Critical Dialogue

Democracy in the Woods: Environmental Conservation and Social Justice in India, Tanzania, and Mexico.
By Prakash Kashwan. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 336p. $78.00 cloth.
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— Craig M. Kauffman, *University of Oregon*

Environmental conservation and social justice are often presented as competing policy goals. Yet some countries reconcile them better than others. Why is this? How do societies negotiate the apparent tensions between environmental conservation and social justice? *Democracy in the Woods,* by Prakash Kashwan, addresses these important questions by comparing how forest land rights conflicts in India, Tanzania, and Mexico have been shaped over time by the evolution of forest property regimes, with varying outcomes for forest-dependent peasants.

India, Tanzania, and Mexico present an interesting puzzle. In the early twentieth century, peasants in all three countries had few if any forest land rights. Over the course of the century, forest conservation greatly expanded in all three countries in response to global demands. Yet protected forests were governed by very different "forestland regimes" (institutions of territorial control). Centralized, state-controlled regimes developed in India and Tanzania, where peasants' land rights were effectively ignored. By contrast, much of Mexico's forests are largely community controlled. Consequently, "Mexican peasants enjoy a far greater security of forest and land rights than do their counterparts in India and Tanzania" (p. 3). Why did Mexico more effectively combine environmental conservation and social justice? And why did the democratic governments in India and Tanzania ignore populist pressures by forest-dependent communities?

Kashwan consciously eschews parsimony in favor of a comprehensive explanation that incorporates a myriad of factors operating at multiple levels of analysis (micro, meso, macro) across different time periods (colonial, post-independence, contemporary). A partial list of explanatory factors includes pre-colonial land tenure patterns, the framing of land rights by colonial powers, states' development goals, the legacy of colonial and post-independence forestland regimes, variation in forest agencies' exercise of power, the goals and strategies of national political leaders, the strength of social mobilization by peasant groups, power relations in local communities, national political party systems, corporatist structures, and international incentives for conservation. The purpose of this comprehensive survey of explanatory factors is to separate out "the effects of path dependence from contemporary institutional structures that shape policy-making, for determining the political and economic factors that affect the motivations and aspirations of main actors, and for analyzing the extent to which peasant groups' interests are represented in the political and policy processes" (p. 213).

Given the book's complex goals, Kashwan dismisses using a single theory and instead presents a framework for organizing his analysis: the Political Economy of Institutions Framework. Chapter 1 presents the framework by applying it to the evolution of forestland regimes in India, Tanzania, and Mexico from the colonial period to the modern day. According to the framework, the historical legacies of colonialism and state development agendas after independence shaped the forestland regimes initially created. However, to understand the evolution of forestland regimes over time, one must analyze the contestation that occurs among competing interest groups (particularly between state and society) at both the national and subnational levels, as well as the balance of power among them. This explains what formal rules were adopted and whether they were implemented or ignored. A key factor determining the outcome of this contestation is the strength of "political intermediation mechanisms"—processes and relationships (formal and informal) that help citizens directly engage political elites in the policy processes. Intermediation mechanisms at the national level shaped formal legal and institutional change, while intermediation mechanisms at the local level influenced policy implementation.

The book is organized into three parts that examine the evolution of forestland regimes across three time periods. Part 1 traces the origin and evolution of distinct forestland regimes created during the colonial era and examines the factors shaping their evolution after independence. It shows how a variety of political and economic factors produced highly centralized, state-run forestland regimes in India and Tanzania, but undermined the creation of a strong forestland regime in Mexico. After independence, the Indian and Tanzanian

governments maintained strong, centralized control over forests, while in Mexico, landed elites' continued power forced the government to engage in large-scale redistribution of forestlands, expanding community control. Part 1 also shows how international conservation groups incentivized national political elites in all three countries to expand forest conservation. Whether or not this came at the expense of forest-dependent groups depended on the institutional legacies of previous regimes and "the nature of political engagement between a country's elite and its peasant groups" (p. 209). Important factors shaping this engagement included power differences among various groups, inter-elite competition, the strength of peasant mobilization, political party systems, and corporatist peasant organizations.

In Part 2, Kashwan uses political ethnography to analyze the micropolitics of forestland reforms in the 1990s and early 2000s. He shows how variation in national-level political contexts, the bargaining power of peasant groups, and the nature of peasant engagement in the process explain why land rights were effectively implemented in Mexico, but effectively ignored by the state in India and Tanzania. Part 3 looks more closely at the interaction of international and national politics. It examines whether international incentives to protect peasant land rights influence contemporary national programs for forest-based carbon emissions reductions in a way that provides additional benefits for forest-dependent people. Kashwan finds that international incentives had little effect. National governments negotiated their way out of enacting meaningful land tenure reforms and agreed only to nonbinding commitments which, based on past experience, are likely to be ignored.

The book's main policy contribution is to suggest that strong, centralized, state control of forests may lead to greater forest conservation, but will likely come via unjust policies that victimize marginalized, forest-dependent groups. Environmental conservation and social justice can both be achieved, but only if peasants' forest and land rights are protected in practice. This will not occur simply by passing laws recognizing land rights. Where historically produced inequalities exist, national and local elites will use their power to exclude marginal groups and to subvert land rights. Socially just environmental conservation can only come through inclusive processes. These will only occur when political elites are forced to create structures of political intermediation that allow forest-dependent groups to engage directly in the policy process.

Democracy in the Woods also makes an important contribution to the literature on institutional change. Kashwan uses forestland institutions as a focal point for analyzing the interaction among multiple factors operating at different levels of analysis across time. This novel approach allows him to develop a convincing argument that, while emphasizing the legacies of institutions, is not overly structural. Kashwan incorporates structure and agency into his analysis in a way that is reminiscent of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory. While previous institutions structure subsequent competition among competing interests, they cannot by themselves predict future outcomes. Explaining outcomes requires analyzing various actors' power relationships and strategic use of formal and informal rules. Kashwan shows, for example, that conflicting land rights laws did not emerge through an unconscious process of institutional layering. Rather, they are the intended product of political elites' strategic use of institutional ambiguities to achieve their goals. In sum, the book is an important contribution to the emerging body of work seeking to bridge the gap between historical institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism.

Arguably, the book's most impressive feature is its incredible level of detail. Virtually every aspect of forestland conflicts in India, Tanzania, and Mexico is thoroughly documented. However, this strength is also one of the book's main weaknesses. The political economy of institutions framework often gets lost in the detail. Part of the problem is that Chapter 1's presentation of the framework does not clearly articulate the specific components of the framework and the relationships among them. Consequently, it is often difficult to evaluate whether and how case details presented in subsequent chapters fit within the framework. The book makes a passing reference to what the framework would predict in a particular scenario (e.g., p. 168), but this is disconnected from the theoretical discussion of the framework. Statements about the framework's ability to make predictions imply there are hypotheses which can be tested. Yet the book never articulates a complete list of hypotheses or their predictions. This makes it hard to evaluate whether or not particular case study details support the framework, as well as how one might apply the framework to other cases.

Nevertheless, *Democracy in the Woods* provides a convincing explanation of why forestland regimes vary across the three cases. Its ability to incorporate a multitude of explanatory factors operating at multiple levels of analysis across time is truly impressive. It is a must read for scholars interested in how international, national, and subnational forces interact to shape local environmental outcomes. Perhaps most important, it provides valuable insight into how a more just form of sustainable development might be achieved.

Response to Craig M. Kauffman's review of *Democracy in the Woods: Environmental Conservation and Social Justice in India, Tanzania, and Mexico*

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— Prakash Kashwan

I am thankful to Craig Kauffman for an engaged review of *Democracy in the Woods*, especially for his articulation of

the book's novel contributions to the scholarship on institutional change. Kauffman's theoretically rich paraphrasing of the main outcome analyzed in the book, i.e., forestland regimes, as the "institutions of territorial control," is also greatly appreciated.

The points of discussions regarding methodological and analytical strategies that Kauffman brings up in the review are extremely important in the context of the goals of cumulative knowledge-building in the social sciences. The political economy of institutions framework, which incorporates theoretical insights from scholarship on institutional analysis, comparative politics, and development studies, was central to my efforts to engage meaningfully with the scholarship on institutional change. A theoretically grounded framework ensures that the numerous explanatory factors that Kauffman's review lists do not remain disparate factors thrown into the kitchen sink, but are instead part of causal configurations logically connected to the outcomes over time and at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels.

The nature of the tradeoff between parsimony and depth of engagement is contingent on the level of development of any area of scholarship. Whether we already have sufficiently well-developed theories of institutional change that allow researchers to conduct empirical tests of institutional change in the arena of environmental policy regimes is a question worth debating. We should continue to weigh the utility of different types of evidentiary approaches depending on the stage of development in a theoretical field. Even so, I do not dismiss the importance of testing narrowly defined hypotheses. The findings reported in *Democracy in the Woods* include the results of statistical tests of specific hypotheses about the political and economic determinants of local forestland claims (Appendix V). On the other hand, I chose to publish separately the cross-national evidence that reinforces the book's core arguments about political mediation of national forestland regimes (Prakash Kashwan, "Inequality, Democracy, and the Environment: A Cross-National Analysis," *Ecological Economics* 131 [2017]). Including all of the available empirical evidence in the book's core text would have left less space for a meaningful conversation with scholars in the fields of institutional analysis and development studies, who tend to value analysis of how political institutions actively shape what becomes of radical reforms and innovative policy proposals.

Facilitating a conversation among scholarship that cuts across disciplinary and methodological boundaries, while addressing questions that are theoretically salient and policy-relevant, are important goals pursued in *Democracy in the Woods*. Additionally, it is important to disentangle the normative agendas, often attached to environmental policies and programs, from the scholarly goals of examining the social and political drivers and the broader effects of various environmental policies and programs. This is important not just for maintaining the scholarly commitment to generating knowledge that is not driven by specific agendas, but also for making meaningful contributions to the long-term sustainability of the ongoing efforts to promote environmental protection. Scholars of environmental policy and politics have an important role in facilitating these broader and socially meaningful conversations.

Grassroots Global Governance: Local Watershed Management Experiments and the Evolution of sustainable Development. By Craig M. Kauffman. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 272p. $78.00 cloth.
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— Prakash Kashwan, *University of Connecticut*

In *Grassroots Global Governance*, Craig Kauffman addresses two main puzzles. One, when states fail to address a global problem, either through multilateral agreements or national laws, why and how do things get done on the ground? Two, how do ideas regarding the best way to tackle global problems evolve? What drives the evolution of global ideas like sustainable development and the emergence of new global ideas like *buen vivir* and rights of nature (p. 3)?

To answer these important questions, Kauffman conducts a comparative case analysis using the following methods (p. 28): (1) frame analysis to compare the effects of different framing strategies on motivating action; (2) social network analysis to compare networks' expansion and resource mobilization; and (3) process tracing to analyze the evolution of strategies over time. The extensive time that the author spent in field settings during nearly three years of fieldwork in Ecuador shines through in his meticulously compiled evidence concerning the policy process and program implementation of Integrated Watershed Management (IWM).

According to Kauffman, the answer to my posed questions lies in the ability of transnational governance networks to expand by constructing and mobilizing groups of grassroots actors influential in local policy arenas. The ability of transnational actors to do this depends on the success of network activation strategies, which are likely to include two critical components: (1) motivating influential local organizations to join the governance network and contribute their resources, time, and energy to the cause; and (2) enhancing the network's capacity to combine the resources accessible to each network member and convert these into action.

The book's second purpose is to trace the processes by which local experiments with watershed management influenced the global discourse regarding sustainable development. The author devotes Chapters 7 and 8 to show

how grassroots farmers and indigenous activists experimented with an innovative IWM governance arrangement that combined global IWM principles with local norms and practices associated with *buen vivir*. Organizations involved in this local experiment used network activation strategies to scale up the model nationally, resulting in Ecuador's National Plan for *buen vivir*. Ecuadorian government representatives then used another set of network activation strategies to promote *buen vivir* and the rights of nature globally (p. 5). This shows how, under certain political and economic conditions, local experimentation with global ideas can alter global discourse and the policies and practices promoted by international actors.

Kauffman argues that the grassroots level should not be viewed merely as the object of global governance, but rather as a terrain where global governance is constructed. As such, he analyzes the intersection of top-down and bottom-up processes to show how global and local governance arrangements are co-constituted at the grassroots level. Such a multiscale analysis of global governance reveals the importance of various grassroots actors—municipal bureaucrats, smallholder farmers, indigenous activists, and rural community organizers among others—who are normally left out of global governance analysis. These grassroots global governors contest, translate, and adapt global ideas to fit local realities; they mobilize pressure to overcome local apathy and opposition; they experiment with new local governance arrangements; and they engage international actors in negotiation and learning processes (p. 6). By guiding the way global ideas are applied at the local level and consequently evolve, and by reshaping the thinking and strategies of international actors, these grassroots actors participate in the global governance process. These are original insights that enrich our understanding of transnational governance. A process-oriented and thick view of the origins, evolution, and reconstruction of global governance at various scales takes the reader beyond the often debated questions of privatization versus nationalization while offering a ringside view of governance in action.

Grassroots global governance theory, which is embedded within an overarching framework of a process model, explains how global ideas, i.e., policies and best practices for solving global problems negotiated at the global level, get implemented at the local level. It also demonstrates how the implementation of global ideas locally contributes to the evolution of these same global ideas. The theory argues that variation in outcomes (that is, whether the process endures or breaks down and the point where failed cases break down) depends on the ability of transnational governance networks to expand to include actors who are influential in the policy arenas relevant to each phase of the process (pp. 25–26).

Kauffman also argues that grassroots global governance involves the shifting of contestation over policy both within and across levels of analysis, first from global arenas to national and local arenas, and then from local arenas back to national and global arenas. These shifts in arenas contribute to variation in rules, resources, and power relationships across them, which means that transnational governance networks must incorporate a diverse array of actors able to exercise multiple forms of power in multiple arenas. He argues that the shifting of arenas leads to privileging of different actors, which brings different organizations to the center of a transnational governance network. This leads to an organic distribution of power, which relocates to whichever arena happens to control the territory for the contestation of global ideas at any point in time (p. 25).

The evidence-based tracing of the policy processes that he executed ably provides sufficient evidence that the "success" of global grassroots governance in Ecuador would be difficult, if not impossible, without appropriate engagement with the state at various levels. These include the role that the Ecuadorian political leaders played in pushing and promoting the concept of *buen vivir* in the United Nations forums. Kauffman also generalizes this point to argue that "as the campaign moves to the international realm, the state becomes the primary coalition representative due to its unique power to influence international policy" (p. 50). It would have been quite productive for him to have shone a light on the fact that despite failures to arrive at or implement international agreements, an engagement with state actors and agencies at various points remains pivotal to the success of grassroots global governance. These would be sufficient grounds to revisit the notion that grassroots global governance is a substitute for state failures, which is one of the points of departure for the analysis in the book under review.

On a related note, the book focuses quite significantly on the role of political mobilization and politicians at national and sub-national level. For instance, politicians were included among the key stakeholders that IWM proponents mobilized in each of the six cases studied. More important, political mobilization by movements of indigenous people was utilized cleverly by the promoters of IWM. One can think of few other countries in which indigenous people's movements forced national governments "to renegotiate laws . . . and . . . contributed to the rewriting of . . . [the] Constitution" (p. 88). Ecuador's political context played an extremely important role in shaping the ability of national policy experts to resist the World Bank and the technocratic methods and means promoted by Global Water Partnership.

One of Kauffman's main findings is that "institutionalization of global ideas [is] primarily a social, rather than technical, exercise" (p. 222). That also suggests, as Bill Blomquist and Edella Schlager argue, based on decades of research on IWM, that competing political-economic

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interests are intrinsic to the implementation of IWM anywhere (see "Political Pitfalls of Integrated Watershed Management," *Society & Natural Resources* 101–17 [2005]). For Kauffman, contestation is invariably resolved through clever framing and organizational strategies of network activation. Moreover, because grassroots global governance entails the shifting of arenas at various stages of the governance process, it is accompanied by redistribution of power which, it would appear, makes grassroots global governance essentially a progressive project. But does construction of such spaces, with "pressure from beside," entail distributional consequences? For instance, what are the implications of Kauffman's argument concerning municipal government representatives who pressure "landowners to lower their expectations and negotiate agreements by threatening to expropriate the land" (p. 155)? As it stands, the reader is left wondering if such competing interests are resolved in the process, or get disguised within the processes through which specific ideas take shape and get transported to a global fame. It would have been useful for Kauffman to have developed this argument more explicitly.

The book will also be of great interest to political scientists and other social scientists of environmental and natural resource policies and programs, who will find in grassroots global governance a provocative thesis, several new insights, and important methodological contributions. The book's novel framework and analysis opens numerous opportunities for the students of comparative and international environmental politics interested in theorizing how elements of national and subnational politics influence the ways in which specific actors engage with global ideas, policies, and programs.

Response to Prakash Kashwan's review of *Grassroots Global Governance: Local Watershed Management Experiments and the Evolution of Sustainable Development*

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— Craig M. Kauffman

It is now axiomatic to say that global governance has evolved beyond the conventional "cascade model" in which national governments adopt international agreements and implement them domestically through national legislation and policies. Yet, little is known about how new forms of global governance structure and exercise authority; how national and local systems intersect with and push against these global structures; how power is distributed and exercised across the local, national, and international levels; and how these global governance systems change. *Grassroots Global Governance* answers these questions by analyzing one alternative form of global governance that arises around local-cumulative problems like deforestation, watershed degradation, and climate change.

With this in mind, I would like to address several comments made in Prakash Kashwan's generous review, for which I am grateful. Kashwan correctly notes that "engagement with state actors" is "pivotal to the success of grassroots global governance." He then asserts that this warrants revisiting "the notion that grassroots global governance is a substitute for state failures." I disagree. First, grassroots global governance is a substitute for the conventional model of global governance, not any and all activities by state actors. The review presents a false dichotomy where either national governments address a global problem by implementing international agreements and/or national laws, or politicians and government bureaucrats do not matter at all. By contrast, the book presents a theory of networked governance that explains how government and non-governmental actors at various levels of analysis can work outside the formal national policy process to affect change on the ground, and how these changes reverberate back to the international level. The Ecuadorian cases show that even when politicians and bureaucrats block the national policy process, governance networks can still get stuff done by shifting contestation to other arenas, including local social and policy arenas. The issue is not whether state actors matter, but what governance processes (formal and informal) they participate in.

Second, I do not assert that "contestation is invariably resolved through clever framing and organizational strategies of network activation." The book's failed cases show otherwise. Indeed, the book argues that contestation is never fully resolved, but is an ongoing process (pp. 22–23). This is why "success" is measured by whether the grassroots global governance process endures through each of its three phases, and why the process is graphically depicted as cyclical. Network activation strategies determine the outcome of contestation (e.g., the balance of power between different stakeholder groups and the way these groups perceive their interests and the issue at hand) at any given time. Given this, it should be clear that grassroots global governance is not necessarily a progressive project. I am not making a normative argument about whether grassroots global governance is "good" or who it is good for, but rather presenting an empirically based argument about how global governance works outside the conventional framework.

Third, contestation does have distributional consequences. This is why the book's theory highlights the importance of "pressure from beside" during Phase 2 of grassroots global governance (local experimentation with innovative governance arrangements). Pressure from "beside" (not described in the review) entails simultaneous, balanced, mutually enforcing and reciprocal pressures among all key stakeholder groups. The review mentions the pressure exerted by municipal government representatives on

landowners and water users, but neglects the simultaneous and equally important pressures exerted by landowners on local government and water users, and by water users on local government and landowners. All of these "pressures from beside" must be flowing simultaneously for Phase 2 of the process to endure. When pressure only flows in one direction, the process breaks down.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that in Phase 3 of grassroots global governance contestation shifts again to national and international policy arenas as networks seek to scale up innovative local governance experiments. Just as grassroots actors contribute to the evolution of global ideas by engaging in bricolage during Phase 2, national and international actors similarly engage in bricolage during Phase 3, spurring further evolution of global ideas. This is why the concept *buen vivir* is treated differently in international discussions of sustainable development than in many Ecuadorian communities. Nevertheless, local experimentation and bottom-up network activation around *buen vivir* helped produce a 2030 sustainable development agenda rooted in the idea of living in "harmony with nature" that is different from the sustainable development of the 1990s. Both *buen vivir* and sustainable development remain contested concepts, and they are still evolving. *Grassroots Global Governance* explains how and why this evolution occurs.

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