

of IMT. In conclusion, the book's meticulous research and robust conceptual framework, along with its discussion on methodology, make it a useful guide on how issues in the IMT need to be further analysed and tackled at various geographical levels, i.e. from regional to global.

Reference

Sparke M (2005) *In the Space of Theory: Postfoundational Geographies of the Nation-state*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

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The Right to Water: Politics, Governance and Social Struggles *Farhana Sultana and Alex Loftus (eds)*. Earthscan, Oxon, 2012, pp. xvii + 262 (ISBN 978-1-84971-359-7).

Since the early 1990s, water struggles have been gaining attention in political agenda and debates. Unequal access to water, increased competition and environmental degradation have pushed local and global movements to demand institutional changes for addressing these issues at different scales. Despite consensus that there is a global water crisis, institutions have conflicting approaches to the guiding principles and changes that should be adopted. Generally this tension has been framed under the binary categories of a pro-market model aiming to reach economic efficiency versus a universal human right to water aiming to reach social equity.

The supporters of the pro-market model have promoted this model as a phenomenon that, existing by itself, has an inevitable essence, follows universal rules, and is isolated from broader political debates. The adversaries to this model counter that developing and promoting it is extremely harmful for water debates, so long as water problems and struggles are presented as simple technical issues. When the pro-market imaginary becomes hegemonic, political debates regarding how water should be managed are replaced by standard and apolitical formulas that appearing as neutral, naturalize power relations and unequal access.

However, the 'human right to water framework' is not immune to the previous critique at all. Insofar as it is rooted in the liberal political philosophy tradition that presents human rights as universal, the right to water discourse can be easily framed by narratives that justify it as preceding any political debate, making the right to water appear to lack any political content. This perspective opens a window for justifying its materialization through technical and abstract legal schemes structured under liberal axioms, designed by technocrats to make the human right to water completely compatible with pro-market instruments. Here, the right to water could be instrumentally used as a moral veil for covering the power asymmetries reproduced by the commodification of water. The co-editors of the book invite readers to push the right to water framework down an opposite path: toward its radical politicization.

The goal of politicizing the right to water is achieved through the 14 chapters of the book. Rather than answering the question of what the right to water means in universal terms, these chapters offer conceptual and empirical discussions oriented toward exploring the theoretical paradoxes and the concrete struggles for understanding the right to

water as a politically contested concept. This is framed within the general question of who has the right to control the production of the hydrosocial cycle. Following the introduction, five theoretical chapters explore the philosophical, ethical and epistemological aspects of the right to water: Bakker discusses the limits of the human right to water as a conceptual counterpoint to the neoliberalization of nature; Linton interrogates the human right to water as a collective right to both participating in water governance and sharing the value generated by the hydrosocial cycle; Staddon *et al.* explore the possibilities and consequences opened by the geographic-legal contradictions of the right to water; Mitchell highlights that water conflicts, rather than being conflicts over a biophysical matter, are more a struggle about rights, and calls for radically retheorizing the concept of ownership to ensure the success of the right to water; and Schmidt rejects a utilitarian understanding of what water scarcity and water security mean and how they should be addressed, and calls to embrace a perspective that roots the right to water in a collective and communal base.

After the conceptual approach, nine chapters explore the right to water through an empirical analysis. Studying different cases around the world, the authors engage with broader theoretical problems that illuminate how political struggles over the right to water happen on the ground. Ruru studies the indigenous peoples in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and problematizes the right to access to clean water by presenting it as a problem of identity; Van Rijswijk and Keessen describe and evaluate the European Union protection of the right to water; Giglioli interrogates the connections between rights, citizenship and access to water through exploring how the right to water is a highly contested concept in the West Bank; Meehan questions the binary categories of legal and illegal water activities to inform the struggle for the right to water in the US and Mexico; Clark, by examining the South African case, defends community participation as playing a crucial role in achieving the right to water; Bond, through an analysis of the South African case, contextualizes the right to water under the right to the city framework as a better strategy to socially mobilize it; Bywater evaluates water movements in India and explains how they have stopped water privatization; Bustamante *et al.*, by examining the limits of the concept of water as a human right in Bolivia, invite the reader to reflect on the alliance between activist and progressive politicians, and the possibility it opens to translate theory into policies; and Perera studies how the right to water has been used in recent water struggles, and explores its genealogy since its early mobilization in Bolivian and Uruguayan water struggles.

The Right to Water: Politics, Governance and Social Struggles meets the co-editors' goal of politicizing the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the right to water framework. This leads the readers to see how the right to water is not the final result of a political process, but a political activity framed within the broader struggles for reaching equitable and clean access to water, which precludes dispossession. The authors' effort to problematize the human right to water as an easy counterbalance and critique to the extension of the market logic is welcome, especially when the concept has become commonplace among social movements and scholars, and faces the risk of becoming an empty concept. However, the book is not just a critique; it is a call to academics, students, policy makers and activists to reflect on how it is possible to fill this concept with political content that allows its mobilization as a powerful tool for eradicating water inequality.

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