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Book Review: Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment by Jennifer Clapp and Peter Dauvergne

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Book Reviews

Clapp, Jennifer, and Peter Dauvergne. 2005. *Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

*Reviewed by David Downie
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This intelligent, well-written and informative book provides a fresh analysis of global environmental politics and fills a soft spot in the literature by concentrating explicitly and exclusively on its political economy. Clapp and Dauvergne use a typology of four worldviews—Market Liberals, Institutionalists, Bioenvironmentalists, and Social Greens—as a framework to examine how forces in global political economy impact the environment. Each type will seem familiar to many readers but they are rendered here in greater detail and to better effect than in other texts.

Market liberals focus on economic issues, believe in the positive power of markets, and believe that poverty, weak economic growth, and poorly designed and intrusive government policies are the primary source of environmental degradation. Environmental problems that do exist can be addressed by fostering economic growth and harnessing market-based incentives to promote new technologies and corporate responsibility.

Institutionalists believe that current levels of environmental degradation and underdevelopment reflect ineffective global cooperation and weak domestic and international institutions. Globalization is not a villain. A global environmental crisis could develop, however, if we do not build stronger and more effective global institutions, build state capacity, distribute technology and wealth to developing countries through appropriate channels, and effectively harness globalization so it fulfills its potential to enhance human welfare.

Bioenvironmentalists focus on ecosystems and ecological carrying capacity. They believe a global environmental crisis already exists, caused by human overpopulation, over-consumption, and excessive, unnecessary, and ultimately counter-productive economic growth. These problems are augmented by globalization, which drives unsustainable levels of natural resource consumption, pollution, debt and misplaced economic activity. With the earth's carrying capacity at or even beyond its natural limits, addressing environmental and economic problems effectively will require strong action to reform the global economy, reduce consumption, limit population growth, and respect the value of non-human life.

Social greens also believe a global environmental crisis already exists. They see the ultimate causes as industrialization and increasing globalization. These factors, in their current form, lead to exploitation of the poor and less powerful, shift power and control away from local communities, undermine non-economic values, feed grossly unequal and unsustainable patterns of consumption, and cause unacceptable environmental degradation. Solutions must reject globalization and further industrialization, promote economic and ecological justice, and empower local institutions and indigenous knowledge.

The authors acknowledge that—as with all such divisions—this typology represents a somewhat artificial and exaggerated categorization of what is actually an interconnected spectrum of views. At the same time, however, it provides an accessible entry point to understanding different perspectives on the interplay of international economic activity and the environment. Their approach is exactly right for the purposes of this volume. The typology can help students understand and discuss these issues. As such, this book represents an excellent complement for courses that use other recent overviews of global environmental politics which focus on politics, institutions and agreements—such as those by Chasek, Downie and Brown; Axelrod, Downie and Vig; Switzer; Lipschutz; and DeSombre,¹ among others.

After introducing the typology, successive chapters use it to explore key issues in the political economy of the global environment. These include the ecological consequences of globalization; the links between wealth, poverty, consumption and the environment; trade patterns and trade agreements; global investment; transnational corporations; patterns in environmental standards; and international financing, multilateral lending and aid. Case studies and informative charts and graphs appear throughout the text and each chapter explores the arguments in the context of current, real-world issues—not simply as abstract perspectives.

In each chapter, Clapp and Dauvergne take care to explain the relevant underlying assumptions of the worldviews, their perspective on what each issue-area means—positively and negatively—for the environment, and what policy prescriptions they recommend. The authors also note how the perspectives, while sometimes contradictory, emphasize different aspects of the issues and, in many cases, are not entirely mutually exclusive.

This approach sends an important message to students, scholars and policy-makers. Achieving real sustainable development (however one defines it) and averting or remedying a global environmental crisis will require not only productive interaction among market liberals, institutionalists, bioenvironmentalists, and social greens but also actual compromise and cooperation. Essential steps in this process likely include understanding the values and beliefs of those who see the world differently and integrating the best potential solutions from more than one paradigm. By taking such care in explicating how four world-

1. Chasek, Downie, and Brown 2006; Axelrod, Downie, and Vig 2005; Switzer 2004; Lipschutz 2003; and DeSombre 2002.

views approach the political economy of the global environment, Clapp and Dauvergne have helped us take a step in this direction.

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Pity the World Bank. The academic and policy literature on the Bank in general, and on its environmental behavior in particular, is dominated by critics who see every attempt by the Bank to reform itself and improve its behavior as ineffective at best, and harmful at worst. There are a brave, hardy few who believe the Bank has made significant positive changes in improving its performance. In between, where shades of grey lurk and the Bank's efforts at reform may be seen as an uneven mix of successes and failures, there is a virtual vacuum.

Sociologist Michael Goldman makes an eloquent contribution to the critical side of the spectrum by focusing on how the Bank produces knowledge, and why its knowledge is so influential. He journeys "through the intestines of one of the world's most powerful institutions" to conduct a critical ethnographic study of how the Bank's hegemony is constituted, resulting in a Bank that plays a key role in perpetuating a "highly inequitable global economy" (pp. xiii, 20). He writes, ". . . I learned that one of the Bank's greatest accomplishments has been to make *its* worldview, *its* development framework, and *its* data sets the ones that people around the world choose above others. This is one reason why the Bank's influence continues to grow, even with mounting pressure from critics" (p. xv).

Goldman is specifically interested in the rise of the Bank's "green hegemony." He argues that the Bank responded to widespread criticism of its environmental behavior by reinventing itself through the expansion of its neoliberal economic agenda to include environmental dimensions, and that this reinvention gave the Bank the means to expand the tentacles of its knowledge and