



# Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization (Yale Agrarian Studies Series)

By Michael Goldman

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Why is the World Bank so successful? How has it gained power even at moments in history when it seemed likely to fall? This pathbreaking book is the first close examination of the inner workings of the Bank, the foundations of its achievements, its propensity for intensifying the problems it intends to cure, and its remarkable ability to tame criticism and extend its own reach.

Michael Goldman takes us inside World Bank headquarters in Washington, D.C., and then to Bank project sites around the globe. He explains how projects funded by the Bank really work and why community activists struggle against the World Bank and its brand of development. Goldman looks at recent ventures in areas such as the environment, human rights, and good governance and reveals how—despite its poor track record—the World Bank has acquired greater authority and global power than ever before.

The book sheds new light on the World Bank's role in increasing global inequalities and considers why it has become the central target for anti-globalization movements worldwide. For anyone concerned about globalization and social justice, *Imperial Nature* is essential reading.

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

This probing study of the World Bank examines not its brute financial muscle but its "hegemony"—the rhetorical strategies, training programs and patronage networks that let the Bank frame debate and cajole even critics into endorsing its agenda. Sociologist Goldman focuses on what he calls the Bank's "green neoliberalism," a fashionable development ideology that packages poor nations' public services, natural resources and environmental diversity as undervalued economic assets to be profitably managed and conserved through the market. He explores this creed through interviews with Bank employees and onsite studies of Bank-financed projects, looking at the Bank's Policy Research Department, a project in Laos that links construction of hydroelectric dams with the set-aside of nature preserves, and an ambitious initiative to privatize water utilities. Goldman levels a biting but nuanced account of the Bank's dubious scientific studies, its cooptation of environmentalists and the "neocolonialism" of its new enthusiasm for pristine eco-tourism zones that are often as disruptive to traditional communities as old-style development.

Unfortunately, he overlays it with a great deal of dense theory, heavily indebted to Gramsci and Foucault, about "power/knowledge regimes," adding little insight but lots of jargon. That's a shame, since this clumsy rhetorical strategy partly obscures an excellent critique of the Bank's inner workings and external image-making. Photos.

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## **Review**

"Michael Goldman's brilliant book will be widely read, admired, and quoted. Many ships will sail in its wake."—James C. Scott, Yale University

"In this compelling book, Michael Goldman offers powerful new insights into how the World Bank has emerged as one of the most important sites of knowledge production in the world today. Yet by chronicling the practices and processes through which such knowledges become authoritative—and how they shift under pressure—the book also contributes to the possibilities for more politically enabling alternatives."—Gillian Hart, University of California at Berkeley and author of *Disabling Globalization: Places of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa*

(Gillian Hart)

"Michael Goldman's brilliant book will be widely read, admired, and quoted. Many ships will sail in its wake."—James C. Scott, Yale University

"Simply the best analysis we have of an imperial, hegemonic institution 'at work': in this case, the World Bank at work containing, colonizing, co-opting and reformulating environmentalism. *Imperial Nature* is well-argued, ethnographically subtle, and historically deep. Goldman's work will be the indispensable point of departure for all subsequent work on 'green' neo-liberalism."—James C. Scott, Yale University

(James C. Scott)

"We have grown accustomed to indictments of the World Bank for the devastation it has wrought, but Goldman goes several steps further. Opening up the Bank and its projects to the ethnographic eye he shows

not only how environmental catastrophes occur but also how the Bank responds to those catastrophes with an ever more insidious regulation, by creating new knowledges, absorbing opposition, and refabricating states—all in the name of protecting the environment. Grassroots opposition may mount but the Bank's overarching hegemony is strengthened. A must-read for anyone interested in the role of global agencies in development."—Michael Burawoy, University of California, Berkeley  
(Michael Burawoy)

"Highly original and insightful, Goldman reveals how countries are pushed backwards instead of forwards in the name of 'development.'"—Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo*

(Naomi Klein)

"*Imperial Nature* offers novel insights into the Bank's methods of valuing nature and orchestrating technologies of governance to legitimize its development regime. Rich case studies, interwoven with intriguing biographies of developers and resisters, ground this engaging account of the Bank's unrivalled, and yet always fragile, power to produce and monopolize development knowledge."—Philip McMichael, Cornell University

(Philip McMichael)

"Anyone puzzled by why globalization is increasing poverty and destitution in poor countries should read *Imperial Nature*. Through detailed research Goldman shows how the secretive unaccountable workings of the World Bank aimed only at increasing its own profits and the corporations it serves are killing ecological and economic democracy and dispossessing the poor of their resources and rights."—Vandana Shiva, author of *Earth Democracy*

(Vandana Shiva)

"[A] scholarly, incisive and damning study of the Bank."—David Moore, *Journal of Agrarian Change*  
(David Moore *Journal of Agrarian Change* 2006-09-20)

About the Author

**Michael Goldman** is associate professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota and is affiliated with its Institute for Global Studies.

## Users Review

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**Alyson Hardy:**

Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization (Yale Agrarian Studies Series) can be one of your beginner books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining but delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort to put every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization (Yale Agrarian Studies Series) but doesn't forget the main level, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource details that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can easily drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial thinking.

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