

In search of the rain forest

Smith, Derek

Postprint / Postprint

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

www.peerproject.eu

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Smith, D. (2006). In search of the rain forest. *Cultural Geographies*, 13(2), 306-306. <https://doi.org/10.1177/147447400601300209>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter dem "PEER Licence Agreement zur Verfügung" gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zum PEER-Projekt finden Sie hier: <http://www.peerproject.eu> Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

gesis
Leibniz-Institut
für Sozialwissenschaften

Terms of use:

This document is made available under the "PEER Licence Agreement". For more Information regarding the PEER-project see: <http://www.peerproject.eu> This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Mitglied der
Leibniz
Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

In search of the rain forest. Edited by Candace Slater. Durham NC, and London: Duke University Press. 2003. 318 pp. US\$22.95 paper. ISBN 0 8223 3218 3.

Tropical rainforests are places where interests converge, and often collide. For hundreds of indigenous groups they are a home, for ecotourists a place to visit, and for multinationals a source of primary commodities. For others they are fragile environments in need of protection, a safe haven for illegal activity or reservoirs of as yet undiscovered medicines. Far beyond their confines they are a source of inspiration, concern and even fear. *In search of the rainforest* ably explains how various actors appropriate, manipulate and reproduce images of rainforests as part of dynamic, ongoing narratives – or bioscripts – that influence perceptions, attitudes and policies about how they should be used and managed. A recurring motif consists of how rainforest icons – simplified representations embodying an array of associated meanings – are constructed and transmitted through photographs, brochures, newspapers, books and movies. Although various groups may draw from a common environmentalist ideology, they do so in opposing ways, sometimes disseminating one discourse while attempting to silence others.

One chapter demonstrates how a company operating in the Ecuadorian Amazon publicizes the implementation of innovations that purportedly allow for the harmonious coexistence of oil extraction and the biological diversity of a vast, untouched forest – while obscuring the deliberate disruption of indigenous organizations or the use of state violence to suppress resistance. Here and elsewhere, the authors show how depictions of rainforests shape notions about the relationships between people and nature, and how these in turn can lead to quite different outcomes. For example, if forests are thought of as ancient and pristine, they will warrant strict protection; if they are anthropogenic, better understood as ‘gardens gone to seed’, they may in fact require resident populations to maintain certain ecological processes. As another chapter illustrates, the long-standing policy of removing villagers from reserves in India – developed in collaboration with international conservation organizations – is not merely unjust, but can ultimately result in the devastation rather than protection of wildlife populations.

This book provides valuable insight into the dynamics of competing social constructions of nature. A limitation, perhaps, is an asymmetrical emphasis on the perceptions and representations of rainforests among outsiders (e.g., colonial administrators, an expatriate natural medicine guru – not to mention the contributors themselves) rather than those who are most affected by them. What are some of the icons that resident peoples use? What are some of their distinct cultural interpretations of the rainforest? These questions receive much less attention. Nevertheless, this remains an engaging, thought-provoking volume rich in ideas grounded in real-world cases, and may alter to some degree the way many of us see the rainforest ourselves.

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
Carleton University

DEREK SMITH