

DeShazo, Jessica L., Chandra Lal Pandey, and Zachary A. Smith. 2016. *Why REDD will fail*. New York: Routledge. ISBN: 9780415729260; e.\$50, Kindle \$16.64

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Why REDD will fail begins with a bang. Through this evocative title, the book promises to be a detailed critique of one of the most recent developments in market-based conservation, an approach that has risen to dominance in global sustainable development policy over the last few decades. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries, otherwise known as REDD, is a program spearheaded by the United Nations in an effort to fund forest conservation in the Global South, thereby achieving net global reductions in atmospheric carbon dioxide and mitigating climate change. At its core, as the authors effectively demonstrate, REDD "moves the carbon sequestration capacity of the forest into the market economy" (p.3), by promoting infrastructure and providing a vehicle through which "less developed countries" can receive payment for protected forests. The authors convincingly argue that this approach to climate change mitigation is fundamentally flawed, from the vague definition of "forest" and the lack of adequate governance within recipient countries, to the egregious refusal among "developed nations" to engage with greenhouse gas reduction.

The text clearly is directed toward scholars and policy makers less familiar with critical political ecology. Political ecologists will readily place the critiques of REDD emphasized in the book within the larger conversation about the pitfalls (and limited promises) of market-based conservation and sustainable development (e.g. Igoe *et al.* 2007; McAfee 1999). Readers of this *Journal* will find that though the book draws heavily on themes of "green developmentalism" and "neoliberal conservation", it does not clearly position itself within this literature, which would have helped to better orient the authors' critiques. REDD did not, for example, independently "[allow] for the commodification of forest resources", (3) but rather it represents the pinnacle of market-based conservation efforts that have gained unprecedented momentum within the concept of ecosystem services (see Gómez-Baggethun *et al.* 2010). Had the authors devoted a section of the book to tracing the evolution of REDD within the broader ideology of market-based conservation (and critiques therein), it would have eased some of their discussion and clarified what is otherwise a confusing timeline of REDD evolution. Instead, the text reproduces many arguments made by political ecologists, among others, and shows how they apply to REDD. For experts in the field, this will not come as much of a surprise, nor does it illuminate the particularities of REDD that distinguish it from other market-based conservation programs.

The book is strongest and most appealing as a primer on REDD and the general challenges of market-based conservation programs like REDD. It would be a useful text, for example, in survey courses on environmental policy, sustainable development, and ecological economics. The chapters have extensive repetition in the opening paragraphs, and they read well independently. The first two chapters define REDD and trace its evolution through the last 20 years of global climate change policy. They draw links between the Noordwijk Declaration on Climate Change, The Kyoto Protocol, The Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project, and REDD (with a brief description linking RED to REDD, and now REDD+). Chapters 1 and 2 also outline the main actors in REDD policy successfully, covering the financial funding institutions and participating countries.

Chapter 3 defines what the authors perceive to be the key threats to REDD's potential success: leakage, additionality, and the problem of forest definition. The authors offer a convincing discussion of why monoculture plantations, such as oil palm, should not be defined as forests because of their threat to biodiversity and their inefficient role in carbon sequestration. In this sense, REDD offers perverse incentives to governments to invest in monoculture plantations that do not solve the problem of carbon mitigation and that create new environmental and social threats. The authors provide a thorough discussion on leakage – the idea that environmental damage is merely displaced to another location through programs like REDD, and additionality – the question of whether such programs provide additional environmental benefits or merely finance activities that would occur independent of economic incentives.

Chapter 3 seems to flow naturally with Chapter 5, which continues the discussion of the inability of increased market liberalization and green markets to solve the problems of environmental degradation. Chapter 4 is a brief interlude that provides an overview of the "drivers of deforestation" in different contexts, reinforcing the conclusion that "[the] drivers of deforestation are complex and vary within countries over time, from country to country, as well as from region to region" (p.56) and are often "powerfully connected to the capitalist market system" (p.58). Chapter 5 lifts the problems of REDD identified in Chapter 3 to a larger scale – the scale of capitalism itself. This chapter walks the reader through the ideology behind market-based conservation approaches, from market failure to free-trade agreements, in order to successfully pick apart the inadequacies of the underlying logic. In doing so, the authors invoke dependency theory to explain why REDD will fail in the stated objective of promoting sustainable development (Viotti and Kauppi 1999). Combined, chapters 3 and 5 provide a thorough analysis of the shortcomings of REDD.

Chapter 6 pulls together the themes of the book, and argues decisively that REDD will fail to help developing countries, as well as fail to mitigate climate change. The chapter addresses the problems of governance in REDD schemes, and asserts that the demand for forest products and the problem of forest definitions will ultimately be the undoing of REDD. The authors conclude that poor governance, unequal power relations, and high costs of operation will result in few economic benefits reaching the most impoverished sectors who are the purported benefactors. Further, they assert that the demand for forest products and the market-driven search for profit will result in negligible net benefits for climate change mitigation.

The conclusion may leave the reader perplexed. The authors frequently backpedal from their strong stance on *Why REDD will fail* to a watered-down *how REDD can be improved*. They suggest improving REDD with "forest certification" programs that would tag sustainable forest products on the global market. This is confusing, since they have convincingly argued that global capitalism is incapable of solving its own environmental ills. For example, the reader will find it difficult to reconcile statements like "We strongly feel that REDD can be improved and could be made to do what it was intended to do" (p.114), with "Any program like REDD will ultimately fail without fundamental changes in our market economy and dependence on fossil fuels" (p.115). The forest certification programs they speak of certainly function differently than REDD, but do little to establish the fundamental changes in the global market economy that the authors seem to advocate. The support thrown behind forest certification programs comes off as a bit of hand-waving and may be frustrating to the reader who, at that point in the book, is expecting a radical proposed solution.

Overall, the book provides a solid critique of REDD while illuminating the history and some particularities of the program. Given that the authors are experts in environmental policy, it is a timely book, and likely a hard pill to swallow in that field. This book serves to educate current and future policy makers about the pitfalls of market-based conservation policy, and expose them to the wealth of literature that expounds upon the arguments stipulated in the book.

References

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