Book Review/Compte rendu

Julian Agyeman, Peter Cole, Randolph Haluza-DeLay, and **Pat O'Riley,** eds., *Speaking for Ourselves: Environmental Justice in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009, 292 pp. $32.95 paper (978-0-7748-1619-9), $85.00 hardcover (978-0-7748-1618-2)

Speaking for Ourselves brings together scholars from across the environmental social sciences to examine the multiple forms that environmental justice takes in Canada. Prior research on environmental justice focused predominantly on the United States, where the concept gained sociological attention through research on racialized patterns of exposure to environmental risks and the social movements that organized against environmental racism. Like much American research on environmental justice, one of the recurring themes in *Speaking for Ourselves* is that the social justice dimensions of environmental politics often go unexamined by mainstream environmental organizations. However, the editors and contributors argue for a different understanding of environmental justice in Canada than in the United States. By focusing on social inequities related to resource allocation and land management, as well systems of agricultural production and distribution — in addition to traditional environmental justice concerns with environmental health and risk — *Speaking for Ourselves* articulates a broader definition of environmental justice. This model accounts for the inequitable distribution of environmental "goods" (natural resources and decision-making power), as well as environmental "bads" (toxins and health risks).

Individual chapters focus on a variety of topics, including water quality in First Nations communities in Ontario, the invisibility of Mi'kmaq communities in Newfoundland, the political economy of the Sydney tar ponds, the Lubicon First Nation's resistance to tar sands development in northern Alberta, heightened vulnerability to environmental risk among Inuit in the Arctic, and environmental governance in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. In addition to expanding our concept of environmental justice, two other key themes run through this collection. First, several authors raise the issue of visibility and invisibility within environmental decision-making processes, noting that access to these processes is not equitably distributed. Second, several of the chapters seek to problematize models of Canadian environmentalism that assume a

disconnect between environmental concerns and social justice questions. Authors offer several suggestions throughout the book for reconfiguring the practices of environmental politics in order to move towards a more just and democratic environmentalism.

Speaking for Ourselves is most clearly linked to the environmental justice literature. Its main contribution to this literature is the articulation of a broader conception of environmental justice, which focuses on issues of equity in the distribution of environmental resources, decision-making power and well-being, as well as on inequalities of environmental harm and risk. This collection also speaks to recent work on "climate justice," which examines the social justice dimensions of climate change responsibility, vulnerability, and adaptation. Much of this literature emphasizes the greater responsibility of nations in the global north for creating the problem, while asserting that nations in the global south are more vulnerable to the risks associated with climate change. As the chapter by Trainer et al. on climate change vulnerability among Inuit communities in the Canadian Arctic illustrates, there are differentiated risks and responsibilities within the nations of the global north. Arctic communities likely face more acute threats from this issue than communities in southern Canada. These tensions within nations should not be bracketed out in analyses of global responses to climate change.

Speaking for Ourselves also makes an important contribution to our understanding of environmentalism in Canada. As several authors note, when we examine mobilization around environmental health and other environmental justice issues, we see that much environmental activism takes place outside the formal structures of large environmental organizations and often goes under another name. This theme echoes Bullard's analysis, in *Dumping in Dixie* (1994), of struggles against environmental racism in the US, where local political mobilization typically takes place through churches and community organizations, rather than through mainstream environmental groups. Several chapters also make an important contribution to the growing literature on ecological citizenship and environmental governance, which focuses on the increased democratization of environmental management and policy making. Despite attempts to make environmental governance more inclusive, there are often profound inequalities in who gains by participating in environmental governance processes, and important differences in whose voices are valued and whose are marginalized.

While *Speaking for Ourselves* is a valuable collection, a few shortcomings are worth noting. Most importantly, despite claiming to examine environmental justice *in Canada*, there is a notable absence of work on environmentalism and social justice in Quebec. First Nations oppos-

ition to the James Bay Project in Quebec is mentioned briefly in the introduction, but the province drops out of sight for the remainder of the book. Second, the chapter by Rahder highlights the absence of a gender analysis in much environmental justice scholarship, despite the fact that women are often central to environmental justice movements. However, many chapters reproduce the absence of a gender analysis that is highlighted in this chapter. Finally, while the diversity of this book is one of its main strengths, some additional structuring into thematic sections would have been useful for navigating through the book.

In their introduction, the editors assert that "co-creating a space of shared storytelling not only brings a different kind of relationality within academia, it also encourages more equitable, diverse, complex, and complicating narrative engagements" (p. 5). *Speaking for Ourselves* accomplishes this by incorporating a diverse range of authorial voices, by connecting rural and urban case studies, and by bridging global and local fields of analysis. Its authors and editors are to be commended for bringing together several areas of inquiry, including environmental sociology, First Nations politics, race and ethnicity, urban sociology, rural sociology, and social movements. The collection will prove valuable to a broad range of students and researchers.

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