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?**

Professor Sato has produced a marvelous manuscript, which I thoroughly enjoyed reading and, importantly, learned a lot from. It is rare to encounter such engrossing scholarship, so engagingly written, and compelling enough to keep me turning the pages until the very end.

The book has a provocative argument that challenges much of the accepted wisdom about environmental policy and environmentalism more generally. Put in simple terms, my summary of the main point of the MS would be as follows. The process of industrial modernization, led primarily by the West, has resulted in catastrophic impacts for the global environment. These impacts have not always been experienced evenly. In response, since around the 1960s, states have been forced to implement environmental policies and created environmental institutions in an attempt to ameliorate or, at least, control such problems. Ironically, however, the very process of implementing environmental policies has often resulted in untended negative consequences for local communities who find themselves alienated from their traditional living spaces and at odds with the nature they once lived in harmony with. This unintended consequence of environmental policymaking is also transnational in nature – for instance, in the ways global environmental policies to deal with climate change are forced on developing nations (or local groups within them) by the developed nations. There can be a kind of neocolonial aspect inherent in these well-intended policies.

The argument presented throughout the MS is more nuanced than this, but the big take away message seems to be that local voices must not be obliterated in environmental policymaking, otherwise we run the risk of creating new structures of domination by states, and potentially undermining efforts to improve environmental conditions. Operating under the logic of capitalism, states will inevitably pursue technological environmental solutions, replicating the process of developmentalism that caused the problems in the first place. For Prof. Sato, the solution lies in strengthening intermediary organizations (civil society) so that they can act as buffers between individuals and their localities and the states wanting to control them through technocratic-developmentalist solutions, all in the name of environmental conservation.

The provocative aspect of this argument is the way it challenges the reader to question assumptions about environmental policy being necessarily “good.” Prof. Sato argues that things are more complicated: a lake and its biodiversity may be saved by strict regulation, but should this come at the expense of traditional communities that have depended on the lake for their survival?

The MS does a wonderful job of presenting readers with this challenging question and provides some important clues about how it might be successfully solved or, at the very least, resisted.

1. **Is the work original and the scholarship sound?**

The scholarship, while resonating with work on environmental justice and critiques of globalism, is highly original and based on years of fieldwork. It is clear after reading the MS that this work represents a sort of culmination and synthesis of Prof. Sato’s studies in Southeast Asia over the past decades. The latter chapters (especially on intermediary organizations) evidence a sophisticated attempt to step beyond explaining a complicated problem (challenging enough in itself) by proposing some possible solutions.

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

Yes, I strongly believe the work will be significant, primarily for the reasons outlined above. Namely, Prof. Sato is asking readers to step outside the assumption that environmental policy is inherently “good,” “correct,” and that it should be unconditionally accepted. Instead, he challenges us to look at the human consequences of environmental policy when it is used as a tool for control. And, when these consequences prove negative, he asks us to reconsider our assumptions and consider alternatives. I believe this contribution is deeply significant.

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

The book deserves to be read by a wide variety of both academic and nonacademic audiences. To begin with, obviously it will be of interest for those working in environmental studies, development studies, and Asian politics. But I also believe the book will be of interest for practitioners, such as international NGOs involved in environmental issues. It should also be essential reading for policymakers who craft environmental regulation.

Although the book is primarily focused on the problem of environmental policy as it relates to developing nations (including their relations with NGOs, international organizations, and developed nations). I also think the book has implications for those studying environmental issues in advanced capitalist nations. While reading the book, I saw strong resonances between local communities who are pushing back against state plans to develop wind farms in their localities. These residents are rightly upset about the environmental impacts of such infrastructure in their regions, even though mainstream society is supportive in the name of CO2 reduction. Thus, the dilemma Prof. Sato outlines in his book is not only one for developing nations [In fact, I think this aspect could be more emphasized in the MS].

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

This is a unique book in many ways because, as Prof. Sato rightly explains, there is not a great deal of scholarship on the negative human/social impacts of environmental policy. That said, the book strongly resonates with Radkau’s *Nature and Power* (used in the MS). The MS’ advocacy for the rights of local communities in environmental issues also resonates closely with the ideas of famed activist/scholar Vandana Shiva who has argued that global environmentalism has actually restricted the scope of activism, as well as the ideas of Wangari Maathai who was a very locally focused environmental voice. Although Prof. Sato does not draw the connection, I believe his work is also in conversation with scholarship on eco-cosmopolitanism, like Ursula Heise’s *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. This MS serves as an important corrective to such works (much in the same way as scholarship like Arif Dirlik’s “Globalism and the Politics of Place,” and Timothy Doyle and Brian Doherty’s “Green Public Spheres and the Green Governance State: The Politics of Emancipation and Ecological Conditionality.”). I actually think the MS could benefit by more explicitly engaging with some of this scholarship (see below)

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

The MS is beautiful and engagingly written. Not many academic tomes are “page-turners,” but this one was for me. I also really like the organization of the book, unfolding from the theoretical, to the historical, then country-specific case studies, followed by a highly-conceptual discussion and, finally, a chapter devoted to a possible solution (ch.6). The organization flows seamlessly. The organization is very sensible.

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

Inversion:

One area that Prof. Sato may wish to consider a little more is his use of the idea of “inversion.” This term is really central to the whole argument of the book, so I think it is essential that there is no ambiguity in readers’ minds about its meanings from the very outset. Reading through the chapters of the MS, I could see that the term “inversion” is used with subtly different nuances. On p.5 (para.3) of the introduction, Prof. Sato notes that it can simply mean when environmental policy has negative effects on the environment. He also notes on the same page (para.2) that it can also refer to situations in which environmental policies alienate local communities from the goals of the policies, resulting in a less sustainable habitat. So, there are two kinds of inversion being presented here. This section of the introduction has the sub-heading “The emergence of state-led ‘inversion’,” so as I read, I wondered if there might be other versions of inversion (e.g. community-led, business-led etc.).

On page 7 of the introduction [section “3. The chain of events that leads to inversion”], the discussion focuses on the introduction of environmental regulations in the USA in the 1970s, however I am not quite clear how the US case represents inversion. Similarly, it was not quite clear to me why the Japanese response in the 1970s was a case of inversion. Things are made more complicated here because the discussion compares advanced states with developing states. Is the point that advanced states got it right and developed states did not because their democracies were weaker (p.11 says that inversion “was not so drastic in Japan”)?

Page 8 of the introduction (last paragraph) further complicates the discussion of inversion to that between developed and developing nations. This was understandable to me, but it also further complicated the notion of inversion.

On page 9 of the introduction, the text reads “the environmental state then become inverted….” further complicating things for the reader. The following page (page. 10) also suggests that inversion is not only a product of state policies, but also of “economic progress” (para. 1)

I wonder if Prof. Sato might consider more thoroughly defining the types/characteristics of inversion in the introduction? Because it is so integral to the MS and because it is used in so many different contexts in the content chapters which are in different locations, eras, and stages of development, I sense that it might help by giving readers a little systematic clarity about inversion early on.

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

Introduction: The introduction does a very good job of setting up the main arguments. The illustration on p.3 is particularly enlightening. It is all very clear, although, as noted above, I would have liked a more systematic discussion of inversion and its various manifestations. Also, as mentioned, Prof. Sato is perhaps correct to say that his notion of inversion in environmental policy is unique in the literature, but there are clearly resonances to critics of eco-cosmopolitanism and champions of the “right to development” of the Global South. Could the argument here not be profitably connected to such ideas? Also, although I am not a political scientist, my guess would be that scholars in that discipline have written on how certain state policies for minorities, gender, etc. while well-intentioned, can often have inverse and negative outcomes. Perhaps Prof. Sato could show how his work is in conversation with that literature too?

Ch.1 Mechanisms: From Dominance over nature to dominance over people: Excellent overview of the environmental state. The discussion of environmental justice at the end of this chapter is very relevant and actually occurred to me as I was reading the MS. Similar to the introduction, I wonder if Prof Sato might consider further linking his ideas to those of the Third World activists and scholars (mentioned above) who have pointed to the injustices between the Global North and Global South in the realm of environmental policies (e.g. claims by Global South countries to their “right to development”)?

Ch.2 Exclusion: Comparative History of environmental states in Japan and Thailand: This chapter contains an interesting historical comparison of Thailand and Japan. One state adopted a path of excluding locals while the other made concessions to their demands. The chapter seems to suggest that, when studying environmental state, we need to look at the longer process of modernization (ch.2 p.15). But why? I wonder if the chapter might not be strengthened by a little more discussion explaining why this kind historical analysis is important? After reading the chapter, I can perceive the answer, but I think there might be a greater effect if this is spelt out more clearly.

Ch.3 Compulsion: Maintaining Irrigation Infrastructures in Indonesia: Excellent chapter that does a great job of showing how inversion occurred when the state became involved in irrigation maintenance. The suggestion that inversion can be avoided by clearly delineating allocation of authority, and also the role of the state in mediating local conflicts, was enlightening.

Ch.4 Release: The Cambodian government relinquishes control over Tonle Sap fisheries: Interesting discussion of how the state *relinquishing* its power can result in inversion.

Ch.5 Science: inversion of environmental knowledge in Japan: fascinating discussion of how environmental knowledge was inverted in the case of methylmercury poisoning in Japan. Prof. Sato uses this case as a platform to provide some very sophisticated analysis.

Ch.6 Intermediaries: Promise and Challenge of Groups in Between: Good chapter outlining Prof. Sato’s proposed solution that strong intermediary groups are possibly a counterweight to inversion. I wonder if this chapter might benefit by bringing discussion of civil society and transnational civil society in Asia? There has been a great deal of scholarship on the rise and role of civil society in Asia in recent decades. Perhaps Prof. Sato might link some of this scholarship to his arguments here? (e.g. Ogawa, *Routledge Handbook of Civil Society in Asia* etc.)

Conclusion: Another strong chapter. Perhaps Prof Sato might consider again tying together all of the manifestations of inversion for readers?

Minor suggestions:

* The paragraphing in the MS is a little unusual. Many paragraphs are very short (too short). Maybe some of these can be pulled together into larger paragraphs?
* Introduction p.12, the sentence beginning “Chapter 5” and the following sentence have grammatical errors.

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?**

The viewpoints of minorities and underrepresented groups (e.g. pollution victims, local communities etc.) are at the very heart of this MS. Indeed, the whole aim of the MS is to try and find a way to give such groups more voice in politics.

1. **What is your overall reaction to the project?**

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