

Editorial

Entangled Environments in Asia

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For a long time, Asia attracted the European gaze and interest through its abundant and seemingly endless endowment with natural goods like timber, plants and minerals. Meanwhile, one of the most pressing issues of our time is to how reconcile the exploitation of natural and biological resources with socioecological needs. How to cultivate, appreciate and extract existing biodiversity and biomass without causing unintended social and environmental problems is a question demanding critical analysis. Among and within Asian countries, a wide range of different premises, priorities, ideas and values on the issue of development and its relationship to the natural world as well as property rights over it exists (Ribot and Peluso 2003; see Joshi this issue). National industries and policies often face resistance from society, and industrial mining, farming, forestry and fishery find themselves contested by food and environmental movements (Ye et al. 2020; see Maimunah this issue). In many Asian countries, the notion of ‘bioeconomy’ has already developed into a political project, with governmental strategies approaching key issues such as food security, energy supply and overall global competitiveness (Sheppard et al. 2011; see Keilbart this issue). As part of an international organic movement, activists in many Asian countries aim at food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture addressing issues of social and environmental justice. Challenging the global consumption of organic food and ethical symbols, thus deserves critical analysis informed by coloniality (Freidberg 2010; see Still this issue).

This field of tension presents political-economic, environmental and social challenges for countries in the region and their (re)production, utilisation and governance of natural and biological riches. These processes and the rapidly expanding web of relations accompanying them stimulate a variety of scientific approaches, theoretical concepts and perspectives. Beyond the management of natural resources, the conceptualisation of human–nature relations, values and connections to individual behaviour and collective action become of vital interest. This includes Asian perspectives on human alienation from nature, attempts at a reconciliation between human and nature (also in urban settings), and diversified conceptions of nature in traditional-knowledge systems across Asia. Taking account of the symbolic-material complexities in Asian conceptions of nature,