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Review: Peace Parks: Conservation and Conflict Resolution

Saleem H. Ali (Ed.)

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Ali, Saleem H. (Ed.). *Peace Parks: Conservation and Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007. 406pp. ISBN 978-0-262-51198-8. US\$29.00, paper. Recycled, acid-free paper.

Peace Parks can be understood as international zones commonly managed by two or more neighboring countries in a transboundary region (the concept is uncredited, but closely parallels ideas from Pierre Nora's classic text *Realms of Memory*). Although not a peace park as such, the case of Antarctica (studied in chapter 9), which belongs to no one and everyone, is a clear example of the challenges of many nations which must work together for the aims of science and environmental protection, without any kind of conflict. However, as Michèle Zebich-Knos indicates when referring to the "Antarctic paradigm," conservation management implies some specific issues in new domains: there are up to 4000 scientists living in Antarctica, plus many tourists who visited that region (p. 164). This 18-chapter book is timely: in her short foreword, the rector of the United Nations' University for Peace, Julia Marton-LeFèvre, notes that so far, "there has been limited systematic analysis of the role peace parks can play in the peaceful resolution of conflict" (p. xiv).

In their opening chapter on "Measuring Peace Parks Performance", Anne Hammill and Charles Besançon provide a clear definition of peace parks: "Parks for peace are transboundary protected areas that are formally dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and to the promotion of peace and cooperation" (p. 24). The most frequent example of success is the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, located between the Canadian province of Alberta and the U.S. state of Montana. It was established in 1932 and it is known as the world's first peace park (p. 197). Chapter 10 gives an accurate account of its history and some current issues in terms of border security (p. 192).

The first chapters (1-5) are more theoretical with core concepts and issues introduced in terms of political ecology, governance and globalization; in the following sections, authors from various disciplinary domains present a dozen of case studies. Among those examples, we find a practical presentation of the peace parks projects along the border between the United States and Mexico (chapter 11), in Africa (chapter 12), and in Korea's demilitarized corridor for conservation, seen here as "a green approach to conflict resolution" (chapter 13). Among other case studies are the peace parks in Afghanistan (chapter 16), plus the Mesopotamian Marshes and the "Hawizeh-Azim Peace Park" in Iraq and Iran (chapter 17). Each chapter presents the historical context that led to the creation of peace parks in a given region, the elements that make it unique, the sources of funding, possible hazards, and in a few cases the role of NGOs and the United Nations for promoting the idea of peace parks in Third World countries.

Among many other qualities, I appreciated the editor's accurate remarks in his rich conclusion, like his practical suggestions regarding the involvement of NGOs and the usefulness of sharing the positive experiences previously made in other national contexts: "NGOs should play an epistemic role — exchanging knowledge between parties and mediating for community members on all sides" (p. 340). Elsewhere, when asking what to do after some long conflicts, Saleem Ali (from the University of Vermont) advocates in just a few short formulas what seems to be the only solution that can work in postconflict eras: "resolve conflicts beforehand, acknowledge past grievances and make process transparent to local residents" (p. 340).

The interdisciplinary book *Peace Parks: Conservation and Conflict Resolution* will be instructive for professionals and students in environmental studies, political geography, peace studies and diplomacy, tourism and heritage studies, but also in sociology of the environment, citizenship education, political science and international relations.

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