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Much of the public debate over environmental destruction has focused on the rainforest in tropical Latin America. Yet environmental problems also affect long-settled areas, farmlands, and cities. The essays collected in *Green Guerrillas* show just how severe the environmental problems are, and how complicated the solutions.

Many now familiar stories appear in the collection: the struggle of indigenous groups against petroleum companies in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and the rubber tappers versus the ranchers in the Brazilian Amazon. There are also less familiar but equally significant stories of environmental problems in the Colombian flower industry, supposedly one of Latin America's economic success stories; and of the resurgence of organic farming in Cuba, as farmers there confront the embargo. The title of the collection, *Green Guerrillas*, makes an important point. In spite of the "globalist" discourse emerging out of the Rio conference in 1992, the struggles over the environment in Latin America are primarily local struggles. Most advocates of conservation use are "irregulars" rather than professional scientists, politicians, or diplomats.

The five sections of *Green Guerrillas* cover a wide range of large and small "guerrilla" activities. The two essays in the first section lay out the central issues and themes in the book. Section 2 describes indigenous environmental conflicts, and sections 3, 4, and 5 follow the conflicts in three different spaces: the rainforest, agricultural lands, and the cities.

Section 1, "The Crisis and the Movement: Continental Perspectives," looks at the environmental crisis from a regional perspective. The complex and hotly contested concept of "sustainable development" is at the heart of both essays in this section. Elizabeth Dore argues that the concept of sustainable development transformed the environmental discourse in the 1980s. "Sustainable development made the environment into a human issue by linking the protection of people and ecosystems" (p. 9). Before, environmentalists had lobbied to preserve ecosystems, but not the people who lived in them. The "greening of the discourse" became quite powerful in the 1980s. Even multilateral lending agencies such as the World Bank made sustainable development one of their central aims. In spite of the powerful discourse of sustainability, governments and international lending agencies continued to pursue neo-liberal economic policies that took precedence over ecological sustainability. Although people are now more aware of environmental problems, "ecology struggles in the region have tended to concentrate on ameliorating particular examples of environmental degradation, rather than confronting its social causes" (pp. 17-18).

David Kaminowitz argues bluntly that "the current pattern of development in Latin America is unsustainable," and that solving the problem requires state intervention. Kaminowitz hypothesizes that "government leaders will not take strong measures to reduce natural resource deterioration unless they are pressured to do so" (p. 21). He then gives an overview of the groups that could possibly pressure governments. Extra-regional players such as European and North American governments and NGOs were important in making environmental issues more visible in Latin America, but they tend to view environment as a separate sector rather than as an integral part of how production and society are organized (p. 24). The decline of bilateral assistance in recent years has diminished the importance of these players. The urban middle classes are influential, particularly over issues dealing with urban pollution, but their devotion to the environment is sporadic. The groups who have a material interest in the environmental movement, green producers, communities and producers affected by environmental problems, indigenous movements, and professional environmentalists are not major forces in Latin America. The social justice movement, particularly the left-wing political parties, are not strongly committed to environmentalism. "For the vast majority of Latin Americans, the basic issue is not environmental conservation but

day-to-day survival. Getting these popular sectors involved and making the environmental movement something more than a dim reflection of developed country environmental concerns will happen only once the immediate impact of environmental degradation in people's daily lives is addressed" (p. 31).

Part 2 focuses on indigenous communities and their environments. Often portrayed as victims of Western programs of development, the indigenous people in this section are agents for environmental and social change. To be sure, they often face unequal struggles against much larger forces, but they do not accept the erosion of their lands and cultures passively. Al Gedicks' article on "Native People and Sustainable Development" points out that "differing interpretations of sustainable development lead us to ask the question 'sustainability of what and for whom"' (p. 34). Studies in Latin America and elsewhere have shown that native knowledge is essential for successfully managing and maintaining biosphere reserves. Sustainability, in the case of these preserves, challenges the model of technical (or scientific) transfer of knowledge from "developed" to "less developed" countries. "Clearly," writes Gedicks, "the goal of sustainable development is inseparable from the goal of maintaining cultural diversity."

Aidan Rankin describes how the Wichi people of the Argentine Chaco have begun the legal battle against encroachment on their land by settlers by defining their territories through the use of oral history. Even when indigenous groups adopt Western ways, this does not necessarily mean that they have been assimilated or subordinated. Anthony Bebbington argues that when Indian organizations in central Ecuador have adopted modern agricultural technologies, this has been a "sign to farmers that they are claiming citizenship rights of equal access to technical resources provided by the state, but from which they were previously excluded" (p. 52).

Indigenous groups have begun to organize to prevent the encroachment of development projects on their territory. In eastern Ecuador, the Cofan, Quichua, and Huaorani have been organizing to prevent oil companies from drilling in their territory. Judith Kimerling argues that these groups should be able to participate in the process of deciding whether or not oil should be drilled in their region. On Colombia's Pacific coast, indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups sought to prevent the Colombian government from undertaking hydroelectric, petroleum, and mining megaprojects in the region. One of the benefits of organizing against these megaprojects, argues Lucy Alexander, is that the Afro-Colombian and indigenous organizations have begun to cooperate with one another. In Ecuador, Colombia, and elsewhere, governments are finding it difficult to ignore increasingly well-organized indigenous groups.

Elizabeth Dore's essay asks "How sustainable were pre-Columbian civilizations?" This brief piece is one of the most thought-provoking for historians. Dore challenges the "pristine myth of pre-Columbian peoples ... naturally living in symbiosis with their environment" (p. 48). Archaeological evidence suggests that environmental crises contributed to the demise of the high Maya culture around AD 1000 and contributed to a food crisis in the Aztec Empire in central Mexico. The "population implosion" of the New World following the Spanish conquest had the unintended consequence of reducing environmental stresses. "The demographic collapse," writes Dore, "safeguarded the ecosystems of the New World for centuries" (p. 49). This is a controversial claim, and one that is certainly worth further exploration. Recent works by Elinor Melville and by Warren Dean suggest that the environmental destruction in the post-Conquest period was more severe than Dore portrays it here.

The rainforest is the central focus of Part 3. The essays in this section seek to qualify or tear down many popular stereotypes about the rainforest. Stephen Nugent writes that there are "Amazonian societies (both indigenous and post-colonial) which, despite the uncertain conditions in which they carry on, not only display possibilities for a non-pathological Amazonia, but which are already concrete and integral" (p. 84). Japanese colonists have made Amazonia into one of the Western Hemisphere's most significant sources of black pepper, and they have done so in a small-scale way that is sustainable over the long term. "Green" tropical forest products (such as those produced for the Body Shop) and even small-scale cattle ranching offer some hope.

Any single solution for the rainforest will not be enough to sustain the livelihood of the people who live there. Many of these small projects, taken together, offer some hope for a sustainable future. Articles by Catherine Matheson and Anthony Hall describe the contribution of extractive rubber reserves and fruit farming to the economy of Brazilian Amazonia. In Ecuador, writes James Fair, "ecotourism demonstrates that there is an alternative to agriculture and logging" (p. 118). Janet Gabriel Townsend's article reminds us not to essentialize any group in the debate. Her study of women in the Mexican rainforest explicitly questions Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist model. For pioneer women in the rainforest, questions of survival are always more immediate and

pressing than questions of environment. Solutions to the problems of the rainforest must come from insiders.

Part 4, "Modernization: Ecological Costs and Popular Responses," takes us to Latin America's domesticated landscapes–its farms, beaches, and fisheries. The impact of neo-liberal economic policies has been felt very strongly in Latin America's agricultural export industries. Lori Ann Thrupp explores the environmental consequences of the boom of non-traditional agricultural exports [NTAEs] in the wake of neo-liberal reforms. These exports, largely flowers, fresh fruits, and vegetables, have led to a greater use and consumption of agrochemicals, particularly pesticides and fungicides. In addition to the obvious pollution consequences of these chemicals, they also serve to accelerate resistance to the crops. Dedication to NTAEs also leaves local agriculture vulnerable to economic fluctuations and threatens local food security. Sarah Stewart's "The Price of a Perfect Flower" describes one such industry–the flower export industry near Bogota. There is legislation protecting workers from exposure to pesticides, but this legislation is often not enforced. There is considerable groundwater contamination, there is fallout from spraying, and there are water shortages. Nonetheless, Stewart shows that some companies do comply with the law to protect workers, so a tolerably healthy work environment is possible.

Neo-liberal economic reforms have produced both environmental transformation and innovative responses from a wide variety of groups. Denise Stanley describes how artisanal fishermen in Honduras have had some success in promoting regulation in the shrimp industry that threatened their traditional fishing grounds. Charles Arthur gives a concise environmental history of Haiti since independence in order to explain the country's contemporary problems. There are competing visions of the island's economic future, with Americans promoting the development of agribusiness and some Haitian groups promoting agricultural self-sufficiency. Marianne Meyn describes how the people of Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, organized to prevent the construction of a coal-fired generating station near their city. The very appeal of the Caribbean environments can be a source of trouble. Polly Pattullo gives a brief account of the impact of tourism and ecotourism on the Caribbean during the past generation. The small Caribbean islands also face other environmental problems. Hilary Beckles' "Where will all the garbage go?" is an account of a debate over the site for a landfill in the Barbados.

Cuba is one of the most interesting cases in this section. Peter Rosset's contribution, "The Greening of Cuba" describes how Cuba has made the "first ever transformation from conventional modern agriculture to large scale organic and semi-organic farming" (p. 159). By reintegrating traditional agricultural practices, such as plowing with oxen, with Cuba's capacity for biotechnology, Cuban farms have reduced their dependence on agrochemicals. Cuban scientists and policymakers remain divided over whether this is a temporary or permanent shift. Nonetheless, it is an indication of what is possible.

Part 5 is devoted to environmental conflicts and initiatives in Latin American cities. Environmental activists in Europe and North America often pay little attention to the problems in Latin America's cities. Serious environmental problems water shortages, urban sprawl, air pollution, and untreated sewage, to name the most obvious, are evident to anyone with experience of the cities. Julio Davila's "Enlightened Cities" reviews the rapid urbanization in Latin America, and shows how the neo-liberal reforms have affected even urban environments. The reforms ended many federal subsidies that had a direct impact on quality of life in the cities. There is some hope that the changes in political structure might offer some solutions. "Barrios," writes Davila, "became privileged a location of institutional activity" (p. 204). The political reforms of the 1980s gave more powers to municipal and regional governments. Still, many of these governments "lack the technical expertise and money to monitor pollution, control deforestation, improve waste management, and provide basic services to their poorest citizens" (p. 207).

Efforts to improve urban environments have met with mixed results. Nick Caistor's article on San Salvador and Jorge Cela's on Santo Domingo show that attempts at conservation are often bound up in unequal political struggles. There are grounds for hope, however. Margarita Pacheco Montes describes the work of the Colombian Recyclers' Association. Formed by independent waste collectors, the Association now recycles about 5 percent of Colombia's waste, including 60 percent of the country's glass. It could be even more efficient with more support from the state. The Brazilian city of Curitiba is an example for the whole continent. Curitiba has grown rapidly, like many other cities, but it has managed to do so while maintaining a high quality of life, preserving the city's cultural heritage, implementing an innovative transportation system, promoting recycling, sanitation, and waste management. Jonas Rabinovitch credits this partly to the detailed planning process for the city. In the end, though "what makes Curitiba unusual is not so much that it had a coherent plan, but that it was *imple-*

mented and that this plan was integrated with an effective public transport system and various other initiatives to improve the quality of life in the city" (p. 231).

This brief summary of *Green Guerrillas* illustrates its significant strengths. It describes a wide range of societies, places, and modes of production. It broadens the environmental debate beyond the rainforest while still keeping the rainforest in the picture. Environmental history is not just about plants and wildlife, but also about people and production. Together, the essays paint a powerful picture of the deep social and environmental impacts of the neo-liberal economic policies of the 1970s and 1980s. Rather than simply denouncing the effects of these policies, however, many of the essays offer examples of constructive and creative responses to them.

The flood of writing on the environmental transformations in this period also highlights the comparative lack of studies on the environmental history of Latin America before the 1970s. The essays by Dore, Rankin, and Arthur in this volume suggest some of the issues that historians need to address. Historians of Latin America need to map out the very rich and important environmental history of the region they study. For contemporary issues, *Green Guerrillas* is an excellent introduction.

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