



A review of *Political Ecologies of Meat* Edited by Jody Emel and Harvey Neo

Kathryn Gillespie

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Political Ecologies of Meat

Edited by Jody Emel and Harvey Neo
London: Routledge, 2015.

352 Global animal agriculture is now understood to be a leading cause of planetary environmental destruction, including its staggering contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, global deforestation, water pollution, biodiversity loss, and so on. As meat production and consumption and their accompanying impacts increase dramatically on a global scale, political ecological analyses that attend to the political, social, ethical, and environmental dimensions of breeding, raising, slaughtering, and selling animals for food become vital for understanding these kinds of interspecies social relations. *Political Ecologies of Meat* brings us a much-needed collection of case studies exploring some of the key issues in global meat production. As part of Routledge's "Studies in Political Ecology" book series, the collection makes an important contribution to the field of political ecology by tackling the timely subject of global meat economies.

As editors, Jody Emel and Harvey Neo identify several key themes that they see as central to developing political ecologies of meat as an intellectual project. Broadly, the text synthesizes impressively the entangled impacts on humans, animals, and the environment of global meat production. While this holistic approach is not necessarily new for critical scholars of animal agriculture and other animal use industries, it remains a surprisingly understudied approach in fields of political ecology, environmental studies, and political economy that tend to lean toward anthropocentric analyses of animal use industries. With its focus on meat production and its impacts, this text advances in exciting directions conversations on production and consumption trends, questions of justice broadly defined, shifting economies and their global impacts, knowledge-making practices in meat industries, and problems of governance and legislation. The global nature of this text is something to appreciate especially, with case studies spanning North and South America, Asia, Africa, Europe, and New Zealand.

Political Ecologies of Meat is organized in four parts. The first part is dedicated to understanding global *livestock* production as a development strategy and the growth of meat production and consumption in the Global South. This section begins with a discussion of the emergence of the so-called livestock revolution and its implications (Chapter 2), followed by three case studies: trends in *cattle* ranching in the Brazilian Amazon (Chapter 3), political dimensions of meat consumption and trade in East Africa (Chapter 4), and current and projected shifts in climate and the agricultural sector in South Africa's meat industry (Chapter 5). This portion of the book directs much-needed attention to the various ways in which trends of increasing meat consumption and production are concentrated in the Global South, geographies where the fastest growing economies of meat production and consumption are located.

The second part takes up a classic concern for political ecology in its attention to environmental justice, beginning with an overview of environmental justice and factory farming broadly (Chapter 6), followed by three case studies on pig farming and water pollution in Catalonia (Chapter 7), a spatial analysis of factory farms in Ohio (Chapter 8), and the governance of hog waste spills in North Carolina's pork industry (Chapter 9). These case studies (especially the US-based ones) will be familiar to scholars and activists focused on environmental justice since these tend to be common locations for critical investigation of these issues.

The third part of the book is dedicated to understanding various modes through which knowledge production about meat is highly politicized, contested, and subjectively formulated. These discussions of knowledge making focus on several themes relevant to political ecologies of meat: cultural politics and the creation of breeds (Chapter 10), genetic selection and breeding for *meat* characteristics (Chapter 11), media narratives and story networks of climate change and meat production/consumption (Chapter 12), the politics of farmed animal welfare science (Chapter 13), and a perspective on vegetarian advocacy (Chapter 14). How knowledge-making agendas play out in global meat production and consumption has profound impacts for the animals, ecologies, and human actors in these industries.

The fourth part addresses structures of governance and oversight, and the messy ways in which these regulatory strategies play out. Case studies presented in this final section of the book include certification practices in Halal ritual slaughter (Chapter 15), a comparative analysis of roundtable management approaches in palm oil and beef production (Chapter 16), governance struggles over pig farming sanitation issues in Hong Kong (Chapter 17), the politicized nature of climate change mitigation strategies in New Zealand animal agriculture (Chapter 18), and diverse regulatory environments in the governance of the US aquaculture industry (Chapter 19). These cases highlight the deeply conflicting and contested nature of regulatory structures and systems of governance as well as the politicized dimensions of negotiating governance strategies at various scales.

In its geographical and topical breadth, *Political Ecologies of Meat* brings us an excellent resource for exploring global meat production and consumption patterns. In addition to contributing to scholarly debates in political ecology, this text could be useful for teaching—likely through excerpting particular chapters that could be easily added to advanced undergraduate or graduate syllabi on political ecology, food systems, climate change, and environmental justice, among others. Many of the case studies illuminate complex and provocative questions that would be interesting to discuss with students of varying levels.

Emel and Neo also make a call in their concluding chapter for enacting more just social relations among humans, animals, and our global environment. This creates a call and an opening for future work in political ecologies of meat to conduct research that offers imaginative and creative modes of response and radical social change. They signal toward other sites of animal use (e.g., dairy, egg, leather, rendering industries) that could be explored in more depth in further research (perhaps as *political ecologies of animal use* more broadly) and that might also illuminate other avenues for imagining new directions for social, environmental, and multispecies justice. This excellent text makes an important intervention in this ongoing conversation and should be read widely within and beyond the field of political ecology.

Kathryn Gillespie
University of Washington