

International Journal of the Commons
Vol. 7, no 2 August 2013, pp. 571–572
Publisher: Igitur publishing
URL:<http://www.thecommonsjournal.org>
URN:NBN:NL:UI:10-1-114940
Copyright: content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License
ISSN: 1875-0281

Book Review

Mori A., ed. 2013. *Environmental Governance for Sustainable Development: East Asian Perspectives*. New York: United Nations University Press.

Reviewed by Samantha M. Berdej, Environmental Change and Governance Group, University of Waterloo, Canada.

The book *Environmental Governance for Sustainable Development*, edited by Mori, is one of five volumes in a series on “Multilevel Environmental Governance for Sustainable Development.” It examines the successes and challenges of emerging multilevel environmental governance and policy in East Asia, including northeast and southeast regions. The volume’s main objective is to contribute to our understanding of the process and effectiveness of specific policy instruments and environmental programmes (“constituents”) that do (or can) address national, regional, and global environmental challenges, as well as contribute to good environmental governance. It focuses mostly on the state, with specific attention to regional economic and environmental regimes.

This volume is rich and comprehensive. Following a preamble on the evolution of governance in East Asia, the book consists of a series of topical chapters organized into five thematic areas. Researchers from a range of disciplines contribute economic and political analyses to demonstrate the role and effectiveness of select constituents in environmental governance for sustainable development. Seminal topical chapters include democratization and its bearings on environmental decision-making, the impacts of globalization on economic liberalization and environmental policy-making in East Asia, and the appropriateness of regional environmental institutions and regimes.

The case analyses in Mori’s collection give the reader insight into the real challenges of governing commons in an increasingly complex, globalized world. Utilizing case material from Cambodia, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Thailand and elsewhere, it clearly lays out the advantages and drawbacks of specific policy instruments and programmes on environmental problem-solving. To that end, Mori and colleagues show how the global climate regime, increased domestic

pressure and capacity, and global product-based standards and regulations have – for better or worse – become indispensable contributors/drivers in evolved multilevel environmental governance.

In many ways, the main appeal of this book is its diverse nature. IJC readers will appreciate its dealings with the wealth of changing economic and environmental regimes and policies. It will be especially useful for readers with interest in the institutional evolution of environmental governance in East Asian nations. This volume attempts to cover a lot of ground, figuratively and literally. Unsurprisingly, chapters can at times shift radically between topics, geographic focus, and modes of analysis. Yet, the editor successfully generates cohesion by clearly articulating the book's 'big picture', or analytical framing, early on; the last chapter serves to synthesize and meld case materials.

This work is a timely addition, when the general tenor of addressing environmental challenges is increasingly regional and global in nature (Biermann and Pattberg 2012). Policy-makers struggle to keep pace with the increasing complexity and magnitude of social, economic, and environmental challenges. Ultimately, this book is a solid contribution toward an understanding of innovation in policy intent on shifting the course of economic growth in East Asia.

Literature cited

Biermann, F. and P. H. Pattberg, eds. 2012. *Global Environmental Governance Reconsidered*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.