

Can Sustainability Be Sustained?

Toward Sustainable Communities: Transition and Transformation in Environmental Policy

Daniel A. Mazmanian and Michael E. Kraft, editors. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1999. 323 pages. \$25 (paperback).

In *Toward Sustainable Communities*, Daniel A. Mazmanian and Michael E. Kraft use six case studies to examine the evolution of environmental policy over the last three decades. Their objective is to provide “conceptual clarity” (p. xii) to the integration of sustainability into environmental policy. This contribution to the sustainability literature goes beyond many of its predecessors by avoiding a lengthy theoretical treatment of the meaning of sustainability. Instead, it examines existing practice for insight into the potential transformation of environmental policy.

Mazmanian and Kraft’s fundamental thesis “is that the modern environmental movement can be best understood as the unfolding of three distinctly different but internally coherent epochs: the rise of environmental regulation [first epoch], the period of flexibility and regulatory reform [second epoch], and the move to sustainable development [third epoch]” (p. xii). The transformations of these three epochs provide the analytic frame for the case studies that follow. The chapter by Lamont C. Hempel further contributes to this thesis by examining the meaning of sustainable development within the context of local and regional planning.

Section two of the book contains three chapters addressing the transition from the first to the second epoch. In his examination of clean air policy in Los Angeles, Mazmanian concludes that the command-and-control approach of the first epoch and the market-based approach of the second epoch are unlikely to produce additional air quality improvements. The critical question—as yet unanswered—is whether Los Angeles will opt for another round of more stringent command-and-control strategies or make a “sweeping transformation” to sustainability through such policies as “life-cycle cost account-

ing” (p. 104). Kraft and Bruce N. Johnson document the use of collaboration and consensus building in addressing water pollution in Wisconsin. They acknowledge the necessity of these approaches to build support for cleanup programs, but also observe that these approaches have not resulted in a transition to sustainable water policy. Daniel Press concludes the section by analyzing open space preservation in California and its links to local sustainability efforts. Collectively these chapters demonstrate how social values, government roles, and political context drive the transformation of environmental policy.

Section three contains three chapters that explore the transformation into the third epoch of sustainability. Franklin Tugwell, Andrew S. McElwaine, and Michele Kanche Fetting document the necessity of coalition building and progressive leadership in contemporary responses to the environmental devastation of Pittsburgh. They examine a new coalition of green business interests, foundations, and academicians and speculate that they may lead Pittsburgh’s transformation into an environmentally sustainable city. Thomas A. Horan, Hank Dittmar, and Daniel R. Jordan, in their study of transportation planning in the United States, highlight the role of local decision making through metropolitan planning organizations. Most notably, they emphasize the need for the federal government to maintain and refine first-epoch regulatory programs, while at the same time providing technical assistance, financing, and mandatory citizen participation to assist communities in the transition to a sustainable transport system. Barry G. Rabe concludes the section by documenting the difficulties of developing intergovernmental cooperation for regional ecosystem management in the Great Lakes Basin. This chapter contributes to an ongoing examination of Great Lakes management, notably accomplished in Susan Hill MacKenzie’s *Integrated Resource Planning and Management: The Ecosystem Approach in the Great Lakes Basin* (Island Press, 1996) and elsewhere. Collectively these chapters analyze the real-world difficulties of implementing the sustainability principles of coalition building, citizen participation, and intergovernmental cooperation.

The primary limitation of the book is the minimal causal analysis on the transition from the first to the second epoch. Additional insight into this transition would aid in understanding the potential for realizing sustainable development. In their conclusion, the editors acknowledge this limitation with their call for additional research; moreover, they see this work as providing a needed foundation for further causal analysis. Yet, given the richness of the cases in the book, I desired greater attention to the social learning potential of our existing experiments in sustainable development.

Practitioners who want to develop critical insight into contemporary environmental policy with an eye on moving towards sustainability will find the book's historical and interdisciplinary framework relevant. In addition, several chapters contain examples of sustainable policies and programs. Academicians searching for environmental policy course readings with a sustainability context will find numerous instructive chapters that could be complemented with Norman J. Vig and Michael E. Kraft's edited book *Environmental Policy: New Directions for the Twenty-First Century* (CQ Press, 1999). In addition, academicians who are pursuing research will find well documented historical treatments on environmental policy and the transition to sustainable communities.

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