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Parks, Peace and Partnership: Global Initiatives in Transboundary

Conservation Edited by **MICHAEL S. QUINN, LEN BROBERG, and WAYNE FREIMUND**

U of Calgary P, 2012 \$39.95

Reviewed by **FENN STEWART**

The essays collected in this book emerged from a conference held, in September of 2007, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the creation of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, the first park of its kind, located in Alberta, Canada and Montana, USA. Today, the peace park movement is associated with a “shift away from the idea of strictly protected national parks towards greater emphasis on multiple resource use by local communities” (Peace Parks Foundation). The international focus of the peace parks movement reflects the fact that, as editor Michael S. Quinn notes in the introduction, quoting Charles Chester, “purely domestic approaches to biodiversity conservation,” while crucial, are ultimately insufficient to “protect life on Earth.” Peace parks, Quinn explains, attempt to further the wellbeing of local human communities at the same time as they work towards conservation goals. Transboundary conservation areas seek to support human and non-human members of ecosystems, foster “peace and cooperation” between nations, and sustain “cultural resources,” “social and economic development,” and biological diversity.

The nineteen essays that make up *Parks, Peace and Partnership* are divided into four sections. The first of

these, “Lessons from the Field,” takes up questions of cooperative management, tourism, conservation, and peace-building in diverse geographical contexts including central and southern America, Australia, and Europe. The second section is dedicated to southern African “experiences,” and the third to international peace parks and education. The final section of the book includes proposals for five new parks in sites associated with longstanding conflicts, such as the Korean Demilitarized Zone, and in border communities that have long experienced peaceful coexistence, like the Niagara region in Canada and the U.S.

The peace parks movement attempts to combine attention to local and international social and political contexts with work directed towards conservation goals; as a result, the essays in the volume may interest a wide range of scholars and practitioners. That said, the essays in the book tend to prioritize practical questions pertaining to park administration, policy, and law enforcement, including the relocation of border control infrastructure to allow freer movements of humans and animals, and effective methods for international policing and coast guard patrols, and cooperative research endeavours. Analyses of how to establish “cross-jurisdictional management arrangements,” as in Jacob and Anderson’s chapter on the Australian Alps, may prove very useful to those who work in conservation and park administration. In general, however, wider social and political problems are given less attention in this book. It is worth asking what these

discussions might have gained from a more in-depth, sustained engagement with the social justice issues raised by the creation and maintenance of park lands—in particular, the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, and the constructions of particular racial and national identities (see for example Mawani 2004; Sandilands 2011).

Certain passages in the book do orient to political issues such as the problematic nature of borders. Quinn's introduction notes that the 1818 drawing of the border between the countries now known as Canada and the U.S. had a profound impact on the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy). He writes that the boundary "sliced through" and "sever[ed] the once seamless lands" that have long been the Niitsitapi's "physical and spiritual home." While Quinn observes that "artificia[l] jurisdictionary boundaries" interrupt "the long history of indigenous dwelling in the landscape," for me this discussion raises (rather than answers) a range of further questions about the Niitsitapi's historical involvement in, and/or support for, the creation and maintenance of the local Waterton-Glacier park. Similarly, Chester and Sifford's "Under the Penumbra of Waterton-Glacier and Homeland Security," which proposes a peace park be created in the Mexican-U.S. border area, raises a number of issues that, in my view, require further analysis. As the authors explain, this region is home to the Indigenous Tohono O'odham Nation, whose reserve of 1,122,815 hectares (the second-largest in the U.S.) is located along the border. Chester and Sifford note that the O'odham were, in 1988, included for the first time in a

"transborder forum" on ecological issues; at the time, O'odham representatives "raised strong concerns" about the impact a potential "international biosphere reserve" designation would have on their rights. These concerns received "a cool reception among many—if not most—of the Symposium's participants." Chester and Sifford explain that a later meeting, which included the participation of "indigenous groups," resulted in the creation of two biosphere regions. Further information regarding the O'odham representatives' concerns—whether and how they were taken into account, what compromises were reached, and the degree to which these have been considered satisfactory by the Nation—is not provided, which I found curious.

The same chapter lists "drug smuggling and illegal immigration" as impediments to the creation of the proposed Sonoran Desert Peace Park (while the Homeland Security Department's penchant for "steel border fences and 100-foot-high towers with radar, high definition cameras, and virtual fences" is also noted as a problem, the important social and political differences between these "obstacles" to the creation of a peace park are not discussed). In their essay on border parks in Mexico, Sammet and Quinn also list "illegal immigra[tion]" as a form of "crime [that takes place] inside protected areas," along with drug smuggling, and "illegal" hunting and harvesting practices. Terms like "illegal immigration" and "crime" must be critically unpacked; otherwise, their use can obscure the complex realities of racism, colonialism, and poverty that

lead people to undertake dangerous and often fatal journeys across spaces like the Sonoran Desert, as well as a diverse range of economic activities that may be criminalized. The U.S.-Mexican border is a particularly contested space (as a slogan popular with migrants' rights advocates insists, "we didn't cross the border, the border crossed us"). Other contributors to the volume, including Schoon and Zunckel, note "illegal" migration and practices like the cultivation of marijuana as problematic for conservation areas in other contexts. While Zunckel does acknowledge that such activities "contribut[e] to the livelihoods of people," I found myself looking for further discussion of the material conditions that lead to these "illegal" activities.

Ultimately, the ambitious mandate of the peace parks framework seems to require a sustained critical engagement with such social, and political realities, in addition to addressing questions of cross-border jurisdiction, policy, and park administration. As Quinn notes in his introduction, the very concept of peace parks is associated with "an interest and commitment to collaborate across jurisdictional boundaries or frontiers" in terms that are "meaningful in the context of the socio-political realities of [a given] region." As it reaches beyond particular moments of international collaboration towards the resolution of broader social and political problems, scholarship on transboundary conservation can only be strengthened by a thorough engagement with the work of scholars and activists who focus on social justice issues around migration, land use, and land rights.

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FENN STEWART is an interdisciplinary researcher and writer. She has reviewed scholarship on race, culture, and environmental racism for journals including *Social Forces* and *Reviews in Cultural Theory*. An excerpt from her own ongoing study of "wilderness," de/colonization, and Canadian culture is forthcoming in *ARIEL*. She is the author of two chapbooks—*An OK Organ Man* (above/ground, 2012), which was shortlisted for the bpNichol Chapbook Award, and *Vegetable Inventory* (Ferno House, 2013). Other poems have appeared in literary journals including *Open Letter* and *The Capilano Review*, and in *The Arcadia Project*, a North American anthology of "postmodern

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