Questions for Readers

Please be frank in your evaluation and critical judgment of this material. Your review is for the guidance of the author and the editors and Editorial Board of the MIT Press, and your identity will not be revealed to the author without your permission.

**To protect the author or volume editor’s interest in the material under review, please treat the enclosed as confidential and refrain from sharing it with others.**

1. What have the authors/editors tried to accomplish, and to what extent does the proposal package or manuscript achieve this?

I was very excited to read this manuscript. It is written by an excellent scholar, promised a new concept, “inversion,” and offered an important alternative perspective on the story of environmental policy that focused on how environmental policy is often aimed at expanding control of people, not just natural resources.

Unfortunately, the manuscript wasn’t focused enough to accomplish what it set out to do. There is a lot of original material in the manuscript that is valuable, but it would need to be rather substantially reorganized and supplemented to work as an academic book.

1. Is the work original and the scholarship sound?

Yes. It is just too scattered—too many countries, time periods, units of analysis (i.e., level of government/political action), issue foci, modes of research (i.e., empirical and theoretical).

1. Will the work be a significant contribution to the field? If so, in what way is it significant?

If it got reorganized around a central focus on how states use environmental policy as a mechanism to exercise and extend governmental control over people (would need to add China), it would be enormously valuable to a large and diverse group of environmental studies, comparative politics, East Asian studies, and development studies scholars.

If it got reorganized around a central focus of inversion and documented how the process is and has taken place across East Asia, highlighting how it is not, as much of the literature on development would have it, a “national,” “level-of-development” phenomenon but rather one that is local: rural and indigenous communities in “advanced” countries often share very similar inversion problems as rural and indigenous communities in “developing” countries, with the urban elites, global NGOs, and multinational corporations behaving in similar ways within and across national boundaries. Similarly, nation states—advanced and developing, democratic and nondemocratic—have similar methods of using environmental policy as a tool for expanding authority and control over people. Not surprisingly, the nondemocratic countries have a bit more reach and control than the democratic ones, but the behavior is similar. That version of the book (my personal favorite) would also likely engage a diversity of scholars in comparative politics, East Asian studies, environmental studies, and development studies.

If it got reorganized around a central focus of Japan’s evolution and legacy of inversion internally as well as how it engaged in a regional/transnational process that exported this process abroad, exacerbating and accelerating inversion processes abroad, it would have a large impact in the East Asian studies and environmental studies fields. It would need more contemporary information about Japan to make that work and the Southeast Asian cases would need to be chosen to highlight their connection to the Japanese state/companies.

If it got reorganized to be a more theoretical book that developed the concept of inversion, looking at its emergence in the developmental state, ways that civic activism and local engagement can help address/redress the inversion problem, it would engage political theorists and environmental studies scholars.

1. To what audience(s) is the book addressed?

It isn’t totally clear. Much of it is highly academic, but other parts are excessively broad and seem to be aimed at a general audience.

1. What are the best books already published on the subject, and how does this work compare with them?

* [Greening East Asia](https://www.amazon.com/Greening-East-Asia-Eco-developmental-State-ebook/dp/B08NY42GG1/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3TFHDNHR24KD3&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.eGmvAR5TQW8MWaRJnyMCiX0RA627-LSQ9purPFkrHyab04khOHxdlqa9dP4iwfGITFXxro9fjpWpXucZ0wl9GhGDIBgZnrwfZWYG45TAGISc7sVpdFIS7JkMuhBJrWhvvM3wFMfUO81TzozdwylaRn6OxuN4Pc994BR0pRXM13yCzkmBZceKsOib4Ms7ltjI.FG1Qy0Bt_2PffBJFM7YRAdy3BKdQm1H6R7jaOx-dfJ4&dib_tag=se&keywords=greening+east+asia&qid=1718971533&sprefix=greening+east+asia%2Caps%2C101&sr=8-1), 2020 UW press – Esarey, Haddad, Lewis, Harrell
* [China’s Environmental Challenges](https://www.amazon.com/Chinas-Environmental-Challenges-Judith-Shapiro-ebook/dp/B0CSQWD9SY/ref=sr_1_1?crid=15DP5ND8E2NQ9&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.uYpmgPTBg8pwmBG4sfrlXxnsdwrvxhXQfrtGxtpwvRg1LVAGx87HgdqOdT9eX3a_wBEFQ3gCk3-mcumsl5Ih7Ew2kF7AmvKiqiAPCyVQFwTWUVXllNaEE5QCuRatHSqTR4pz2BeNOuF8SJcFZgkvHLSRw85yEzy9sTcokIw2of63EjavGMoXN7j2wj46KpC-y84HOaRmQg2glRuo3u-bvqdbtNtUuh_YwDfqBTDUjhI.Y9oxzLMA6ugaG70INNg6LotczRtE4LPBWS7N2JhxvH4&dib_tag=se&keywords=environmental+politics+china&qid=1718971714&sprefix=environmental+politics+china%2Caps%2C104&sr=8-1), 2024 –Judith Shapiro
* [China Goes Green](https://www.amazon.com/China-Goes-Green-Coercive-Environmentalism/dp/1509543120/ref=sr_1_13?crid=15DP5ND8E2NQ9&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.uYpmgPTBg8pwmBG4sfrlXxnsdwrvxhXQfrtGxtpwvRg1LVAGx87HgdqOdT9eX3a_wBEFQ3gCk3-mcumsl5Ih7Ew2kF7AmvKiqiAPCyVQFwTWUVXllNaEE5QCuRatHSqTR4pz2BeNOuF8SJcFZgkvHLSRw85yEzy9sTcokIw2of63EjavGMoXN7j2wj46KpC-y84HOaRmQg2glRuo3u-bvqdbtNtUuh_YwDfqBTDUjhI.Y9oxzLMA6ugaG70INNg6LotczRtE4LPBWS7N2JhxvH4&dib_tag=se&keywords=environmental+politics+china&qid=1718971714&sprefix=environmental+politics+china%2Caps%2C104&sr=8-13), 2021—Li and Shapiro
* [Forces of Nature](https://www.amazon.com/Forces-Nature-Perspectives-Korean-Environments-ebook/dp/B0B8QRZTSJ/ref=sr_1_3?crid=2A0VBAHVIZFIR&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.rsiJ0V2YJDREHhrtwf3Ob_99yQw6F9IuUnjFM0B_AIFjpcblvaLzbsfVIwAQSbD_-dr7m4hew_C2I_r6alxn6bmReOpX5EAcxh7bm1gZ_cDuvSbomhnDCO3ojq07-INtzkDFBNOjSrAxhHy7AKL3mO4bLLrqJbqCS4RcGqClpLPSALdrKjP_E5xb5l3QjNOsbXngAkpdYg274ABcv3G7L78Shyn1_Z3Yyb9fv7kt5ok.XvXCLLo9I7JarluZosg2NPzmvZupXxwrbbGEvVsBNS4&dib_tag=se&keywords=environmental+politics+south+east+asia&qid=1718971847&sprefix=environmental+politics+south+east+asia%2Caps%2C81&sr=8-3), 2023 –Fedman, Kim, Park, Sarif
* [Japan’s Environmental Politics and Governance](https://www.amazon.com/Japans-Environmental-Politics-Governance-Environment-ebook/dp/B01MQDEVZR/ref=sr_1_5?crid=1WX8LBG7LDC86&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.DaAzr_MGUJC6421cEe4zamQKldH6EjoOwPo3lybhuKFk6dxiqxF54UjUozkpbD9YNVrMfGR-tsN9cipxXvWCnTuxkA8OBSrYsmcjDu2cDgrXNpjSZw6i5ad4zC4jFRK_L-HgR6iijjDL2k0VwdPXSddQjyhhwDedWWEKWsC_rfBZgXVTk8RAFguWymK_HPg9uloA8Vz6Rd_29f2cN4fgzw5_2rU4FKpLKNFAfdjBjck.cl611P1QB6vpKZpiStwxNeFBhTZ-2q-U4JvY9ftpOwg&dib_tag=se&keywords=environmental+politics+japan&qid=1718972021&sprefix=environmental+politics+japan%2Caps%2C89&sr=8-5), 2016 –Takao
* [Shadows in the Forest](https://www.amazon.com/Shadows-Forest-Politics-Southeast-Environment/dp/0262540878/ref=sr_1_13?crid=1WX8LBG7LDC86&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.DaAzr_MGUJC6421cEe4zamQKldH6EjoOwPo3lybhuKFk6dxiqxF54UjUozkpbD9YNVrMfGR-tsN9cipxXvWCnTuxkA8OBSrYsmcjDu2cDgrXNpjSZw6i5ad4zC4jFRK_L-HgR6iijjDL2k0VwdPXSddQjyhhwDedWWEKWsC_rfBZgXVTk8RAFguWymK_HPg9uloA8Vz6Rd_29f2cN4fgzw5_2rU4FKpLKNFAfdjBjck.cl611P1QB6vpKZpiStwxNeFBhTZ-2q-U4JvY9ftpOwg&dib_tag=se&keywords=environmental+politics+japan&qid=1718972021&sprefix=environmental+politics+japan%2Caps%2C89&sr=8-13), 1997—Dauvergne
* [Transnational Japan and the Environmental Movement](https://www.amazon.com/Transnational-Japan-Global-Environmental-Movement-ebook/dp/B01HOB19DO/ref=sr_1_2?crid=LOLI6NO86AWD&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.CvcjkMRZUYcTaWTCBeK4epYaSDHob2P4brJcANKC02da9rU9EmaVMW74M0CyHt1aT-sGoH5mhGI5YXGy1O0PvYiQnr3qkIF2HGcmvBRt5p4.6mWExZyh_oYZU3L8T_EwTGBJNQ6QEHigijX1825R5tw&dib_tag=se&keywords=Avenell%2C+Simon+japan&qid=1718972441&sprefix=avenell%2C+simon+japan%2Caps%2C77&sr=8-2) 2017, Avenell
* [Routledge Handbook of Sustainable Development in Asia](https://www.amazon.com/Routledge-Handbook-Sustainable-Development-Handbooks/dp/1138182184/ref=sr_1_1?crid=IY3RMDZSTH24&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.9ULxmE-HQBUTSPQUADTbiA.GFHruOby3cwc1s3ZJCge5wSFmJQkdt1b3fT7Rg18Ntw&dib_tag=se&keywords=Routledge+Handbook+of+Sustainable+Development+in+Asia+hsu&qid=1718972599&sprefix=routledge+handbook+of+sustainable+development+in+asia+hsu%2Caps%2C88&sr=8-1) 2018, Hsu
* [Footprints in Paradise](https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/MurrayFootprints) 2017, Murray
* [Between Preservation and Exploitation](https://www.amazon.com/Between-Preservation-Exploitation-Transnational-Conservation-ebook/dp/B08BSWK7FX/ref=sr_1_1?crid=QCMFU60CHDVE&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.1tdb9J5LKAAseJNdEfgvGg.YlCcmnUD944Xz72V5yVdgZyBwSM13CwiI4iIEDtKTXg&dib_tag=se&keywords=Between+Preservation+and+Exploitation%3A+Transnational+Advocacy+Networks+and+Conservation+in+Developing+Countries&qid=1718972693&sprefix=between+preservation+and+exploitation+transnational+advocacy+networks+and+conservation+in+developing+countries%2Caps%2C81&sr=8-1) 2016—Fuentes-George

As indicated above, the current manuscript contains fascinating elements of empirical fieldwork from Southeast Asia and some interesting theoretical insights. The best parts of the manuscript are on par with the best parts of these books, but the sum total together doesn’t add up to any of the insightful books above.

1. What is your opinion of the manuscript’s level, style, organization, and length?

As indicated above, the level is quite confusing with some parts very academic and others very generic. The style is similarly mixed. The organization didn’t make sense. The length is fine.

1. How could the manuscript be improved? Can you cite specific sections or chapters that need revision?

I would be happy to provide more detailed suggestions for how to modify the work for any of the potential futures listed in #3 above.

In general, it needs more focus:

* The introduction that introduces the ‘inversion’ concept is pretty good, although the concept isn’t really a cycle, it is more of a linear flow hat happens within a community. Furthermore, there is more interconnections between the “developed” and “developing” countries as well as internally within the two types of countries.
* It is odd to have the Thai and Japan stories together in a chapter here. If they stay in the same chapter, the fact that Thailand was (a) a slave-legal state at the time and (b) the extractive work and companies were being conducted by non-Thais should be highlighted earlier. I’d recommend separating out the Japan part and merge it with the material in chapter 5 to have a historical perspective on Japan.
* The Indonesian chapter on irrigation is good. Odd that the inversion concept isn’t included much. Also odd that the international funding from Japan wasn’t explored/explained more, and that there wasn’t a Japan colliery to this chapter as well, since the story is identical in many ways ([Japan Under Construction](https://www.amazon.com/Japan-under-Construction-Corruption-Politics/dp/0520088158) and [Site Fights](https://www.amazon.com/Site-Fights-Divisive-Facilities-Society-ebook/dp/B01BHSKKPS/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3F40BCIRZ3AC9&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.3qNQaajsRu5j-vSxg7-kuw.XfFIzErG1iVDdTpvkXZW9teZnuO8FyiYACs9m_oREUA&dib_tag=se&keywords=site+fights+aldrish&qid=1718974135&s=books&sprefix=site+fights+aldrish%2Cstripbooks%2C84&sr=1-1) and especially [Ruining and Restoring Rivers](https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/paaf/paaf/2005/00000078/00000002/art00003?crawler=true&mimetype=application/pdf) document the corruption in the damming of Japan’s rivers).
* The Cambodian Tonale Sap story is also a good one, although the connection to the inversion story gets lost and much of the story ends up being speculative (p. 74, “Why did the Cambodian government… My hypothesis is that…--- but this hypothesis isn’t ever tested, so more of a speculation). The biggest problem with the chapter is the naive (to my reading) acceptance of some of the official narrative. For example, p. 70 talks about the French-introduced tax system that was intended to “limit abuse from indigenous, traditional tax collectors” but ended up resulting in the colonizing French enriching a small number of elite fishers. Why wasn’t that bit of historical evidence re-examined and perhaps re-framed as one of local resistance? It would have fit perfectly with the overall inversion argument, but it was not discussed that way.
* Chapter 5 is much too general for an academic audience.
* Chapter 6 is very interesting, but its theoretical orientation and focus on a single Japanese intellectual means that it doesn’t fit very well with the empirical orientation of the rest of the manuscript.

The author should avoid embedding so many distracting questions that it can’t really answer. For example, from p. 108: “What kind of society should be able to prevent individual freedom from being entangled in the power of the state while at the same time encouraging appropriate state intervention in issues that cannot be resolved locally?”

1. Are there any chapter or sections that stand out as being particularly weak or particularly strong?

See discussion under 7 above.

The stories and evidence from Southeast Asia are particularly strong.

1. To what extent does this manuscript address the viewpoints, histories, and perspectives of underrepresented groups in both its citations and argument? Is it appropriate for this book to do so, and if so, in what ways? If not, why not?

Highlighting under-represented and unheard voices is a core, and highly admirable, purpose of the book. The odd thing, though, it that in the process of raising up the local voices from Southeast Asia, it ends up reifying the “developed/developing”, “advanced/backward”, “rich/poor”, “powerful/powerless” dichotomies. This is particularly strange because in my reading of the concept of inversion and, indeed, much of the empirical evidence presented, the book has the possibility to be radically innovative in the ways that it sees people and power organized by highlighting the interconnectedness of all of us and our ecosystems.

1. What is your overall reaction to the project?

X I do not recommend publication by the MIT Press.

X I recommend publication, provided the revisions suggested in this review are satisfactorily made.

\_\_ I recommend publication. Suggestions for revision are offered, but their adoption should be left to the discretion of the author and the Press.

\_\_ I strongly recommend publication.

🡪 The case study information from Southeast Asia is especially valuable. I would love to see the author focus the manuscript more. It has A LOT of potential, but the current iteration isn’t really of the quality and coherence that I would normally expect from an MIT Press book.