

## BOOK REVIEWS

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ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: TRANS-NATIONAL RELATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY POLICY IN COSTA RICA AND BOLIVIA by Paul F. Steinberg. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2001.

Environmental action is often viewed as a privilege of the rich. The environmental Kuznets curve hypothesis suggests that as countries grow wealthier environmental awareness increases, followed after a time lag by environmental action. Hence, after a period of environmental degradation counteraction is undertaken, eventually leading to improvements. Inglehart (1977) suggests that the rise in environmental awareness is an outcome of a shift to post-materialist values, something that is made possible by the elimination of existential concerns in developed economies. Paul Steinberg takes these hypotheses to task by examining in detail the evolution of nature protection policies in two poor countries—Costa Rica and Bolivia

While both countries are part of Latin America they differ greatly. As Steinberg points out, Costa Rica is perhaps Latin America's most stable country, a democracy without an army, and a relatively homogeneous population. In contrast, Bolivia is the region's least stable country, with a very significant indigenous population. Yet, both countries have implemented successful and innovative policies for the protection of nature, and established a renowned natural park system. To explain this seemingly surprising success Steinberg advances a theoretical framework emphasizing the role of bilateral activists. Essentially, he argues that activists with good access to domestic decision making structures, on one hand, and to international funding sources, on the other hand, are the key to establishing such successful policies.

Following a brief exposition of this hypothesis in the first chapter and a critical review of the alternative, privilege, hypothesis in the second chapter Steinberg proceeds to the two case studies, taking a historical perspective. In the third chapter he follows the Costa Rican experience. In this chapter he first follows the evolution of ecological science and thinking, the legal development and the creation and expansion of the Costa Rican park system. Then he discusses the rise of the local environmental movement, as an outcome of the actions of key activists, the transnational links these activists forged, and the use of personal ties these activists had to establish new institutions. In the last part of this chapter he follows the shift in the place of environmental concerns in Costa Rican politics since 1986, from a

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marginal to a central position. The fourth chapter, detailing the Bolivian experience follows a similar vein. First Steinberg describes the actions of the early Green advocates and later the greening of the Bolivian government, after 1985. As in the Costa Rican case he focuses on the actions of the key activists and their ability to use their political resources to advance their cause.

In the remaining three chapters of the book Steinberg takes a step back from the case studies to examine the conceptual framework he outlined in the first chapter on a more general level. This, in my opinion, is the best part of the book. In chapter five he examines the local political resources exploited by activists. He divides these political resources into four types: process expertise, social networks, agenda setting and political learning. Each of these is discussed conceptually employing examples derived from the case studies detailed earlier. Then, in chapter six, he takes a further step back to examine the shift in the policy culture, a term he revives and redefines. To this end he conducted a detailed content analysis of environmental news in the Costa Rican and Bolivian press. This methodology is detailed in an appendix, which can be extremely useful for students wishing to employ this technique. In the chapter he first follows the evolution of environmental issues in the press. Then he explores the sources for environmental awareness, and particularly the influence of foreign sources. This leads to a very interesting discussion of the translation of international environmental agendas and ideas to local circumstances by the bilateral activists, and of the formation of discourse coalitions (a term he inexplicably overlooks) within the different countries.

The book ends with a discussion of the role of national level domestic politics in the international environmental agenda. Steinberg points, correctly in my opinion, that this level has not received the attention it deserves. Most of the attention has focused on either the international level, and the activity of agents based in the developed countries at this level, or on the local level. Yet, the authority needed to implement most of the measures advocated or advanced at each of these scales lies at the national level. Hence, it is essential that the factors that contribute to the implementation of successful policies at this level be elucidated. This he does in a series of recommendations.

As the awareness of the transnational aspects of environmental issues rises, so does the recognition of the importance of the dynamics within developing countries for the environment. Yet, most of the research on these dynamics focused on the failures. This book is a very welcome deviation from this gloom and doom tradition, as it focuses on the successes and the factors that allowed it. Moreover, this book is not limited to the academic analysis of the factors that contribute to success, but goes on to derive concrete recommendations based on these findings. Overall, this is a truly outstanding book—well-researched, well-written, timely and innovative. It is a necessary, and enjoyable, reading to all students and scholars of environmental policy worldwide.

## REFERENCE

Inglehart R. (1977) *The Silent Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

*Eran Feitelson*

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

THE MIDDLE EAST, GEOGRAPHY AND GEOPOLITICS by Ewan W. Anderson.  
London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

Above all, Anderson's book reflects changes that have taken place in the regional geography paradigm in recent years. In essence, it is based on W.B. Fisher's book *The Middle East*, for many years the most outstanding book in the field. The seventh edition of Fisher's, which saw light in 1978, follows the traditional approach to regional geography (Taaffe, 1974). Anderson's book, however, adopts the regional geographical methodology that has developed over the past score years. This considers geographical regions as part of a global arrangement in which there are a variety of activities and movements, rather than a relatively closed system on the growth and progress of which its surroundings have no influence. It also deals with the compression of space and time (Schnell, 1999). Hence it focuses on spatial structuring and restructuring, which is a consequence of the different reactions of man and society both to specific local conditions and to regional and global processes and is influenced by a series of environmental, spatial, social, cultural and political factors; the State, too, still plays a central role in this complicated, multidimensional process, even though its importance and status have diminished in recent years.

Under this light, the first part of Anderson's book describes and reviews a series of factors whose role is influential in the context of the Middle East region as a whole. Its basis is the concept of the state as an arena in which processes of regional structuring take place. The second part of the book expresses this in the discussion devoted separately to each of the nineteen Middle Eastern countries, including the Palestinian authority. The state is a functional geographical region in which 'the geography as such is the stage and influences the performance on it but does not provide the script' (p. 201). The decision-makers at the level of government write the most significant part of the script, which includes both guidelines for structuring the region and a description of its goals. The fact that these environmental and other factors both sustain and influence this decision-making process creates a set of relations, which is the subject of political geography. Under the influence of current ideas in this field, the chapter dealing with the state outlines an individual political geographical 'portrait' of each, based on the relevant factors that influence both the decisions of the heads of government and the patterns of the state's activities. This is according to the realistic school of thought in the theory of international relations exclusively, which claims that those relations are anarchic and the proceedings of the