

paid by the piece to pick fruits and vegetables. As these migrant workers move from harvest to harvest they resemble a "moving maquila," a development that has intensified under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

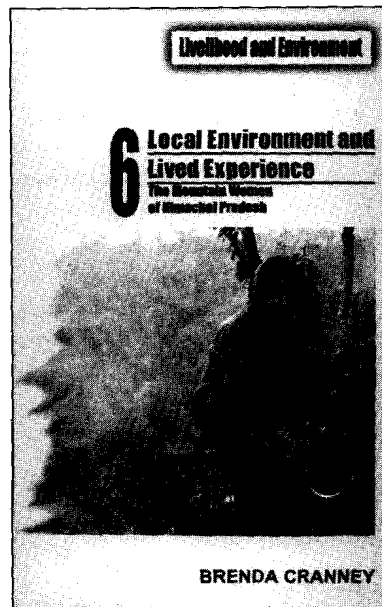
Barndt concludes *Tangled Routes* with stories of resistance which she calls "the other globalization." Here we are offered a comparative look at the different oppositional responses by women to economic globalization, and we are introduced to new possibilities for developing alternatives to the global food system.

Barndt certainly provides food for thought and there is much to chew on in this book. Its sweeping overview of a transnational food system displays interconnections and interrelationships among workers, consumers, environmentalists, corporate capital, and the state. Geographic borders are crossed, we leap across historical time and space as well as traverse disciplinary boundaries by engaging in Marxist political economy, social ecofeminism, sociological labour process theory, feminist ecological economics and feminist environmentalism. The many conceptual threads and intellectual forays make this book, at certain times, too eclectic and lacking in disciplinary rigour, a point the author herself recognizes. Although challenging intellectually, the book remains accessible to undergraduate readers. Each chapter can be read on its own and the array of photo essays, competently produced by the author, vividly portray the real life experiences of workers on the tomato trail.

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND LIVED EXPERIENCE: THE MOUNTAIN WOMEN OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

Brenda Cranney
Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001

REVIEWED BY PAMPA
MUKHERJEE



While much has been written on issues of environmental degradation, resource depletion, or on women and development, one rarely finds detailed work on how rural environment impacts on the everyday life of people in general and mountain women in particular. Subjected to patriarchal norms and the harsh terrain in which they live, the impact of environmental degradation is felt all the more severely by mountain women. Dependent on their immediate environment, the life of "pahari" women is woven around making provisions for fuel, fodder and water for the household.

The limited availability, difficult access to or total absence of these basic requirements due to natural calamity or as a consequence of inap-

propriate development policies makes the already arduous life of mountain women even more stressful, affecting their work, health and existing lifestyle. Researcher and activist, Brenda Cranney provides a detailed insight into the everyday life of mountain women of Himachal Pradesh. She explores and unfolds in a lucid and persuasive manner her "lived experience" with the women of Ichasser and Dev Nagar, the two villages of Himachal Pradesh where she conducted her study.

The book under review, based on her doctoral work, allows the reader an insight into the inner world and existence of "pahari" women and how the degradation of environment and capitalist transformation has negatively impacted their lives, thus laying bare the hidden truths about their struggle and resistance. It informs the reader as to how "the degradation of environment, land fragmentation, the erosion of subsistence economy by unsustainable and inappropriate development or maldevelopment in Ichasser and Dev Nagar has, in fact resulted in fragmentation of the social fabric of the family and the community."

What makes the book interesting is the manner in which Cranney narrates her experiences, involving an element of story telling. Using a mixed writing style consisting of both diary format and regular writing, the author takes the reader along to experience the everyday life, emotional upheavals, and deep involvement of simple Himachali women with whom she lived, worked, and developed a life-time relationship. Its rigorous methodological application adds depth to the work, combining oral histories, personal interviews, photographs and participant observation, thereby developing an approach that cuts across the disciplines of sociology and anthropology.

Chapters two and three of the book detail the choice of her methodological tools, how her research focus shifted from macro to micro

analysis and finally her attempt to develop an appropriate research framework to study the ways in which development has changed the life and work patterns of the rural poor women. In order to capture the finer dynamics as well as intensity of women's work, the "voices of women are woven into the text throughout" and thereby the author has been able to preserve the identity of those unheard voices.

Development policies in India are primarily guided by the dominant official framework of the post-colonial state which, with its centralizing and intrusive strategies, tends to push the main actors i.e., "the people" to the periphery. The implications of such policies are felt and become visible even at the micro level, affecting the production process and the social structure of the village economy in which women and the poor peasants are the worst hit as they are systematically marginalized from the development agenda. This argument holds true in the case of Himachal Pradesh, particularly in the context of social forestry programs.

Cranney rightly points out how social forestry projects have not only marginalized and neglected peoples' needs and opinion including their choice of tree species, these projects have failed because of their focus on profit maximization and commercialization, their inability and unwillingness to address "structural changes" and finally the "top down approach to project planning, identification and implementation." With the introduction of development policies based on the capitalist mode of production there has been a distinct shift in the economy of the state from the semi-feudal to market economy. The book asserts that such policies have not only affected the social fabric of the village community but also the natural resources of the region under study.

Life in a mountain society is fundamentally linked to the geographical, topographical, environmental and political factors that make the

mountain. Verticality and marginalization and vital dependence upon the environment are basic aspects of the region. In this context any effort to understand the dynamics of development and its repercussions, particularly on women, emerges as a complex issue linked closely to a multitude of factors—environmental and social. The lack of this realization and knowledge, therefore, has a bearing on the kind of policies that are being framed and implemented. The book argues that the situation became complicated and difficult for hilly states like Himachal Pradesh as they had to accept policies generally meant for the plains, which fail to take into consideration the geographical, cultural, and socio-economic as well as "local" specificities of the region, devoid as they are of a "mountain perspective."

In her effort to understand the implications of economic development and state policies at the micro level, Cranney refers to the life histories of three women—Nirmala, Kalabati and Shanti. Representing three different generations, their narratives touch upon diverse issues like environment, culture, sexuality, politics and economics, and demonstrate how macro concerns translate into their everyday existence. Through their stories one gets a glimpse of women's lives in rural India from "girlhood to old age." The book also emphatically argues that macroeconomic policies have not merely marginalized these women in terms of resource depletion but further reduced the choices available to them to join the mainstream economy.

In the chapter, "The Environment and Women's Work," the author shows how women are subjected to extremely hard work and of these, fodder collection and water are the most important and arduous. The situation is further exacerbated due to gendered division of labour and in more recent times because of environmental degradation, which impacts both the availability of natural resources and also the time required

to procure such resources. By applying time cycle as a research tool, Brenda Cranney argues that the women she studied, worked on an average 17 hours a day. No surprise that women are reluctant to get involved in any kind of income-generating activities introduced by development projects as this involves extra work and hence more labour. Moreover, the heavy workload contributes to many health problems among women as well as their family members, a situation worsened by extreme poverty and the dominant culture of the region is shaped by patriarchy. For example, Cranney cites, that "women in rural India are valued only if they can reproduce."

Despite the detrimental impact of environment and development policies on the region in general and the dismal situation of women in particular, Cranney looks at the main actors in the study not as passive recipients of the circumstances in which they find themselves but as active agents. She argues that women have been able to use their agency to articulate concerns and find ways to bring about change. Their lives have not merely been sites of oppression but of resistance and they have challenged and protested against "traditional, patriarchal and cultural expectations" both in the private and public domain. In coping with changes that capitalist transformation has brought about in Himachal Pradesh, women have asserted their agency in both adopting certain coping mechanisms and resisting. The book concludes on an optimistic note: the struggles and challenges which the women face have strengthened their agency and made them politically active.

With all its strengths, the book could have done with some editing, in particular the repetition in content, arguments and assertions relating to research methodology, research design and approach. Nonetheless, the book finds its *forte* in the rigorous fieldwork using varied research tools and methods, the theoretical frame-

work and interdisciplinary approach that the author developed. An interesting and useful read for any student of development studies.

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TAKING STANDS: GENDER AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Maureen Reed
Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003

REVIEWED BY EMILY EATON

Taking Stands: Gender and the Sustainability of Rural Communities is focused on the activist experiences of women in forestry communities on North Vancouver Island. Reed examines how women have responded to the state's imposition of environmental regulations in the logging industry in the 1990s. Her research, based on focus groups, policy documents, and interviews with fifty women, reveals that women perceive environmental regulation (including the establishment of "protected areas") as threatening to their communities and livelihood. In this book Reed also offers an analysis of the marginalization of women in the process of negotiating and implementing land-use programmes.

Reed begins by considering contemporary debates including the coherence of the category "woman". She is sympathetic to (and incorporates) many of the challenges mounted by "the cultural turn," but argues that gender remains a valid and significant category of inquiry in the forestry communities of the "North Island." Women in these forestry communities share many forms of social marginalization: their

(paid and unpaid) work is exploited, they are often socially excluded from meaningful participation in their communities, they feel disempowered as they lack autonomy and authority, and they are morally excluded in land-use debates. Such realities lead Reed to conclude that "[a] focus on difference may only weaken the situation of women's collective interests in planning debates."

Despite advocating for a political strategy of uniting women, the bulk of this book is dedicated to understanding the diverse forms of activism in which forestry women are involved. One of Reed's strengths is in establishing a balance between the diversity of women's subject positions and the material significance of gender in communities of North Vancouver Island. This balance is established through a focus on diversity in the first five chapters, and a separate examination of the material significance of gender in the last three chapters.

Reed finds that women are active in "managing their communities" through a wide range of community work, including protesting environmental regulation, cleaning local streams, and lobbying for better access to social services. However, women's activism has neither arisen chiefly out of stereotyped roles as mothers/nurturers, nor is it consistent with eco-feminist analyses that see an essential connection between women and nature. Importantly, Reed challenges the binary conceptualisation of activism as being either pro or anti-environmental. Furthermore, she argues for a widening of the definition of activism to include the (significant) political act of affirming the status quo.

In the first pages of her book Reed introduces "feminist environmentalism" as a perspective that "examine[s] how women's social relations to the environment are made and reinforced through their daily activities in specific localities." She suggests that this anti-essentialist framework offers a

better analysis of women's activism than that given by eco-feminism. However, after her initial and brief discussion of feminist environmentalism, she fails to apply it throughout the rest of the work. The reader is left wondering whether later findings and analyses fit with her belief that feminist environmentalism is a better framework.

In her last two chapters the focus shifts away from the multiplicity of women's activism and toward the collective marginalization of women in land-use planning. Reed argues that women's participation has been marginalized in the planning of forestry transition programmes, which is particularly problematic since they are significantly affected by changing policies and practices. She offers an important critique of the way in which the state has engaged in land-use planning and also of the effects of state-sponsored transition programmes. She argues that the provincial government's Commission on Resources and Environment had the effect of reproducing dominant power relations in forestry communities. For example, the Commission's commitment to social sustainability came to revolve around men's jobs; all other social issues were considered "community issues" and therefore outside of the scope of the land use strategy.

Maureen Reed's book on gender in forestry communities on North Vancouver Island will be of interest to a number of different readers. While this book is focused centrally on the diversity of women's activism in forestry communities, a wide variety of topics are explored including the marginalization of rural communities, anti/environmentalism, policy changes around forestry in British Columbia, women and work, the construction of the "other," and the politics of land-use planning. The book is an important read for environmentalists as it challenges us to understand the complexity and contradictions of anti/environmental action.