
Reviews

Transnational environmental governance: the emergence and effects of the certification of forests and fisheries by L H Gulbrandsen; Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, Glos, 2010, 224 pages, £59.95 cloth, ISBN 9781848445284

In recent decades social science researchers have stressed the importance of new modes of environmental governing that supplant or supplement government regulations. Although highly diverse, these modes are generally characterised as voluntary and market based, involving actors from the public, private, and voluntary sectors, and from multiple decision-making levels (cf Jordan et al, 2005). This development is often seen as reflecting a general shift *from government to governance*.

In *Transnational Environmental Governance*, Lars H Gulbrandsen examines one of these new modes of governing—transnational certification programs. Following the dominant tendency in the literature (cf Cashore et al, 2004), Gulbrandsen characterises these certification programs as nonstate governance, as they do not directly derive rule-making authority from states. Instead, private companies and environmental and social nongovernmental organisations negotiate voluntary performance standards for regulating the social and/or environmental impact of production processes, and they establish mechanisms for verifying compliance with these rules (certification), including labels to inform consumers of the origin of the products.

Drawing on previous research, to which Gulbrandsen himself has made valuable contributions in a number of international articles, he presents an insightful and informative analysis of the emergence, organisation, and effectiveness of two of the most advanced cases of nonstate governance: the Forest Stewardship Council and the Marine Stewardship Council. As the title indicates, the focus of the book is on *transnational* certification programs rather than national or regional standard-setting processes. Nonetheless, the author uses two in-depth case studies (Sweden and Norway) as well as findings from previous research to study how the transnational programs play out in different national and local contexts.

The author identifies key explanatory mechanisms for the emergence and outcomes of certification programs: insufficient governmental action; coalitions and alliances; industry structure; organisational mimicry; and “the framing activities, power struggles and competition for influence among various stakeholders” (page 172). The author also demonstrates how the organisation of the standard-setting process, in terms of inclusiveness and configuration of interests, affects the outcomes as well as the legitimacy of the programs. The effectiveness is “operationalized as the degree to which the certification scheme modifies fisheries and forestry practices in ways that can resolve or alleviate these problems” (page 5). The author concludes that although certification changes management practices, the environmental impact is limited; certification “does not seem to be an effective environmental institution in the sense of addressing some of the most serious environmental challenges in the forest and fisheries sectors. That said, we still know too little about the environmental impact and efficacy of certification as a problem-solving instrument” (page 180). In other words, the jury is still out on the effectiveness of nonstate certification. In his concluding remark Gulbrandsen highlights the importance of the state in implementing nonstate certification programs, criticising analysts who downplay or ignore the role of political and regulatory frameworks, and urging that future research pay attention to the legal, socioeconomic, and political contexts.

The theoretical approach takes its departure from international regime theory but also draws on extant research and preliminary results to identify key factors for explaining the formation and influence of the certification programs. These empirically grounded factors also prove highly relevant for explanation. Although the author intends the theoretical framework to be applicable to other cases of nonstate governance (page 7), it is very much focused on certification. This is a general shortcoming of the book. It is important to study, as this book does, the “unique and innovative features of the certification programs” (page 12), especially as they are generally

seen as success cases for nonstate governance. However, the book would have been strengthened by more general theorisation and discussions of transnational environmental governance on the basis of its empirical findings. Such additions would have made this book more relevant to the larger research community focused on environmental governance, and would have increased its contribution to the debate on a general shift from government to governance.

This is a well-written and accessible book, offering a nuanced analysis of the emergence, organisation, and effectiveness of certification programs in forests and fisheries. This book is recommended to practitioners, students, and researchers interested in certification of forests and fisheries. I think it could also be useful to those with a general interest in environmental governance, as it offers valuable lessons from this empirical analysis of two of the most advanced cases of (allegedly) nonstate governance.

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Governance for the environment: a comparative analysis of environmental policy integration

edited by A Goria, A Sgobbi, I von Homeyer; Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, Glos, 2010, 264 pages, £65.00 cloth, ISBN 978 1848444102

This edited volume is the result of the EPIGOV research project which set out to examine the relationship between *environment policy integration* (EPI), a core principle for achieving sustainable development and, increasingly, a technical–administrative challenge for European policy makers, and *new modes of governance*, such as networking, market mechanisms, and communication. It draws together literature reviews and empirical case studies which shed light on state-of-art EPI at the national, regional, and local scales and identifies gaps in our understanding of EPI as well as barriers to EPI effectiveness. Empirical case studies and examples presented in this volume refer to national-level EPI mechanisms in the UK and selected countries in Central and Eastern Europe, regional-level EPI in Spain, EPI in the implementation of EU regional policy in Germany, EPI in the strategic environmental assessment of an Italian regional plan, and EPI in local air pollution regulation in Germany.

Although the title suggests a comparative analysis of EPI, the editors are actually left with little to compare since different definitions, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies are used in individual chapters. The editors still make an impressive effort at summarising findings and conclusions in their "Introduction", but readers who are looking for more comparative methodology and generalisable conclusions should also consult another recent volume on EPI, Andrew Jordan and Andrea Lenschow's (2008) *Innovation in Environmental Policy? Integrating the Environment for Sustainability*.

The lack of explicit and common research questions also makes it difficult for the editors to make observations and authoritative claims regarding the relationship between EPI and new modes of governance. Are new modes of governance more conducive to EPI than old ones? Which modes are used for achieving EPI? Is EPI itself a new mode of governance? Although most authors seem to assume that new modes are indeed more conducive to EPI or even observe empirically that this is the case, there are also contrasting findings, in that more traditional hierarchical modes have been used for EPI to some success or that governance regimes employ both old and new modes. These findings suggest that future EPI studies should focus first on whether EPI was achieved or not, and, if achieved, to what degree, according to some predefined benchmark, and then on deducing conducive governance modes. The findings also raise the question of whether governance modes could really be separated out from policy context, political culture, and general environmental values when explaining EPI success or failure.

The lack of common definitions and methodologies also leads to some conceptual stretching of EPI. Arguably, this is reflective of EPI in policy practice—that it is given different meanings by different actors, ranging from a minor technical and process-related concern to a fundamental value and high-potential issue of conflict, much like the mother concept of sustainable development. However, in this case it also appears to be a result of diverse research approaches. For future studies of EPI in practice, this research community would benefit from nailing down more precise definitions, not least because there is an increasing body of empirical experience with EPI that could inform that process.

On particular source of conceptual stretching is when EPI becomes synonymous with environmental protection in general. Much of the early study of EPI depicted it as a subset of a broader environmental strategy and as an alternative to functional specialisation approaches, which became typical of modern bureaucracies. Such a framing immediately makes EPI easier to evaluate, in that there is—in theory at least—an alternative strategy to compare with.

With the limited basis for comparative analysis in mind, this volume makes some important contributions to the EPI field of study. First, the two chapters that place EPI in the context of established social and political theory (Bruno Dente on local public administration and Philipp Schepelmann on sociological systems theory) manage to broaden the perspective of the reader away from the often assumed uniqueness of EPI as a governance challenge, by placing it in a more historical context and relating it to societal megatrends. Second, several of the chapters highlight the urgent need for analysing how EPI ‘travels’ through the policy stages or implementation chain—that is, whether good intentions are translated into actual policy outputs and outcomes and ultimately a better environmental impact on the ground. Much of the existing EPI literature has focused on analysing tools and premises for good EPI, but not on their implementation. Third, and connected to this point, the volume makes a convincing case for the need to shift into evaluative mode in order to progress with EPI. In addition to policy makers’ self-evaluation of their EPI efforts, it is critical that academia undertakes independent evaluation in parallel since EPI, as demonstrated throughout the book, is not a mere technical concern but something that needs to be filled with meaning and commitment in order to avoid environmental policy dilution.

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Reference

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Educational opportunity: the geography of access to higher education by A D Singleton; Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey, 2010, 218 pages, £55.00 cloth, ISBN 9780 754678670

If there was ever a book that could be described as ‘timely’ then Alex Singleton’s *Educational Opportunity: The Geography of Access to Higher Education* would be one of them. With UK higher education (HE) under the political and public spotlights due to spending cuts and the introduction of higher variable fees in HE institutions in England, extending access and widening participation have become key and controversial issues amongst politicians, university managers, and school leavers. Although most universities have existing programmes for widening participation amongst more disadvantaged groups of school leavers, most of these initiatives are often unsystematic in the ways in which they target schools and colleges. There are multiple social, spatial, and temporal processes that shape access to HE and these are rarely acknowledged, let alone fully understood, in most strategies aimed at devising better ways of reaching potential but underrepresented students, particularly in the UK’s elite Russell Group universities. In this book Singleton begins to address some of these issues in the context of a rapidly changing HE policy-setting arena and presents a systematic framework for widening participation and extending access using a variety of educational data sources, analytical tools, and profiling techniques.

The book is divided into nine chapters that provide a thorough grounding into the types of HE and publicly available data sources that can be used to analyse and understand widening participation and extend access within this sector. Singleton has a strong geographical focus, implicitly assuming that where a person lives can have a strong influence on whether they participate in HE, the type of HE institutions they may attend, and even the subject they will study. Geodemographic analysis is introduced as a major method of linking widening participation to geographical markets and a sociospatial understanding of differentiation and unequal access. In particular, Singleton describes how concepts of social capital can map onto geodemographic variables, allowing generalisations to be made regarding the sociospatial context of access to HE, including segmentation caused through choices made at GCSE and A-Levels, the influence of distance on the choice of HE institution, and the real and pervasive effects of home and school on participation rates.

In the middle section of the book Singleton is devoted to providing a critique of existing geodemographic data and asks the crucial question, “what makes a good geodemographic classification for evaluating and understanding widening participation and access to HE?” Here he demonstrates methods for constructing bespoke classifications using public sector data sources for use in HE research, arguing that off-the-shelf typologies created by commercial companies may not be suitable for research in the public sector applications that may apporportion real-life changes. Although some less technically minded readers may choose to skip these chapters, they give an important critical grounding to the science of geodemographics in the context of HE applications and the problems and issues associated with naive approaches to the subject.

The book concludes with a gallery of applications for HE stakeholders, such as students, schools, and universities, illustrating the sorts of research that could be done with the data and the analytical techniques in order to better inform and help widen the participation of different groups. For instance, it could help HE institutions to target local schools for widening participation activities more systematically, or it could throw more light onto the equity of individual school selection policies.

The book is exclusively concerned with the UK HE sector and provides no comparisons with experiences in other countries. This is not to say that the book is of no interest to an international audience; Singleton has developed an innovative methodology for exploring and analysing participation in the HE sector that encompasses the social, spatial, and temporal domains using the types of data that would generally be available to researchers in different countries. This will allow international researchers to undertake their own research within their own institutional, educational, and political contexts. The book should appeal to a wide audience concerned with widening participation and access in an era of increasing variable fees and political scrutiny. This will include academics, policy makers, and those who manage and run HE institutions. At around £55.00 for a hardback copy, the price is what you would expect to pay for something aimed at a specialist market. It is well produced and nicely illustrated by the author with plenty of maps for those with a geographical leaning. The statistical content is at a level that most readers will understand and the author does a good job of describing the analytical processes and interpreting the outputs.

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