
Book Reviews

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1 Rethinking Climate Change Research: Clean Technology, Culture and Communication

by: Pernille Almund, Per Homann Jespersen and Soren Riis (Editors)

Published 2012

by Ashgate Publishing Limited

Wey Court East, Union Road, Farnham,

Surrey, GU9 7PT, UK, England, 334pp

ISBN: 9781409428664 (hbk); ISBN: 9781409428671 (ebk)

Cassandra, the beautiful daughter of the Trojan King Priamos, predicted the future. In doing so she focused on the bad events. Although her predictions proved to be correct, people did not believe her and did not act in a preventive way on the events to come. Consequently, the evil materialised.

There is a remarkable resemblance between this 3000 year old Greek myth and the current situation on climate changes. Although scientists within the IPCC context obtained a far-reaching consensus on the scientific basis of climate changes, society and in particular the world decision makers do not turn this information into policy. As a whole, the situation is characterised by far-going powerlessness.

Therefore, the issue arises is that the message originating from the natural sciences should be tuned in a new agenda that has a better likelihood to be transformed in political action. The hypothesis underlying this book is that an interdisciplinary approach integrating data from cleaner technology, culture and communication sciences is able to alleviate the current situation by broadening our understanding of climate changes.

New technology can substitute greenhouse gas emitting technologies and improve the quality of life. Five chapters of the book deal with a range of aspects of cleaner technologies for climate changes: its definition, local initiatives to bring down CO₂ emissions, non-fossil energy systems, low carbon lights, and moral hypotheses for scientists and engineers. All together, these chapters show that cleaner technology is part of the solution, but far from all of the solution.

If climate change policy has to be implemented internationally, one has to understand that the problem, also in its historical dimension, is rooted in culture and its diversity. Six chapters deal with a wide scope of cultural issues related to climate changes: the natural-social sciences nexus, social movement theory, the 'nature-culture hybrid', education, ethics and social changes. These chapters show how climate change is anchored in everyday habits and traditions and how it is symptomatic for an unsustainable culture and lifestyle.

The last part of the book is about how communication affects the public awareness of climate changes. Five chapters deal with mass media in Bangladesh, the impact of

documentary films, citizen action and media, climate activism, and negotiating and communicating on climate policy (using the Copenhagen COP15 as a case study). This section shows that climate communication is a matter of strategy, policy, entertainment, and media.

As a whole this book provides a kaleidoscopic view on cleaner technology, wide cultural and applied communication aspects of the international climate change debate. It takes the 15th UN Conference of the Parties in the Climate Changes Convention (Copenhagen, December 2009) as a landmark, which is found in a cross-cutting way over the chapters. It was published on the eve of the 18th Conference (Doha, November 2012). It is therefore not only timely, but allows an interesting opportunity to assess progress since the Copenhagen COP. Advocating more integration and interdisciplinarity on data from technology, culture and communication is intriguing and stimulating. Unfortunately, the book does not go beyond this discourse. A concluding chapter on what this integration should look like and what added value it brings, is unfortunately lacking.

This perfectly edited volume is part of the Ashgate Studies in Environmental Policy and Practice series. The book is an eye-opener on possible switches in the international climate change debate, while showing that part of the solution is in our daily lifestyle and habits. The publication is most useful for students and researchers in environmental sciences, in particular in programmes with a strong interdisciplinary character. It is a must for consultants, policy makers and NGO collaborators who care about influencing the climate change debate and its impacts on our way of living.

2 The Right to Landscape. Contesting Landscape and Human Rights
by: Shelley Egoz, Jala Makhzoumi and Gloria Pungetti (Editors)
Published 2011
by Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East, Union Road, Farnham,
Surrey, GU9 7PT, UK, England, 309pp
ISBN: 978-1-4094-0444-6

Landscapes and (human) rights – the two core elements of this book – seem at first sight to be two independent variables. The first questions that arise after reading the title are: ‘What kind of landscapes are meant?’ and ‘What kind of rights are at stake?’ Central elements that relate to the first question entail that a landscape is more than the objective (horizontal and vertical) components that allow the subject to be described in analytical terms. Landscapes are also about cultural heritage, about visual interpretation and perception, and about socio-economic functions. They tell about a wide variety of stakeholders, ranging from local communities to national tourism authorities. The conservation of landscapes and nature necessitates the support of ecological and cultural diversity. From this point of view, discussing landscapes is not only about the physical-geographical analysis but also about its policy, legal, and ethical aspects. This links the discussion with the second question on ‘which rights?’ On this topic, landscape conservation joins the new, emerging rights as rights to reproduction, animal rights, and ecological rights to a healthy environment and legacies of heritage. These rights stem from a universal moral standard that transcends any national laws. These rights are framed in the human rights discourse.

Part I of this book includes the general concepts that are part of this new discourse: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 2009 Copenhagen Summit, the European Landscape Convention, and the 'right to landscape'. Overall, this part of the book points to the finding that a 'right to landscape' implies a need to depart from the prevailing economic paradigm and focus on human wellbeing related to equity and social justice.

Parts 2 to 4 are case studies that illustrate issues concerned with the 'right to landscape'. The chapters are most diverse and discuss issues as:

- the historical landscape and legal rights in Orkney and Shetland
- land and space in the Golan heights
- hunting and the 'right to landscape'
- indigenous peoples' 'rights to landscape' in New Zealand
- Bahrain's polyvocality and landscape
- cityscapes in Israel
- historical genocide landscapes in Cambodia and Ruanda.

The cases show the complexity and the manifold, open-ended discussions that are related to the 'right to landscape'. They link the issue with different aspects of contestation and empowerment.

Part 5 covers visionary aspects of the discussion. This section introduces – among other concepts – the notion of 'landscape crime'.

This is one of the most innovative books in the area of multidisciplinary environmental sciences that I have read in recent years. It explores a wide range of topics that include urban, ethical, legal environmental, political and art related themes. It situates landscapes in a multidisciplinary and holistic context. As such, it inspires a diversity of ideas and conceptual interpretations. It offers both fundamental-academic and applied-managerial anchor points. This book should be compulsory background reading for postgraduate students in geography and human ecology. It is an inspiring text for environmentalists and decision makers on landscape and nature conservation. It contributes to a most tempting and legitimate widening of the environmental discourse.