

Book Reviews

From Heresy to Dogma: An Institutional History of Corporate Environmentalism.

Andrew J. Hoffman. San Francisco: New Lexington Press, 1997. 253 pp. \$53.00, cloth; \$26.00, paper.

From Heresy to Dogma provides a fascinating tale of how the unfolding of the 1960s environmental social movement led to corresponding changes in the perceptions and practices of large-scale corporations in the chemical and petroleum industries. Focusing explicitly on the relationship of organizations to the broader social systems within which they are embedded, Hoffman provides an account of the evolution of corporate environmentalism that speaks to ongoing debates in organizational theory without sacrificing accessibility. For anyone interested in the evolution of environmentalism, here is a fresh narrative that focuses on the vantage point of industrial corporations from 1960 to 1993. For organizational scholars, this book provides a perspective on institutional change that features an innovative use of multiple methods coupled with a panoply of thought-provoking theoretical ideas.

Hoffman's main argument focuses on explaining how institutions and organizations co-evolve. He posits that as the composition of key actors in an organizational field shifts, organizations adopt interpretive frames suited to the particular configuration of norms, rules, and beliefs that are most salient, given the particular historical composition of the organizational field. This ultimately leads to changes in organizational structures that reflect shifting institutional conditions. Hoffman's multilevel perspective is developed with the aid of a diverse set of empirical data. He uses systematic investigation of federal environmental case law to track changes in key actors in the organizational fields of chemical and petroleum firms and in the key actors who were most active in challenging (and defending) extant practices of firms in those industries. A content analysis of industry trade journals provides evidence to track shifts in the dominant conceptions of environmental management in both industries. In addition, an in-depth case study of a representative firm, Amoco, which operates in both the chemical and petroleum industries, is used to animate how the broader institutional and organizational shifts unfolded in a particular organizational setting.

The narrative traces key qualitative shifts in the conjuncture of key actors in the organizational field, dominant institutional beliefs, and organizational practices. Hoffman parses this history of corporate environmentalism into four institutional periods: Industrial Environmentalism (1960–1970), Regulatory Environmentalism (1970–1982), Environmentalism as Social Responsibility (1982–1988), and Strategic Environmentalism (1988–1993). During the period of Industrial Environmentalism, governmental regulation and environmental activism had not yet had much influence on organizations in the chemical and petroleum industries. Environmental issues having to do with toxins and air quality raised during this era were interpreted and treated as routine problems to be solved by the operations function within organizations. The creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in

1970 ushered in the era of Regulatory Environmentalism, characterized by the imposition of state rules and sanctions. To cope with these new coercive forces, organizations created separate environmental departments at the corporate level to manage the process of legal compliance.

Environmentalism as Social Responsibility emerged during Reagan's presidency, when his administration attempted to reduce the scope and influence of the EPA. This had the unintended consequence of fueling the efforts of environmental activists, who began to challenge corporate activities directly through lawsuits and boycotts, rather than indirectly through the EPA. Organizations responded by expanding their environmental department staffs, to develop a more cooperative relationship with governmental regulators as well as establish public relations campaigns aimed at influencing the negative perceptions of various audiences, such as environmental activists.

In the late '80s, corporations became more proactive in their environmental efforts by restructuring operational processes in ways that generated both operational efficiencies and environmental benefits. This new era of Strategic Environmentalism was marked by the entry of new kinds of pressures from investors, insurers, and competitors into the organizational field of chemical and petroleum firms, leading to the reframing of environmental issues as operational problems to be solved by technical ingenuity. Environmental management departments grew in size and stature, and new alliances began to be forged with other actors, such as the state and environmental movement organizations. Ecological sustainability became viewed as "good business."

One of the main strengths of this book lies in its explicit effort to speak to both academic and practitioner audiences. Hoffman explicitly ties his material to current developments in institutional theory. The book's theoretical sections are carefully explained, although some theoretical claims, such as those having to do with the stages of institutional change, may be overstated. A forward-looking concluding chapter on corporate environmentalism and the concept of ecological sustainability should be of special interest to scholars as well as to corporate environmental managers and policymakers. Environmental managers will be particularly intrigued by Hoffman's prognostication that the institutionalization of environmentally sensitive practices in corporations will lead to the decline of corporate-level environmental management positions. With regard to environmental policy, this book highlights the importance of focusing on the modification of broader infrastructures rather than constructing regulations that more narrowly target individual actors.

On a more political side, some organizational and environmental sociologists and ecoactivists may find the lack of attention to issues having to do with stratification inadequate and may not agree with the relatively benign portrayal of corporations that seem to be moving toward ecological commitment. While Hoffman's analysis does focus on the actions of powerful corporations and environmental activist groups that have the resources and legitimacy to make claims on those corporations, the changes he tracks are undoubtedly impor-

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tant in their own right. With regard to the problem of ecological commitment, many environmental practices adopted by large industrial corporations in recent years have contributed to social welfare while at the same time increasing profits, making efforts to distinguish between those often counterposed motives particularly complex. For better or worse, these difficult interpretive issues are bracketed.

Overall, *From Heresy to Dogma* contributes strongly to our knowledge about the institutional changes surrounding environmental issues and sheds useful light on the potential mechanisms by which broader-scale social forces get translated into organizational level changes. In addition, Hoffman's use of multiple methods and piecing together of various bits of data to construct a complex, multilevel account of institutional change provides an exemplar for students of organizations.

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