is reflected in post-modern theory and post-Newtonian theory, which “affirm and celebrate multiple realities and local diversity.” (1449) It also parallels trends in business organizations aimed at flexible specialization. Finally, in development thinking previous ideas about normative growth and progress are increasingly seen as untenable and therefore are being replaced by concerns more focused on quality of life.


This article describes the goals of the International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI) research program – a project designed to collect large amounts of data over several years in many countries. The data are meant to provide for testing of a broad range of theories across academic disciplines in topics such as “the nature of property rights, collective action, rule enforcement, human foraging patterns, markets, transportation systems, informal norms, institutional creation and change, ethnicity, agricultural livelihoods and population” (227). The book draws on research that forms part of this program and from the results the authors draw several broad conclusions.

First, “local users of forest resources can exercise more control over the incentives they face than is frequently depicted in textbooks on natural resource policies” (227). Many of the cases show that common-property resources can be well managed given appropriate governance structures, showing that local people often have significant power to shape resource use in their immediate environment. This is true even though experiences differ – local organization takes many different forms. In order to move toward theoretical understanding of these variations, the authors ask what factors help explain success or failure of different local management styles.

They find that local users invest in collective action when they expect the benefits of management to exceed the costs of their organizing efforts. To further specify, the authors suggest several characteristics of the resource and of the users that contribute to the cost-benefit calculation. In the case of resources, the main variables to consider are whether the forest resource can be improved through collective action, whether the
condition of the forest is good enough to warrant management, whether forest products are available predictably, and the location, quality and accessibility of the terrain. In terms of the users, variables to consider include: level of dependence of users on resource, whether users have a shared image of the resource, whether users trust one another, whether they have autonomy to determine governance rules, and whether they are experienced at organizing. The authors state that there is dispute about the impact that size and heterogeneity of the group have on success in managing resources.

Obtaining better measure of all the variables and utilizing data to construct more models of behavior and decision-making is the goal for future study. The study now includes 104 sites, including 173 forests in many different countries. Plans include returning to the same sites in future years to be able to also measure changes over time.


Many variables have been advanced as important in the creation or maintenance of improved forest conditions. This study develops a statistical test to explore hypotheses regarding the relationship between rule enforcement and forest conditions, controlling for social capital, formal organization and dependence on forest products. The authors begin with two basic hypotheses: 1) “if rule enforcement is sporadic – even if a group has high levels of social capital – forest conditions are more likely to be poor”, and 2) “if rule enforcement is regular – even if a user group has low levels of social capital – forest conditions are more likely to be good.” (276)

They use data on 178 user groups collected by a network of scholars associated with the International Forestry Resources and Institutions research program from 1991-2000. This includes data on forest conditions, community rules and rule enforcement, demographic and socioeconomic variables, and other factors. Most of the variables used in this study were composite variables created from several questions in their data set and coded as dichotomous variables.

They find that rule enforcement and good forest conditions are correlated regardless of social capital, level of formal organization or degree of dependence on forest resources – all factors that previous studies have noted as important factors in outcomes of forest management. The author suggest that, far from being a tautological argument to state that rule enforcement has important impacts on the condition of forests, this new data highlights the centrality of good enforcement mechanisms in any forest management plan. They also dedicate a section of the article to discussing what they call the “collective action problem” of rule enforcement (based on Mancur Olson’s “free rider” problem), which states that local users may have little incentive to enforce group rules if it entails individual costs. They cite substantial experimental research that suggests that this problem is not much of a problem – individuals have been found to enforce group rules even if it entails some level of cost to them as individuals.
The authors conclude by noting that their study has many weaknesses: quality and substance of data did not allow for regression analysis (they relied on three-way chi square tests only), the lack of time-series data did not allow them to control for the state of the forest at the time a user group acquired rights (some user groups were likely given poor quality forests to manage), and up to the present they have not looked systematically at the factors that facilitate or complicate the rule enforcement efforts of local groups.


The author notes an increasing use of the term “governance” in the international community. The term generally refers to “the exercise of authority within a given space.” (105) However, in recent times it has been used to refer to political practices that do not necessarily involve the state, to “building consensus, or obtaining the consent or acquiescence necessary to carry out a programme, in an arena where many different interests are at play.” (105) The concept has perhaps become so popular because it can have widely divergent meanings for different sets of interests. For example, many actors argue for “good governance”, when what is really at stake is the reform of the state (often a sort of euphemism for limiting the role of an inefficient, possibly corrupt state). In contrast, others advance hope for governance when they are addressing problems where the state cannot take the lead – where it is necessary to build civic cultures or voluntary action, or to involve elements of the international community. “In other words, ‘governance’ – like so many other key concepts in the current development debate – is being used by groups of very different ideological persuasion, for a number of different and often contradictory ends.” (106)

The international financial institutions have utilized this term as a way to soften the overall discursive impact of their policies, which have been based upon a free-market ideology that aims to limit the functions of the state. Since this policy was met with much resistance, it became easier to talk about ‘governance’ than about reforming the state. In other words, it allowed them to put their demands in technical – rather than political – terms. Yet the programs advanced have clear political implications. “These are programmes designed not only to shrink the state and make it more efficient, but also to shift the balance of power in society from governments and the public sector to private individuals and groups.” (108)

Bilateral agencies often used the same terminology for projects of a different sort: to support emerging civil society groups in developing countries, to link funding to respect for human rights, and to otherwise promote democratization. This type of ‘good governance’ has a much broader meaning and was based on improving “people’s capacity to organize and manage their own affairs in a creative fashion.” (108) In other words, it is shorthand for a broad variety of arrangements to improve governance which may have little in common aside from an emphasis on working with a range of actors outside the state. Unfortunately, despite these usages of the word, there is still a strong segment of the development community that uses terms like “civil society” in ways that
may lead to negative impacts – particularly if the assumption is that strong civil society requires a weak state, which the author argues undermines concepts like “the common good” and “the public sphere.” (108)

The author sees a need to closely examine the extreme case of societies in reconstruction after violent conflicts, stating that these cases show that to rebuild civil society it is also necessary to rebuild the state. These areas can remind the international community that it is important to value a multiplicity of approaches to rebuilding a political order, since “an enormous effort to understand and involve local people is required, when operating within these political minefields…” (110)

Finally, the concept of governance arises in discussions of “globalization and supranational organization. Precisely because ‘governance’ suggests creating structures of authority at various levels of society, within the state and below it, the term is proving indispensable in coming to grips with transnational processes that require a creative institutional response.” (111) This is because the global system increasingly places limits on state capacity to resolve a variety of political conflicts, while at the same time international standards in areas such as human rights require more effective international institutions. In this sense, the term promotes innovative forms of management.

Finally, the author argues that the search for good governance should seek a plurality of perspectives and approaches, should move away from a technical approach based on standard prescriptions about reducing the role of the state, away from a tendency to draw lines between civil society and the state or between the national and international, and away from a tendency to consider macroeconomic policy and institutional reform as separate spheres.


Kemedi explores three different cases of community conflict in the Niger Delta to show how the practices of oil companies, coupled with the inadequate policy responses of the state, have led to the breakdown in traditional community structures, generating violent conflict. He argues that the “resolution of the structural, environmental, economic and political conflict between the communities of the Niger Delta on the one hand and the Nigerian states and the oil companies and their guarantors on the other is of urgent importance to Nigeria and the world.” (1)

Nigeria makes up roughly 20% of the total population of Africa. It ranks seventh worldwide in petroleum production, and almost all export earnings come from this single commodity. This oil complex in Nigeria has generated significant conflict. Kemedi argues that while the conflicts between communities and the oil companies or between communities and the state have been explored in many studies, comparatively little information exists about how oil exploitation generates intra- or inter-community conflict
and violence. In the case of the Niger Delta, Kemedi argues that the practices of oil companies have generated significant inter-community violence – often when they aim to buy off political leaders in order to avoid opening more democratic processes to involve citizens in decisions about oil exploitation and the distribution of oil rents.

Although traditional governance in the Delta varies, popular participation has been common to almost all communities. Leaders would govern with consent of community members. However, this system was not efficient enough for oil companies, who preferred to negotiate with only the leaders. As oil companies adopted certain negotiating styles, this in turn weakened traditional systems of governance, leading to social breakdown and violence.

In the three cases, Kemedi shows how this has been implemented on the ground. In the first case of Nembe, traditional structures are weakened when they are not able to produce results from Shell Oil. The company opts to support a youth organization that has little legitimacy and that maintains order through violence – essentially displacing the Council of Chiefs as a governance structure. In the case of Ke and Bille, conflict between the two groups did not begin until oil exploitation by Shell generated new disputes over land rights. Finally, in the case of Peremabiri, Shell adopted a policy of giving payments to certain political leaders, causing a wave of charges of corruption and a resulting breakdown in the traditional political system.

In the different cases, solutions involving segments of the community and other government agencies were attempted – leading to effective results in some cases. As Kemedi argues, this suggests that “The near success recorded by the Nembe Peace and Reconciliation Committee and the willingness of the parties to the Pereamabiri conflict to dialogue is also an indication that these deadly conflicts are open to facilitated resolution.” (22) Kemedi makes a series of recommendations to national and international groups, governments and oil companies aimed at mitigating local conflicts in the Niger Delta.


Le Billon argues that natural resources have perhaps provided the majority of financing for wars in developing countries since the end of the Cold War. Because these conflicts have had devastating consequences, broad reforms are needed to guarantee that natural resource governance takes into account the security of the world’s citizens. To that end, the chapter examines the various instruments available internationally to enforce controls of conflict resources.

Conflict resources “are natural resources whose control, exploitation, trade, taxation or protection contribute to, or benefit from the context of, armed conflict” (216). The idea of instruments of enforcement is to place controls on the amount of profit that belligerent
organizations can garner from trade in conflict resources, which has been shown to be a potential cause of prolonged conflict by providing resources to the parties in combat or by producing a “comfortable stalemate” where both sides maintain their position to continue to benefit from exploiting the conflict resource (although it can also lead to resolution of conflicts, as well).

Conflict trade poses a number of challenges in terms of regulation. It is normally a mix of licit and illicit activities, meaning that tracking and controlling resource flows is particularly difficult. Enforcement mechanisms aim “to prevent resource exploitation and trade from financing war, and to motivate belligerents to resolve a conflict through nonviolent means” (221). Mechanisms may be mandatory or voluntary, may be practiced nationally, regionally or internationally, and will have different targets. Although many conflict resources require global regulation, global agreements are generally the most difficult to develop and to enforce, since enforcement is usually either voluntary or based upon existing national legal frameworks.

The bulk of the chapter discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the major enforcement instruments available: trade sanctions, judicial instruments, certification instruments, aid conditionality and economic supervision, corporate conduct instruments, advocacy nongovernmental organizations and the media, and other transboundary resource and environmental governance instruments.

Despite the broad variety of instruments, many observers have characterized these instruments together as ineffective for meeting the challenges posed by conflict trade. Many studies point to the need for development of a global regulatory framework. The goal would not be to halt all forms of conflict trade (that would be impossible), but instead to make it uneconomic.


This study looks at one case of water reform in Brazil in order to examine how new regulatory frameworks and institutional arrangements associated with water reform were adopted at the local level. They find that the more innovative aspects of the reforms (stakeholder participation, decentralization and integration) – which were subject to reversal due to political concerns – were maintained in this case due to three main factors: the types of institutional networks responsible for implementing reforms, the ability of these networks to gain broad support outside the local and state setting, and the ability of those within the networks to successfully diffuse opposition.

Countries all over the world are increasingly implementing water reform through policies designed to decentralize and integrate management, often at the level of the river basin. These changes often have strong support of multilateral organization like the World Bank, and they normally begin with the adoption of new regulatory frameworks. This
case study examines the Jaguaribe River basin in Ceará, Northeast Brazil in order to shed light on the everyday practices of management during times of transition to more decentralized schemes with the goal of suggesting elements necessary for the formation of successful, durable institutional arrangements for reform. To do this they analyze “the set of variables – including the actors, structural rules, the community attributes, and the material conditions – that shape the reform process.” (2122)

Water is scarce in the region of the case study and must be allocated among many users for competing uses. This is made more difficult due to frequent drought in the region and rainfall patterns that cover only four months of the year. The water reform that was implemented was unique in that users were given a high degree of decision making power over water allocation and use – through the Users Commissions. This was combined with more formal decision making shaped by the River Basin Committees, which were mandated by the new national regulatory framework. In the Ceará case, the local users groups were more participatory and were formed and strengthened before the River Basin Committees: this allowed local users to establish more bargaining power within the political process. This was, in large part, due to the presence of left-leaning technical personnel within the process, who led early organizing efforts to ensure that participation meant meaningful participation in real decisions – not simply an exercise of listening to local feedback before setting policy without real inclusion.

The overall reform process also took place in an state (Ceará) that was getting broad attention and support as a potential “ideal case” of good governance from external donors such as the World Bank. In moments of crisis – when the process was challenged by other political actors – things continued to move forward largely due to outside interventions.

The case shows that the ideas of technical and other personnel in reform projects make a tangible difference in outcomes: in this case, they made the reform more participatory and more durable. It also shows that organization of local user groups is necessary for successful decentralization: groups must be capable of advocating their own interests within the process. It shows that the conflict between reform-oriented technical staff and more entrenched bureaucratic interests in state agencies can be overcome (in favor of the reform oriented interests) if there is significant outside support for the reform. It also shows that formal aspects of reform – like legal frameworks – are necessary but by no means sufficient to guarantee success of reforms. If local people do not feel a vested interest in the new institutional arrangements, they are unlikely to resist political pressures that will likely arise.


This article explores the conditions under which groups may focus on constructing or emphasizing indigenous identity in Indonesia, examining two different cases: one where local groups took advantage of claims to indigeneity and the other where they did not.
The authors goal is to “reflect on how Indonesia’s indigenous or tribal slot is being envisioned, who might occupy it, and with what effects.” (149)

In her two chosen cases, Li notes that the groups in question are similar in terms of being swidden farmers who have historically been involved in similar types of trade relationships with coastal powers. However, one group is relatively well-off: more prosperous, literate, with children “who aspire to government jobs.” In the other case very few people are literate, they lack basic services, and have precarious livelihoods. Yet, Li notes, it is in the first case that people have successfully claimed indigenous identity. This raises two potential problems: one is that examples such as this could lead to the argument that ethnic identity has been adopted strategically and is not authentic; the other is that they cold lead to the argument that groups themselves may suffer from inability to adequate define their identity. The author instead argues that people’s self-identification as indigenous or tribal is neither natural nor simple invention. Instead, this is the product of historical processes of positioning within society: in other words, it is the product of people’s “agency and the cultural and political work of articulation” with the nation, government and other social groups. (151)

In her case studies, the author seems to emphasize that tribal identity is often forged in the midst of conflicts or struggles with outside forces. These moments of conflict lead to claims-making, which in turn brings up questions of identity and belonging, particularly with territorial claims-making. But for this to succeed, the group articulating an indigenous identity also needed members capable of making persuasive claims to the identity based on intelligible boundaries. Articulation of this identity had clear advantages, including giving more political space to villagers: ordinary villagers may be considered communist for their mobilizations, but indigenous villagers are unlikely to be stigmatized in the same ways. In other words, human agency plays a very key role in these processes of identity construction.

The articulation of indigenous identities thus offers opportunities to local activists, but not without also posing some risks. This is because articulation is “a process of simplification and boundary-making, as well as connection.” (174)


The object of Li’s essay is to examine the ways in which the concept of community is often advanced as being opposed to notions of market or the state. Li proposes to explore how the boundaries between these concepts have been created and what the creation of the boundaries mean. In general, literature on communities has shared a vision in which communities are separate from the market and the state. In fact, most often the portrayal includes an assumption that the market and the state are external factors that negatively affect communities.
One of the key terms that accompanies the conceptualization of the relationship between community and the market is “subsistence.” Often, community life is portrayed as subsistence without clearly defining the term. The assumption is that the people who live in the community are driven by a logic that is different than that of the market – they are interested in things other than profit. They are seen as farmers who are relatively isolated from markets. In this characterization, “communities are viewed through a lens that stresses subsistence and implies that marginality is an elected way of life” (161), often obscuring the historical path by which communities have been marginalized to a subsistence-based lifestyle (which often involved close market integration in some earlier colonial period).

Likewise, the relation between communities and the state has often been portrayed as one where these two forces are independent of one another and often at odds. In fact, much research shows how communities are formed in response to the state – almost never independent of it. Because states are constantly involved in “territorialization,” they have an interest in classifying populations, mapping lands, and creating an inventory of resources. These state aims are not necessarily evil – and in fact residents of communities are often eager to gain the benefits of more full citizenship. Li argues that more careful attention should be paid to these relationships in research on communities.

Li examines the case of the Lauje in Indonesia to show how community formation has gone along with market interaction and state-led development efforts. She uses this analysis to argue that “conservation efforts that are consistent with the market-oriented economic strategies of resource users are more likely to be effective that those that overlook them, or bury them in a rhetoric of subsistence” (175). Likewise, “conservation initiatives and institutional arrangements that assume or impose a separation between “community” and “market” or “state” have no prospect. If they are designed on the assumption that rural people are fully implicated in economic and political processes of a powerful and sometimes overwhelming nature, they could make a difference” (175).


Vietnam has been undergoing rapid growth, especially in urban areas. Although it aspires to follow the model of the Asian tiger economies, it also recognizes the significant problems of promoting urban development that is environmentally sustainable. While it would appear that Vietnam faces significant challenges (outdated infrastructure, a poor economic base, overstretched state agencies with poorly trained personnel, the absence of a strong civil society, lack of competitive electoral politics), the author has found several cases in which a new model of encouraging environmental regulation has been surprisingly effective. He calls this model Community-Driven Regulation (CDR).
In the model “communities directly pressure firms to reduce pollution, monitor industrial facilities, prioritize environmental issues for state action, pressure state environmental agencies to improve their monitoring and enforcement capabilities, and raise public and elite awareness of environmental issues and the trade-offs between development and the environment” (97). He presents finding from six cases of industrial pollution in different contexts to show that when community members join together and lobby for change, they can often be surprisingly effective at creating change. His research is based on interviews with factory managers, workers, community members and government officials.

O’Rourke argues that most regulatory actions in Vietnam have taken place due to community complaints. In part, this is because community members are interested in results and generally do follow-up to ensure that the changes that are sought do in fact become a reality. While in different cases the model unfolds differently, generally it involves 1) community identification of an environmental problem and subsequent filing of complaint, 2) state investigation, 3) state regulation of factory, 4) community monitoring, and 5) if pollution is not reduced, increased community complaints. Four sets of actors are generally involved: community members, officials in state agencies, external actors like the media or NGOs, and decision makers in the factory.

The author finds that the most effective cases are those in which a community is cohesive and organized and is able to pressure the state to pressure firms. Action is more effective if the state agency has capacity to respond effectively to community pressure and if firms are in a market position that allows them to implement changes. Linkages between the local community and local governments were especially important in successful cases.

The hope is the CDR can create virtuous circles of environmental regulation. This would be an ideal illustration of what Evans has called state-society synergy – where community organization enhances the effectiveness of government regulatory agencies, and effective state agencies encourage healthy citizen participation.


Ostrom argues that findings from a range of empirical studies show that it is necessary “expand the range of rational choice models to be used as a foundation for the study of social dilemmas and collective action” (1). The author argues that rational choice models, to date, are not entirely consistent with what experimental studies have shown to be true of human behavior. New models are necessary to explain such things as why face-to-face interaction has a direct impact on people’s behavior in social dilemmas.

A social dilemma is a situation where individuals face choices “in which the maximization of short-term self-interest yields outcomes leaving all participants worse off than the feasible alternatives” (1). These social dilemmas have been studied by many
social scientists – the most famous is the so-called prisoners’ dilemma. In fact, so many studies have been completed that it is now possible to revise rational choice theories of collective actions given various finding from previous studies. New theoretical work would have to take into account: 1) that structural variables like groups size, heterogeneity of members, level of dependence on benefits, etc, affect people’s behavior in social dilemma situations, 2) new research regarding how individuals collaborate in collective action, 3) work on heuristics and norms of behavior, as well as on issues like reciprocity, trust and reputation, 4) the failure of policies based on the assumption that people are trapped in social dilemmas, instead of seeing people as capable of designing rules and institutions to solve the dilemmas they face, 5) that citizens in democratic societies have choices about how they participate and theoretical work should give voice to this so as to not encourage political cynicism.

Ostrom reviews a large number of experimental studies to question some of the basic assumptions of current rational choice models. She points out that studies have found that people regularly cooperate more than predicted, that they easily build trust with face-to-face interaction and this leads to further cooperation, that they readily learn norms and that reciprocity is one of the most basic norms, and that trust is basic to how people make decisions in social dilemmas. This means that future research should take into account that the outcome of social dilemmas is dependent on a great many factors and individuals are neither “trapped in inexorable tragedies nor free of moral responsibility for creating and sustaining incentives that facilitate our own achievement of mutually productive outcomes” (16). The implication for policy is a broadening of the object of study – from a focus primarily on the state to a focus on all those institutions and groups that may participate in governance of natural resources.


Paterson divides debates about environmental politics historically into three main strains: the first argued that environmental degradation was a global process that transcended national boundaries and therefore required global forms of governance since individual states could not adequately address what was a global problem; the second argued that existing international institutions or regimes within the sovereign state system could take on the task of global environmental management; the third is more recent work on environmental governance which provides a multiplicity of potential solutions not limited to the two earlier polarized frameworks.

The argument in favor of international regimes as a mechanism for environmental governance is based on the assumption that environmental governance is essentially no different than coordinating the global economy or promoting human rights – both of which are pursued through these regimes. In other words, they assume the state system can respond because “there are no insuperable obstacles to cooperation under the basic anarchy of international politics.” (794) More recent work questions this assumption,
positing that global environmental change does involve significant change in international politics.

Writers in this third approach make both a normative and an empirical argument: first, that “the basic framework of international politics is inadequate to deal with the challenge of global environmental change,” (794) and second, that new forms of governance are emerging that question the traditional roles of states. This perspective agrees with the regimes perspective in viewing the earlier arguments for specific forms of global environmental governance as both unrealistic and undesirable. They instead argue that global governance in the environmental realm should involve a combination of mechanisms that operate in coordination with states. There are three senses in which authors speak of this sort of governance: as an interstate process where authority is held primarily by states, as a new process where authority has been shifted down to local actors and at the same time up to transnational institutions, or as a genuinely transnational process with no center that is shifting and that depends on the issue at hand and on how people mobilize around it. This mixture of approaches shows “a hybrid of diverse state and non-state based practices.” (796)

There is another more critical perspective on global environmental governance that argues that the previous approaches serve to legitimate practices that are environmentally and socially harmful. Writers in this tradition focus on exposing the negative practices of transnational corporations and international institutions such as the World Bank. The argument is that the interests of the powerful – embodied in businesses, states and international institutions – coincide in terms of promoting a form of development that is destructive of much of the planet and the majority of people.


This article discusses five distinct types of violence that were present in the Bhopal gas disaster in order to “understand environmental violence as a societal phenomenon.” (380) The author chose the case of the Bhopal disaster as an extreme case of environmental violence that can therefore shed light on other cases: this is due to the nature of disasters as “extreme manifestations of embedded structures of environmental and societal violence.” (380) The five types of violence explored are: technological violence, corporate violence, distributive violence, bureaucratic violence and discursive violence.

*Technological violence:* The author links this to work done by Perrow on “the normal accident.” The idea is that the accident is in fact a normal part of operations in a system where there is a possibility for interactions between several factors to produce an unanticipated event, or where human intervention is next to impossible in the case of these unexpected events. These factors are often designed into the industrial centers that become the sites of disasters. For example, in Bhopal, key decisions, such as the decision to build underground storage tanks, de-prioritized safety concerns and therefore
maximized risk. In this context, accidents are normal since the engineering of the industrial settings has not built in effective ways to prevent them.

Corporate violence: When corporations prioritize profit over safety, this type of violence occurs. In the case of Bhopal, the facility was riddled with safety problems from the moment it opened. Working conditions were unsafe and many employees had therefore left their jobs, causing the company to hire individuals unqualified for their jobs. After the disaster, the company attempted to deny the problem, to argue that other chemicals were more damaging, to depict the public as “hysterical”, to evade legal responsibility by pitting potential plaintiffs against one another, and to settle the claims with the government when it seemed less expensive than other options. In other words, the corporation attempted to blame the victims of the accident and to avoid corporate responsibility.

Distributive violence: This is often also referred to as environmental racism, and generally involves the siting of dangerous facilities in areas populated by marginalized populations who are unable to effectively fight against corporate interests. In recent years, many corporations have moved facilities outside of the US, since other countries may have inadequate regulatory frameworks or incapacity to enforce regulations meant to ensure safe operations. In the case of Bhopal, those who were initially exposed lived in the region of the plant because it was the only place they could afford. The impacts of the disaster were worsened for them because their homes did not have windows and doors that sealed, allowing for free entry of gas.

Bureaucratic violence: In the case of Bhopal, this was a “violence of absence.” Regulations were virtually nonexistent and there were no contingency plans in place to deal effectively with emergencies. This contributed both to the occurrence of the disaster and to the inadequate response afterwards. In addition, those who needed assistance after the disaster were quickly mired in red tape needed to effectively place claims for services. There was little monitoring or follow-up of programs put into place, and the entire process lacked transparency. Finally, science was often used to claim that victims were not really suffering (doctors claiming that the symptoms affecting people were psychological, etc).

Discursive violence: This took three main forms: first, a violence associated with the discourse of development that places economic progress above all other concerns; second, the violence of organizational discourses advanced by victims organizations that attempted to highlight the horrible nature of the disaster without providing tangible information aimed at ameliorating the gravest problems facing victims (thus, making them a spectacle without simultaneously attempting to guarantee assistance); and third, a discursive absence, where social scientists and others in the intelligentsia maintained silence rather than offering to contribute to rehabilitation or to long-term research on impacts of the disaster.

The author argues that effective treatment of these forms of environmental violence involves action at several levels. First, the various absences must be addressed through
government and citizen action. This includes increased accountability and democratic openings more generally. Second, the author argues for more open and democratic debates regarding the nature of development and societal and political priorities. Finally, the Bhopal disaster suggests a need for reworking basic concepts of human rights given corporate and redistributive aspects of the violence. This would include extension of rights “to include the right to live in nonviolent environments.” (398) In short, adequate response “requires a radical reworking of the institutions of governance and accountability. It asks for a systematic articulation of a ‘green’ social and political philosophy. Last, but by no means the least, it makes a strong case for a major international political movement for an expanded set of human rights that includes both the economic and environmental.” (398)


In this article, Ross reviews research about how natural resource may play a role in “triggering, prolonging, and financing” civil wars (17). He points out that the resources in question are hard-rock minerals (diamonds, gold, gemstones, coltan), oil or natural gas, timber or illicit drugs. Ross points out that natural resources are not the sole cause of conflicts, nor is conflict inevitable in areas with resource wealth. Instead, there are clear pathways through which resource may influence conflict – all of which can be addressed through adequate policy interventions. The author examines four main “pathways” through which resource influence conflict: “their effects on economies, their effects on governments, their effects on people living in resource-rich regions, and their effects on rebel movements” (19).

First, natural resource dependence tends to reduce growth and increase rates of poverty. These impacts could be addressed by increasing assistance for resource-dependent countries to diversify their economic base and by reducing the impacts of price fluctuations for these commodities.

Second, governments of resource-rich regions tend to suffer from corruption, state weakness and lack of accountability. The solution to this issue is to increase financial transparency across the board.

Third, natural resource wealth gives people who live in extractive regions reasons to promote the formation of separate states. This problem can also be addressed through increased transparency, along with preventative diplomacy.

Finally many rebel movements have been able to finance their operations with earning from resource extraction, extortion, etc. To address this problem, the international community would have to find ways to restrict ransom payments, control illicit resource flows and ban booty futures.

Ross notes that a number of recent studies show high levels of correlation between natural resources and civil war, although in general the studies do not provide adequate hypotheses or evidence regarding the potential causal relationships between the two. His study aims to address this gap in existing work by conducting a small-N investigation of causal linkages in thirteen different cases of civil wars.

Recent studies suggest several different things about natural resources and conflict: that states that rely heavily on natural resources as exports are at higher risk to suffer civil wars, that oil-exporting states are more likely to suffer civil war, that some resources may make wars last longer, or that mineral resources tend to increase the scope of conflict. Despite these conjectures, according to Ross there is little agreement on the causal mechanisms linking natural resources and civil war. Further specification of these mechanisms is important to resolving concerns about spuriousness and endogeneity. It could also help to identify which resources make the most difference in the genesis, continuation, and intensity of conflicts (and how), thus leading to more adequate policy interventions.

His study identifies seven hypotheses for testing through examination of a sample of thirteen cases. The cases were chosen from an existing list of civil wars active from 1990 – 2000. Ross chose the particular cases for his study based on the “most likely” method: in other words, he selected the cases most likely to illuminate the central hypotheses he aimed to test.

Of his hypotheses, the first four focus on the ways that resource wealth may generate conflict, the next three focus on how resource wealth may contribute to the continuation of conflict, and the final two focus on how resources may influence the intensity of conflict. Of these nine hypotheses suggested by previous research, Ross is able to formulate criteria for hypothesis testing for only seven:

- that looting of these resources may provides the start-up funds necessary for rebel groups to launch their struggles;
- that resource extraction leads to grievances among local populations, and that these grievances lead to the onset of civil wars;
- that the wealth associated with resources raises incentives for groups to begin separatist struggles;
- that looting of resources leads to more arms and this can lengthen (or shorten) a civil war;
- that war itself becomes financially profitable as different factions gain control over resource exploitation. This can also lengthen (or shorten) a civil war;
- that as two sides engage in resource battles, this can lead to more casualties; and
- that as two sides cooperate in exploitation of resources, this can lead to fewer casualties.
His examination of the cases of Afghanistan, Angola, Burma, Cambodia, Colombia, the Congo Republic, Congo Democratic Republic I and II, Indonesia, Liberia, Peru, Sierra Leone and Sudan yielded the following findings:
- there is substantial evidence in the cases that shows there are causal linkages between resource wealth and civil conflict;
- only oil, non-fuel minerals and illicit drugs seemed to influence civil wars, while other types of primary commodities appear to be unrelated to these conflicts;
- he did not find support for the idea that looting or grievances over resource exploitation were generators of civil conflict in any of the thirteen cases;
- illicit drugs did not seem to generate civil war in the cases, although once civil wars were underway they did seem to increase the length of conflict;
- resource wealth does not always seem to heighten the intensity of the conflict, since in many cases there is a complex mixture of competition over resources and collaboration in their exploitation among different parties to the civil war;
- resource wealth and civil war are linked through a complex mixture of causal mechanisms, which is probably why there is so much seeming disagreement in previous findings;
- resources seem to play a different role in separatist and in non-separatist conflicts.

In addition, his examination of cases identified several connections that could be converted into hypotheses for future studies:
- resource wealth makes foreign intervention more likely;
- warring parties seem to participate in selling “booty futures”, which produces financing for conflicts to expand and continue;
- in separatist conflicts, the state appears more likely to engage in preemptive repression, often amplifying the conflict.


Stoker points out that “government” in Anglo-American political theory refers to “the formal institutions of the state and their monopoly of legitimate coercive power. Government is characterized by its ability to make decisions and its capacity to enforce them.” (17) In contrast, work on governance reflects interest in exploring new processes for “creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action.” (17) Despite the difference in usages and meanings, the author believes that there is “baseline agreement that governance refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred.” (17) However, it is used to talk about such varied things as new or more efficient forms of government, reductions in the state apparatus, or a broad combination of collaborations between private and public entities. The author argues that the value of the concept is in providing “a framework for understanding changing processes of governing.” (18)

The author presents five elements embodied in the term “governance” as key aspects to defining the object of study: 1) “a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but
also beyond government. 2)...the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues. 3)...the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action. 4)...autonomous self-governing networks of actors. 5)...the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide.” (18)

Governance as a “complex set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government”: In this sense, the term challenges traditional definitions of politics which place the state at the center by recognizing the increasingly important role played by private and voluntary sectors. It is an explicit recognition that the state doesn’t stand outside of society as an autonomous actor but instead forms part of social structures. As new structures emerge that mix the private and public, the very framework of legitimacy needs to be reformulated in order for these mixed systems to gain acceptance. The author identifies three necessary conditions for this: “conformity to established rules, justifiability of rules by reference to shared belief, and express consent of [those governed] to the particular relations of power.” (21) He sees this as a key challenge for new forms of governance.

Governance as “the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues”: This is not just in recognition of the increasingly complex systems of governance, but also in keeping with a shift in responsibility where the state is increasingly being supplanted by citizens. “At its most abstract, governance is about a change in the long-standing balance between the state and civil society.” (21) Many portray the array of private and voluntary interests as operating in a ‘social economy’, which lies somewhere between the market economy and the public sector. Of course, the potential downfall here is that the very blurring of responsibility creates confusion and may allow government actors to pass off their responsibility to others, especially when things go wrong. (22)

Governance as “the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action”: In this sense, governance is based upon an understanding of the necessity of collaboration between different sectors, given the inability of any one sector to have access to all the information and resources needed for effective governance. This may take the form of one entity contracting another to perform services, of negotiations to carry out joint projects, or of broader coordination where “Organizations develop a shared vision and joint-working capacity that leads to the establishment of a self-governing network.” (22)

Governance as “autonomous self-governing networks of actors”: This is the “ultimate partnership activity”, or the “ultimate act of power in the context of an emerging system of governance”: where groups come together to form a long-term coalition that the author calls a regime. These regimes are a “response to the challenge of governing without governance.” in basic ways they take over the functions of government. An example might be found in literature on the management of common-pool resources. Many times
these systems are found to be more effective than externally imposed systems, although they also raise issues of accountability.

Governance as “the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide”: According to the author, governance must serve three main functions: identifying and linking key stakeholders, facilitating relationships between stakeholders to reach specific outcomes, and ensuring effective coordination between different governance systems. These roles are not easily mastered – the possibilities for failure include situations where multiple interests make consensus impossible, or where the organizations created to mediate tensions are unable to perform their role.

The author concludes that study of the different systems that are emerging and that meet some of the above characteristics is essential to an understanding of present and future forms of social organization.


Oil has also emerged as a key axis of changing political relationships in Nigeria. Watts argues that the Niger Delta “stands at the confluence of four pressing political flashpoints in the political economy of Nigeria” (51): a struggle for regional resource control, a struggle for self-determination of minority people, a crisis of rule in the context of escalating violence, and, finally, an alliance of southern oil producing states against ethnic majorities. In short, “Oil is the theatre of conflict within which Nigerian politics is currently being played out.” (52)

Watts reviews academic literature on the relations between oil, economic growth, democracy and civil war: for Watts a key problem is that most of the existing literature does not begin with a full conceptualization of what is different about oil as a resource. In particular, the transnational oil companies and the “forms of capitalism that oil or enclave extraction engenders” (53) are under analyzed. To correct for this, Watts examines what he calls “governable space”, focusing on three specific spaces: chieftainship, the space of indigeneity, and the nation. These spaces are “particular politics of scale which are more or less coherent, more or less stable, more or less violent.” (54) Instead of the traditional “resource curse” perspective, Watts advances the idea of “economies of violence” to summarize his findings regarding why oil producing regions are so commonly sites of conflict.

Nigeria is a country heavily dependent upon oil production: oil generates over 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings. The Delta region itself is exceedingly complex in terms of ethnic and linguistic diversity. In the context of Nigeria, oil extraction involved the creation of what Watts calls an “oil complex.” This complex involved the formation of legal monopolies over oil exploitation, a nationalized oil company, support of the state
for the industry in the form of investments and security, and a mechanism to redistribute federal earning from oil back to the regions. Watts highlights that the militarization of the oil complex is essential, as is the vast quantity of money flowing into the national treasury as a result of oil production. This has made oil central to the development of Nigeria and has fueled a particular form of petro-capitalism, “a contradictory unity of capitalism and modernity. On the other hand oil is a centralizing force, one that rendered the state more visible…On the other, centralized oil revenues flowing into weak institutions and a charged, volatile federal system produced an undisciplined, corrupt and flabby oil-led development that was to fragment, pulverize, disintegrate and discredit the state and its forms of governance.” (61)

The Space of Chieftainship: In this section, Watts analyzes the case of the Nembe community in Bayelsa State to make the point that the forms of governance that may emerge with oil development may actually make spaces increasingly ungovernable. In the case of Nembe, a shift in political power arose in 1991 when the traditional authority – the Nembe monarch – was ineffective in dealing with oil companies. In this situation, the Council of Chiefs took over relations with the company and began to control large sums of money, increasing political competition for Council seats. Council members then formed a strategic alliance with youth cultural groups, which extracted concessions from oil companies by offering them protection services. These same alliances have now established violent, vigilante rule in the region. Watts concludes that although this qualifies as a “thickening of civil society”, it is certainly not the sort of outcome anticipated by Putnam and others.

The Space of Indigeneity: Watts here uses the case of the Ogoni struggle to explore the relations engendered when the region of oil exploitation in question combines low levels of infrastructure and services, presence of a minority population, and high levels of awareness about the vast benefits flowing to the national government as a result of oil extraction in the zone. These zones are also sites of concentrated negative environmental impacts of oil production. In Ogoniland, the MOSOP movement took on these issues through drafting of an Ogoni Bill of Rights, which addressed the broader issue of minority rights. In this movement “territory and oil were the building blocks upon which ethnic difference and indigenous rights were constructed.” (69) Saro-Wiwa made the movement into an indigenous environmental movement and attempted to reinvent Ogoni history: although this did not always fit well with reality or motivate mass following of the movement, it did open ground for the creation of all sorts of similarly founded movements across the Delta region that call for ‘resource control’. In this case, oil provided a fertile ground upon which to make claims.

The Space of Nationalism: Oil was always part of the nation-building process, within which the creation of political identity from cultural identity makes ethnicity into a political force. As such, struggles in Nigeria in the last few decades have centered on ethnic rights, and in particular on customary rights to land. Oil comes into this mix as “a national resource on which citizenship claims can be constructed.” (73) Governance in Nigeria then becomes a space for ethnic claims making and for the production of new local political institutions. This sort of process goes against the creation of ‘imagined
communities’ that is advanced by Anderson as key to the construction of nationalism. It is rather a deconstruction of the national space, an ‘unimagining’ that springs from this situation.

In Watts’ account, then, the “oil complex” restructures existing forms of governance. In the Nigeria case, we see that this restructuring has led to the expansion of violence – creating a sort of violent environment where the presence of oil brings powerful corporate and state institutions into focus, and the substance of oil itself becomes an essential element in the ways people do politics.
Additional readings


