

Organizations, Policy, and the Natural Environment: Institutional and Strategic Perspectives, edited by Andrew J. Hoffman and Marc J. Ventresca. Stanford, CA: Stanford Business Books, 2002.

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Organizations, Policy, and the Natural Environment brings a fresh, new perspective to environmental management. It bridges two prominent and related streams of literature (institutional organizational theory and environmental management/sustainability theories) that, for the past decade, have grown side by side with no overlap. Having been steeped in the environmental management literature for a long time, I was surprised to discover how much more explanatory force institutional theories bring to the environmental discourse. This discovery and the opportunities implicit in it, for extending environmental research and for developing institutional explanations of environmental policy and strategy issues, are the significant contributions of this book.

The collection of papers that constitute this edited volume was first presented at a conference. The authors are leading researchers in environmental sociology, environmental management, and related fields of organizational theory. The editors have done an excellent job of distilling the conversations of the conference in a focused and thematized manner. They have created a coherent document that pulls together

diverse discourses and makes theoretical sense of a wide range of empirical data. The papers cover many topics and multiple analytical levels and perspectives. They more or less hang together, collectively painting a complex and nuanced tapestry of environmental, institutional, and corporate policy relationships. Their focus is on specific aspects of how modern organizations adapt to their institutional environments.

In creative and empirically grounded ways, authors of individual chapters in Part 1 of the book describe competing frameworks for understanding the origins of environmental institutions (Frank), compliance to environmental regulations, and conflict resolution (Jennings, Zandberger, and Martens; Morrill and Owen-Smith; and Levin and Espeland).

In Part 2 the authors use institutional theory concepts to explain environmental policy issues. Milstein, Hart, and York explain the impacts of isomorphic institutional pressures on corporate environmental strategies. Levy and Rothenberg explain strategic heterogeneity in response to climate change within the auto industry. Forbes and Jermier provide a provocative and skeptical assessment of voluntary corporate greening. Hironaka and Schofer use the neoinstitutional concept of "decoupling" to explain outcomes of environmental impact assessment laws, in complex ways.

In Part 3 of the book, authors apply institutional processes of negotiation and narrative to show how institutions can act as barriers and enablers of negotiated agreements (Troast, Hoffman, Riley, and Bazerman), how companies' environmental policies change in response to changes in their institutional environment (Sastry, Bernicke, and Hart), and what the stages of institutional evolution are (Howard-Grenville).

Part 4 offers three chapters on field-level analysis. Bansal and Penner explain how differences in interpretations of institutions are based on individual differences. Lounsbury, Geraci, and Weismel-Manor show how policy discourse shapes the development of practice standards in the transforming field of solid waste management. Delmas and Terlaak explain how voluntary agreements are enacted by negotiations between firms and regulators.

In Part 5 the authors focus on governance and regulatory structures. Mylonadis advocates the use of open-source regulations as a means of encouraging firms to compete for the natural

environment. King, Lenox, and Barnett explore situations where "reputations commons" problems arise, and they suggest strategies for resolving them. Mendel explains the worldwide popularity of quality environmental management standards and the reasons behind their diffusion.

The book ends with two closing commentaries. Ehrenfeld offers a framework for understanding the new opportunities for institutional theory in the field of environmental management. Scott concludes the book by describing evolving models of organizations and the natural environment and identifying opportunities for research.

The book provides a very useful and detailed example of applying institutional theory to environmental management and policy debates. Its lessons should be of great interest to environmental policy makers and managers. Its empirical grounding in specific cases and company examples make it particularly relevant to management action. Therefore, it is ironic that the book is so heavily jargon laden and not very accessible to a managerial audience. To fulfill the promise of this line of research, scholars need to establish a conceptual language that is more easily accessible to managers and policy makers.

In conclusion, this book was a source of both hope and despair for me. My hope is that the powerful explanations and tools of institutional theory can be a great boon for environmental management and policy making. Hoffman and Ventresca have opened up a new and productive line of research for organizational scholars. My despair arises from the realization that the current political institutional context shaping environmental policy in the United States today is probably setting the clock back a few decades.