



Book Review

Foundations of socio-environmental research: legacy readings with commentaries

By William R. Burnside, Simone Pulver, Kathryn J. Fiorella, Meghan L. Avolio and Steven M. Alexander
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William R. Burnside is a senior editor at *Nature Sustainability* and is based in the Springer Nature office in New York. Simone Pulver is an associate professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, working at the intersection of economic action and environmental harm. Kathryn J. Fiorella is an assistant professor of Public and Ecosystem Health at Cornell University. Meghan L. Avolio is an assistant professor working with grassland and urban ecosystems at The Johns Hopkins University and Steven M. Alexander is an applied human ecologist and environmental social scientist at the University of Waterloo. The team have meaningful experience over a broad range of subject areas, all editors are based in North America.

According to the promotional material, this volume is an anthology of 53 legacy readings showcasing the rich history of socio-environmental research from the late 1700s onward – most from the 1900s. A legacy reading is an historical publication. The aims of the book are to unite those who work in the diverse field that can be called socio-environmental research within one scholarly source. Not only to unite, but to link those scholars across the diverse disciplinary histories to provide historical perspectives on each of the six designated fields.

It is a volume in six sections documenting the emergence of socio-environmental research. First, (i) as a shared concern and then as a topic of specific interest to: (ii) anthropology and geography; (iii) economics, sociology and political science; (iv) ecology; (v) ethics, religious studies, and history; and (vi) technology, energy, and materials. The introductions for all sections were written by dominant scholars related to that section who puts the readings into an historical and intellectual context. According to the main Introduction, 'Each part is sequenced to reflect the history of intellectual

and political engagement with socio-environmental relationships over time and within and across disciplines'.

There is a general introduction that orients the reader to this diverse topic and how it has evolved, which also describes how to best use the book. A book-wide conclusion links the legacy readings to contemporary approaches in socio-environmental research and discusses how these links can enrich the reader's understanding. Besides the introduction and conclusion there are 53 papers drawn from the literature given in this book; the earliest of which was originally published in 1793 by Hong Liangji. I note other iconic names associated with the readings such as Paul Ehrlich and John Holdren, and one by Aldo Leopold, *The Land Ethic*, which was a drawcard for me.

Clearly the audience for this book will be a broad one – simply consider the six sections mentioned above. It will be a global audience of socio-environmental practitioners, particularly those following and publishing in interdisciplinary environmental journals; this will include those in graduate research and training. I also imagine the audience will extend to undergraduates in socio-environmental courses.

The strength of this book for me was the wide breadth of the legacy readings. These are highlights extracted from their particular fields, likely making them the best possible choices for readers of other fields to gain insights into the wide array of worldviews and workings of those domains. This book will therefore provide a link helping readers to understand the relatedness of the disciplines, thus furthering the socio-environmental field as a whole, which was part of the books objective.

In terms of educational and professional functions it will clearly benefit those that are trying to broaden their understanding of the socio-environmental field by understanding those in adjacent fields. It does this by emersion in the

readings as well as linking the past to contemporary approaches in the book's conclusion. The organisation of the book supports its function by allowing readers to choose the readings pertinent to themselves by having the legacy readings clearly placed between the introduction and conclusion, and by partitioning them into the relevant six sections. This organisation also allows me to cherry-pick the readings of greatest interest to myself.

Clearly the level of referencing is appropriate with the readings being the most pertinent sources. Yet all introductions, general and at each section, and the conclusion are comprehensively referenced. The writing style varies between authors, but it is accessible and understandable. The variety of writing styles in the legacy readings is of course extremely wide as would be expected. Some of the readings carry supplementary material in the form of graphs and diagrams as they were originally published – thus they are

suitable and informative to what can be expected of a published and well-respected article.

This book achieves its aims. I would recommend it to all those working within the diverse field of socio-environmental science who are keen to immerse themselves into its diversity of disciplines or to any individual one. With little imagination, I see this book as a source of readings for undergraduates. This book is likely to provoke others into attempts at bridging the broad scholarly spheres within socio-environmental research. I will take it to bed with me tonight.

Graham R. Fulton
Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Science,
University of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld, Australia
and
Environmental and Conservation Sciences,
Murdoch University, Murdoch, WA, Australia.

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