

LATIN AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Edited by Gordon J. MacDonald, Daniel Nielson, and Marc A. Stern

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LATIN AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE is one in a series of books which take a look at "Latin America in Global Perspective." Previous titles have addressed politics, gender, regional integration, institutional design and civil military relations. The series arises from a multiyear research program organized by the Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies (CILAS) at the University of California, San Diego, with principal funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

LATIN AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE is exactly what its title advertised it would be, nothing more - nothing less. The editors start from the premise that "environmental policy has progressed from rhetoric to substance" in Latin America and proceed through a series of papers to show why, what difference it makes, and how it compares to other parts of the world. In doing so, the book touches on domestic and international factors including political institutions, international development institutions, non-governmental organizations and transboundary cooperation.

The bottom line is that Latin American environmental policy has come of age as the result of the efforts of the international development community, the environmental NGO community (ENGOS), and the Latin American nations' own self interest in playing a role in formal international agreements on the global environment. Sustainable development, "rather than environmental preservation at all costs" (p. 274) has created a win-win situation in which development and environmental concerns can both be met. There is a realization that the social costs of pollution are a drag on Latin American economies. Political liberalization has opened the policy field for ENGO participation. Finally, the regionalization of economic, political and social issues supports the internationalization of regional environmental issues. If this all works, the South may be able to avoid the "North's costly path of dirty development." (p. 9)

PART ONE: DOMESTIC POLITICS AND POLICY

Part One contains four articles on "Domestic Politics and Policy." The first two are intended to be broad overviews and the following two are case studies of Chilean forestry policy and Brazil's crisis of environmental governance. William Ascher, in a chapter entitled "The Politics of Rent Distribution and Latin American Natural Resource Policy" provides the weakest chapter of the book. It is far too theoretical, and tries to tie up too much of what has happened in Latin America through too narrow a model. He does, however, proceed to lay out his model well and to set forth six interesting case examples he calls empirical support for the continued political shortfalls which undermine rational

management of natural resources in Latin America. "Democratization, Politics, and Environmental Reform in Latin America" by Stephen Mumme and Edward Korzetz, relates political liberalization to environmental performance. They assert that democracy opens up Latin American nations to environmental activism. However, the democratization of environmental activism is still weak because legal and administrative remedies are limited, as is public participation.

Eduardo Silva in "Conservation, Sustainable Development, and the Politics of Native Forest Policy in Chile" provides a case study demonstrating the political influence of prodevelopment interest groups. "[P]oliticization occurs if [government and ENGOs'] idea of sustainable development challenges the dominant market-friendly definition . . . socioeconomic forces strongly condition, or limit, the extent to which government actors can turn their ideas into policy." (pp. 60-61) The last chapter on domestic politics and policy, "The Environmental Movement in Brazil: Institutionalization, Sustainable Development, and Crisis of Governance Since 1987" is by Eduardo J. Viola. Basically he presents the reasons why Brazil fell into such a crisis of governance after the Rio Summit that it could not accomplish any of its environmental goals.

## PART TWO: INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The second part of the book is the best because it examines the international aspects of the trade environment linkage and their impact on Latin America. It also reviews the role of the development community and the role of domestic and international ENGOs. Heraldo Muñoz in "Free Trade and Environmental Policies: Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela" looks at the relationship between free trade, economic integration and the environmental policy reform. He recognizes that "there are major conflicts over the premises, purposes, and effects of the relationship between economic liberalization processes and environmental policies." (p. 115). He seeks to "develop a more systematic and rigorous understanding of the link between trade liberalization and environment, using the methodology of comparative politics." (p. 116) And, using Chile, Mexico and Venezuela as his case studies for comparison, he concludes that while "the environmental impact of economic liberalization is not uniform . . . the dichotomy between free trade and environmental protection is clearly false." (p. 126).

Daniel L. Nielson and Marc A. Stern present a chapter entitled "Endowing the Environment: Multilateral Development Banks and Environmental Lending in Latin America." Nielson and Stern provide one of the best summaries to date of the debate regarding the environmental effect of multilateral development lending. They conclude from a thorough review of bank loans that development bank environmental lending is up, but more is going for brown projects to address urban pollution problems, rather than natural resources conservation (green) projects. Based on these findings, they assert that "the [World] Bank is neither as insensitive to the concerns of its critics as some claim nor as responsive to them as the Bank's own literature argues." (p. 131) "Transnational Environmental NGOs: Linkages and Impact on Policy" by Blanca Torres is an excellent discussion of the connections among Latin American ENGOs and Northern ENGOs. She thoroughly examines when, how, and why there has been collaboration on environmental issues.

More importantly she sheds light on the difficulties and obstacles encountered on both sides.

### PART THREE: COMPARATIVE CASES FROM OTHER REGIONS

Because we know the pressure of global change is breaking out all over, we do not have to examine Latin America in a vacuum. To provide a context for looking at Latin America, the editors have included three chapters on other regions: "Environmental Policy Making in Southern Africa: Learning the Hard Way" by Larry A. Swatuk; "Environment Degradation and Environmental Politics in the Former Soviet Union" by Barbara Jancar-Webster; and "Environmental Challenges and Policy Responses in Indonesia" by Carl H. Petrich and Shelby Smith-Sanclare. The Soviet Union case is the best of the comparisons. It provides a frightful recounting, albeit well known, description of the environmental degradation of the former Soviet Union and how it related to economic growth and political stability.

Meanwhile the Indonesia case provides much more of a parallel to Latin America in which short term political pressure ignores long term impacts on the environment.

### CONCLUSION

Gordon MacDonald and Daniel L. Nielson in the "Conclusion: Latin America Foreign Policy and International Environmental Regimes" examine the opportunities and difficulties that shape environmental policy in Latin America. Environmental issues have become more important internationally, however, because of its resource endowments and potential role in global warming reduction efforts, the international importance of Latin America has increased. However, it was Latin America's interest in the linkages being made between trade and the environment which ultimately prodded its involvement.

Overall, the book has two excellent uses, it would make a nice course text or a reference book. I intend to use it for both.

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