
The peculiar position of environmental protection in the former Soviet Union is a recurrent theme in this volume, and of the many paradoxical illustrations post-Soviet environmental policies, perhaps none is as revealing as the story provided by Jessica Graybill in her contribution, "Places and Identities on Sakhalin Island: Situating the Emerging Movements for ‘Sustainable Sakhalin.’" In 1994, as Graybill recounts, the Russian government signed two production-sharing agreements with foreign partners (Sakhalin-1 with Exxon, and Sakhalin-2 with Shell, Mitsui, and Mitsubishi) so as to obtain the technology, political support, and financial capital needed to create a modern oil-extracting infrastructure on Sakhalin Island, just north of Japan in the Sea of Okhotsk. Sakhalin-1 was written in such a way so as to generate dividends for the Russian government immediately, but the revenue stream of Sakhalin-2 would only begin after the investment costs had been recouped. In 2006, the disappointing financial returns prompted Russian federal and regional authorities to unilaterally renegotiate the agreement. Citing the danger that oil production posed to the environment, and specifically the Grey Whale and salmon populations that inhabited the Sea of Okhotsk, the Russian government suspended the agreement and forbade all further work. The injunction was lifted only after the signatories to Sakhalin-2 agreed to relinquish majority control to Gazprom, the Russian state gas company. The plan then resumed, and proceeded according to existing plans. In short, the Russian government successfully (and cynically) deployed environmentalist rhetoric to gain control of economic development, the interests of which immediately trumped environmental concerns—an outcome, as this book documents, very frequently repeated throughout the FSU. Together, the volume's contributors attempt to explicate the role that environmental thinking and activism plays in the creation of government policy in the countries of the FSU, and collectively conclude that although environmental activists still operate in the post-Soviet sphere and have met with limited, respectable success, structural impediments to meaningful change persist and likely will continue to do so.

In their introductory essay, the editors call attention to a conflict inherent in contemporary environmental politics that helps to explain results like the one discussed by Graybill: a tension between "green" and "brown" developmental models. The green agenda prioritizes sustainable development and seeks to ameliorate ecological problems such as climate change and decreasing biodiversity, whereas the brown agenda focuses on environmental justice, affordable housing, and antipoverty measures. Although the editors contend that these two visions are compatible and might be combined in a "middle way" agenda, in practice the sustainable development and environmental justice movements have often found themselves "at odds with each other, competing for political, financial, and civic investment." (4). The volume, taken as a whole, amply demonstrates that the environmentalist and anti-poverty movements have active supporters in the FSU, although the examples provided in the book suggest that the two agendas do not defeat one another so much as cancel one another, or simply lose out to the state-centered efforts to establish market economies. In the post-Soviet era, environmental justice claims, though recognized in the law, have been frequently disregarded in deference to industrial development, the fruits of which have accrued to the elite. Similarly, sustainable development and ecologically sensitive economic

planning have been accepted as important values, as evidenced by the willingness of leaders in the region to sign international environmental treaties, but these laws have often been honored in the breach, with governments citing national poverty as the primary obstacle to enforcement. With chapters examining specific cases in Russia, Azerbaijan, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Estonia, and Tajikistan, the volume provides wide-ranging evidence that green and brown environmental activism, although not as moribund as some Western press reports have suggested, has foundered due primarily to unfavorable governmental attitudes, but also because of the lingering effects of Soviet rule.

Five of the volume’s ten chapters examine environmental politics and environmental protection in Russia. Brian Donahoe’s contribution, “The Law as a Source of Environmental Injustice in the Russian Federation,” paints a bleak portrait of the Russian government as it pays lip service to environmentalism by passing domestic laws and signing international treaties, but then fails to enforce those statutes, and instead uses the law as a weapon against the people—a practice Donahoe likens to John Comaroff’s concept of “lawfare.” For instance, as Donahoe notes, Article 69 of the 1993 Russian Constitution “explicitly guarantees in principle the ‘rights of the indigenous small-numbered peoples in accordance with the universally recognized principles and norms of international law,’” including the right to use natural resources in traditional ways (25). However, Donahoe shows that the state enforces these laws quite selectively, and intentionally fails to inform the population what these laws mean. Donahoe describes the repeated attempts of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North to receive clarification about the meaning of those federal laws passed in accordance with Article 69 of the Russian Constitution, to no avail, leading the president of the association to conclude that “those in power do not want to recognize the rights of the Tozhu [indigenous peoples] because the natural resources in the Tozhu Raion are simply too valuable for the republic to risk losing control over them” (25). Reinforcing this impression are Donahoe’s quoted remarks of the former vice-director of the Lukoil-Varaneyneftegaz company, Dmitry Nesanelis, who contends that it is in “the interests of the state to make these laws so vague as to be unworkable” (27).

The additional four chapters examining Russian environmental politics reach similar conclusions. Laura Henry’s chapter, “Thinking Globally, Limited Locally: The Russian Environmental Movement and Sustainable Development” discusses the many environmental organizations active in Russia today as well as their notable successes, including the rerouting of an oil pipeline near Lake Baikal and the incorporation of the concept of sustainable development into Russian law. However, Henry ultimately agrees with Donahoe that “the gap between environmental regulation on paper and in practice has limited the impact of this legislation,” in no small part because, as she concludes, “it is difficult to imagine Russia integrating principles that limit natural resource exploitation when the main engine of the economy is the oil and gas sector” (64). Jessica Graybill’s chapter, mentioned above, likewise cites a disconnect between publicly adopted government positions and true intentions, and describes the frustration of local environmental activists in bridging this gap when the general populace often seems complacent. Graybill also emphasizes the tension set out in the introductory essay, between “green” professional environmental activists and