

Book Review

Setting the field of International Political Economy of Energy

Rosana Icassatti Corazza*

Paulo Sérgio Fracalanza**

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Predominantly since the 2000s, energy-related policy initiatives steadily grew across several scales, from local to national and international arenas, devoted to the transition to a sustainable low-carbon economy. Such policies, stemming from renewable sources, would be meant to curb our civilization's carbon lock-in. At the same time, policies continued to pursue old tasks, like promoting energy security and access. Consistently, one observes the rise of a massive corpus of grey literature, including national policy plans, corporate and institutional reports. How does academic literature examine this raw material? How are those emerging themes and initiatives valued?

Editors Thijs Van de Graaf (Ghent Institute for International Studies, Belgium), Benjamin K. Sovacool and Florian Kern (University of Sussex, UK), Arunabha Ghosh (Council on Energy, Environment and Water) and Michael Klare (University of Massachusetts in Amherst, USA) take the challenge. They convene expertise and competences on energy studies with respect to states, markets and institutions of dozens of scholars from top universities, research institutions, scientific academies, and multilateral organizations, from a variety of academic backgrounds, in the fields of Geography, Political Sciences, Law, Management, Economics, Social Studies, Political Economy, International Affairs, Energy Studies, Public Policy, Energy Policy, Science and Technology Policies, Security Policy and Climate Policy. Their efforts gave birth to *The Palgrave Handbook of the International Political Economy of Energy*. It may sound an ambitious title, though that is, precisely, the editorial proposal of this bulky volume of 28 chapters in 743 pages that belongs to the

* University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Campinas-SP, Brazil; rosanacorazza@gmail.com. ORCID iD 0000-0003-4658-2889.

** University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Campinas-SP, Brazil; fracalan@unicamp.br. ORCID iD 0000-0002-8395-981X.

series Palgrave Handbooks in IPE: to convey top-tier research by the most prominent authorities in the field. The Handbook focuses on familiar IPE energy topics, such as energy security, OPEC, oil and gas markets, the ‘resource curse,’ as well as on emerging themes like energy transitions and energy justice.

Acknowledging contributions in the past and recent times on social sciences, including Political Science and International Relations, Van de Graaf and colleagues remember sharp observations made by distinguished IPE scholars. Robert Keohane (2009 cited in Van de Graaf et al 2016: 5) remarks, for example, that ‘volatility in energy markets [is] one of the *big questions* in the study of world politics that have been overlooked by the current generation of IPE scholars.’ Kathleen McNamara (2009 cited in Van de Graaf et al 2016: 5) states that ‘energy issues [...] seem ripe to reorder the international political economy in ways that we as a field have not adequately analysed.’ Indeed, as Van de Graaf et al (2016: 5) advocate, ‘IPE offers a powerful framework for analysis upon which scholars of energy politics can build. Energy, in turn, offers a largely unexplored testing ground for insights from IPE.’

Following the Editors’ introduction (Part I), the remaining 27 chapters are organized into five parts that both resume old topics and present emerging themes that call up for a tighter connection between energy studies and IPE: Energy Actors and Institutions; Energy Trade, Finance, and Investment; Energy Transitions; Energy Conflict and the Resource Curse; and Energy Justice and Political Ecology.

Addressing supra-national organizations, from OPEC to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Part II is led by Van de Graaf, and composed of five chapters devoted to energy actors, and institutions. It reveals, among other dimensions, the fragmentation of the international governance regime for energy in the recent years. Fariborz Zelli joins the lead author to present, in chapter 2, a broad and useful account on actors and institutional frames in global energy politics. OPEC, in its past, present and expected future role in global energy market and policy/politics, is the focus of Fattouch and Sen in chapter 3. Van Alstine and Andrews illustrate the relationships between corporations and civil society, focusing on the study of Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, in chapter 4. The role of UN is addressed by Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen in chapter 5, with attention to challenges of Sustainable Development Goals in energy issues. Chapter 6, the last of this part, presents an interesting discussion of World Trade Organization in global energy governance, by Timothy Meyer.

Part III, organized by Arunabha Ghosh, comprehends five chapters, and is focused on energy trade, finance, and investment matters. Arunabha Ghosh addresses the problem of clean energy and trade conflict in chapter 7. In chapter 8, Leal-Arcas and Grasso examine the transatlantic trade and investment partnership, and the emerging issue of divestment. In chapter 9, Ustina Markus explores the non-obvious international oil and gas pricing regimes. In chapter 10, Lane and Newell offer a little disappointing account on the political economy of Carbon Markets, since excessively focused on the Clean Development Mechanism. Energy subsidies are the subject of chapter 11, by Van Asselt and Skovgaard, who offer an analysis of their politics and governance.

Organized by Florian Kern, this tome's Part IV regroups another five chapters on emerging topic of energy transitions. Here, it is possible to have a comprehensive view of author's account of Energy Transitions Studies and IPE (chapter 12, by Kern and Markard) and getting acquaintance with a sharp explanation to the limited role of Carbon Capture and Storage Technologies to energy transitions (chapter 13, by Gaede and Meadowcroft). The efforts to present and discuss European experiences of policy inclusiveness in the electricity industry are made in chapter 14, by Ratinen and Lund. The tasks of Ramana, in chapter 15, involve building on the disjunctive of the contested future and the potential role of nuclear power in a clean energy transition. Quite analogously, chapter 16, by John A. Alic, is dedicated to look into the possibilities and challenges for biofuels in a sustainable transition in transports.

Five further chapters convey arguments on the topics of Energy Conflict and the Resource Curse, in Part V. Michael Klare here puts together contributions to the international security issues implied in the oil industry. In chapter 17, he unveils old and new issues to be considered when one comes to analyze entangled relations between energy security and militarization and, in chapter 18, Emily Meierding continues to examine if and why countries fight over oil. Potential readers may be interested in a fresh discussion of assumed gas weapon possession by Russia, as Henderson proposes in chapter 19, or the role of energy in international sanctions and coercive diplomacy, which is the subject of chapter 20, by Hughes and Gholz. In the conclusive chapter 21 to this part, Gochberg and Menaldo grant a refined state-of-the-art of resource curse literature.

Seven final chapters, organized by Benjamin Sovacool in Part VI, gather overviews and contributions on the emerging debate of energy justice by focusing a vast range of issues under the lens of Political Ecology. He sees an 'obvious overlap' of IPE and Political Ecology and this perception can be illustrated – or tested – by the more conceptual chapters in this section. In chapter 22, he presents a benchmark review of key concepts implied or mobilized by the analysis of energy justice, as tyranny, dispossession, and peripheralization; global production networks; enclosure and exclusion; and energy justice principles and its relevance for decision-making. From these concepts and principles, he draws implications for energy and climate research and practices, which are elaborated in further chapters to this Part. Chapter 23, by Watts, explores a political-ecological approach to conflict in oil and gas sectors in Nigeria and, for their turn, Majia Nadesan and Martin Pasqualetti review, in chapter 24, the issue of dispossession, justice and a sustainable energy future. They employ historical data records and cases to present the energy ladder and to identify, through its steps, risks, dispossession and the building of energy injustice, which support them to claim that 'sustained and knowing energy injustices result in the dispossession of others' rights, including the rights of entire nations' (Nadesan and Pasqualetti 2016: 602). Mulvaney move forward in chapter 25 and summarize impacts of solar-photovoltaic and shale gas (and the non-energy theme of salmon) global production networks on the environment. In chapter 26, Hesse, Baka and Calvert examine issues involving land use and land and resources rights in the cases of shale extraction and biofuels production, while Jenkins, Heffron and McCauley examine the nuclear waste issue in Canada, Britain and Australia in chapter 27. Finally, Mark Cooper offers, in the

final chapter to this Part, a progressive view on energy justice in which he acknowledges a desirable consistency between justice and a progressive market economy. To achieve this consistency, he points out specific policies to achieve justice in the energy sector. The author believes in a virtuous cycle of capitalistic progress in which energy (and social, equitable) justice would be a part of the game and equality policies should be deployed to face market failures, preventing, in a certain naïve way, capitalism itself from failing.

These brief chapters' views illustrate how broad are the visions across the volume are. Distinct theoretical and analytical backgrounds, not always compatible, one may notice, stand side-by-side. It would be up to the reader to judge if this feature can be strength or a weakness of the Editorial project.

International Political Economy scholars would arguably ask if an IPE of Energy is in fact there, at least from discipline-specific epistemological concerns. It would be naïve not taking into account the market opportunity to Palgrave – not leaving aside Editors and authors – represented by the current wave of energy and climate-related issues with cross-border implications and inter/multidisciplinary interests. The editors have pointed out that the 'IPE of energy cannot be characterized as a coherent or unified intellectual field' and, yet, 'there have been a number of important scholarly debates since the middle of the twentieth century about the extractive industry – most notably petroleum – and their socio-political impact' (Van de Graaf et al 2016: 20). It is noteworthy that emerging themes may offer new, fruitful research branches in a thought-provoking field that is not closed by disciplinary frontiers but opened for the scrutiny of a broader range of scholarly approaches and strategies. Controversial as it may be, this volume is stimulating perhaps thanks to its comprehensive perspective and to the resourceful trends of the analysis devoted to the raw material that constitutes its great challenge, which patently sets the field of International Political Economy of Energy as an interdisciplinary one.

In this sense, we may acknowledge Van de Graaf and his colleagues' editors contributions, with this volume. Besides filling a gap in the IPE literature, it also provides potential readers, especially scholars, young researchers, policymakers and the interested public, with an assemblage of compelling state-of-the-art reviews of many traditional IPE energy-policy and politics-related themes. Moreover, it provides thoughtful readings on a recently growing literature covering emerging global energy issues that constitute a major global – and still, national – concern of our time.

One obvious drawback in such a substantial editorial effort is the blatant absence of Global South concerns related to Political Economy and Ecology of energy. In addition to existing research and action, there is still a broad, fruitful and exciting field for work.

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About the authors

Rosana Icassatti Corazza has a Ph.D. in Science and Technology Policy at State University of Campinas (Unicamp), São Paulo, Brazil, with an internship at Université Louis Pasteur (ULP, Strasbourg, France). She is an Associate Professor in the Institute of Geosciences at Unicamp, teaching undergraduate disciplines in Geography and Geology courses and graduate disciplines as a permanent faculty of the Postgraduate Program in Scientific and Technological Policy. She is a collaborating researcher at the Laboratory of Studies on Technological Change, Energy and Environment – Labmem and is vice-coordinator of Laboratory of Technologies and Social Transformations – LABTTS, both at IG-Unicamp. Over the last twenty years, she has developed research experience in interdisciplinary fields involving Economics, Science, Technology and Environment.

Paulo Sérgio Fracalanza has a Ph.D. in Economics at State University of Campinas (Unicamp), São Paulo, Brazil, with a Ph.D. internship at Université Louis Pasteur in Strasbourg, France. He is currently Director of Institute of Economics at Unicamp, where he is also Professor in undergraduate and graduate Economic Theory disciplines. He is researcher at the Industrial Economics and Technology Center (NEIT) and Trade Union and Labour Studies Center (CESIT). He has experience in economics, with an emphasis on Industrial Organization, Labor Economics and Public Policy, focusing on the following topics: reduction of working hours, economics of innovation, evolutionary economics and Political Economy.

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