

T. Gabrielson, C. Hall, J.M. Meyer and D. Schlosberg (eds)

*The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory*

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Environmental political theory (EPT) addresses the relationship between individual people or communities and their natural environment, to identify values and ideas shaping and structuring that relationship, and specifically to articulate how politics can contribute to creating improved environmental outcomes for humankind. It embraces a wide breadth of studies across the social sciences and humanities, ranging from political theories to environmental politics and environmental social movements to implementation of environmental policy at multiple geopolitical levels. That breadth is reflected in this substantial contribution to the field: over 650 pages in five parts, with 41 individual chapters and 45 contributors. Originating from a workshop held in Portland, Oregon in 2012, the *Handbook* features input from distinguished scholars in the field and represents a major contribution to scholarship in EPT.

After an editors' introduction, the *Handbook* focuses initially on establishing the broad field of inquiry, both in terms of engaging with traditions of political thought and the involvement of academia. The emphasis is on how Western political thought has shaped EPT and its contributions to environmental issues and sustainability studies. It then examines the 'rethinking' of nature and politics, first with respect to nature, environment and politics, and then environment, community and boundaries. The longest section deals with 'ends, goals, ideals', with contributions under three headings: sustainability; justice, rights and responsibility; freedom, agency and flourishing. The final part looks at power, structures, and change by focusing on the identification of structural constraints and possibilities, and theorising citizenship, movements and action.

For anyone seriously concerned with environmental issues and understanding the associated politics, this is a book they should have on their shelves. It can be consulted on a wide range of topics, and represents a true state-of-the-art guide. It is difficult to select specific contributions to highlight, but having been engaged with research that addressed notions of environmental justice, I was drawn to the four chapters that explicitly tackled this topic. These provide an historical overview of the concept's evolution, and they also demonstrate vital insights to the challenges being posed by the need to seek 'climate justice', or the efforts to minimise harm associated with climate change and the 'structural injustice' of its harmful impacts, symbolising how the least developed countries may suffer the worst impacts of climate change despite contributing little to the problem.

The chapter in this section by Steve Vanderheiden, which also refers to climate change, illustrates a vital characteristic of the *Handbook*, namely a revisiting of the familiar, which then sits alongside what might be termed ‘the emerging’ environmental politics, and all tightly written. Robyn Eckersley explores structural injustice by stressing the need to move beyond a liability model of responsibility to something more appropriate to ‘a global risk society’. This requires further consideration of where power and responsibility lie, potentially with new roles for states and an ‘active’ citizenry, the latter perhaps needing different incentives to act. The final chapter in the section on justice, rights and responsibility, by Giovanna di Chiro, tackles the notion of the ‘Anthropocene meme’ and ‘the age of humans’, a keyword developing as a ‘concept for understanding, theorising, and acting on climate change’. Di Chiro considers how the term has been disseminated, acquired and legitimised and what challenges have been raised to its use in the context of social justice. Those concerned with the uncritical blanket application of the Anthropocene meme will find support in the final section here on ‘people powered regeneration and a just transition toward living economies’.

As someone who has spent considerable time researching why and how people take environmentally-friendly actions, I found Elisabeth Ellis’s chapter on ‘Democracy as constraint and possibility for environmental action’ particularly helpful in summarising the contradictions posed by democracy in any search for environmental justice. Perceptively, she champions more democracy not less and assesses a range of democratic possibilities that can contribute to enhancing sustainable provision of sufficient food, pure air and clean water. One aspect of her arguments is pursued subsequently by Sherilyn MacGregor in an analysis of ‘citizenship’, especially focusing on the radical feminist and green versions. Having myself advocated ‘green citizenship’ in terms of people who ‘do their bit’ for the environment in their everyday lives, my thinking was challenged by her section on ‘what’s wrong with green citizenship?’ She identifies two principal problems: green citizenship is often conceptualised in narrow and exclusionary terms, and the emphasis placed on individual responsibility in the private sphere. The latter accentuates the power of consumers rather than a wider conceptualisation of citizenship and so is not transformative. Nevertheless, I feel this view downplays the potential of ‘people power’ and is too dismissive of so-called ‘nudge’ approaches within government environmental policy.

‘Nudging’ receives a more concerted appraisal by Cheryl Hall in her chapter on ‘Framing and nudging for a greener future’. Essentially these both involve ‘investigating how various symbolic and material contexts interact with human perceptions, thought-patterns, feelings, habits, and practices to shape the way we live’. Hall refers to the paternalistic underpinnings of much nudging and argues that it can be seen in the West as integral to much policy developed by neo-liberal governments. However, her discussion provides a nuanced appraisal that considers context design and its role (or lack of it) within democracies and as a transformative agent, noting that ‘there is no such thing as unframed information’. She also

acknowledges how nudging can foster greener practices, such as recycling and greater energy efficiency, and can help people make more informed choices, as in the case of eco-labelling.

The *Handbook* is thoroughly worthy of the label ‘treasure trove’. Even in the short space of the few weeks I have been reading it to prepare this review, I have consulted it on several occasions to help inform work on environmental issues: Teena Gabrielson using the example of wildfires in a discussion on ‘agency’ and notions of human and non-human actants; Joan Martinez-Alier on the global environmental justice movement; John S. Dryzek on global environmental governance and much more ... There is certainly a bias towards Western EPT, as the editors themselves acknowledge, but no doubt a volume dealing with non-Western EPT ideas and practice will soon emerge. Meanwhile, this is clearly a ‘must have’ book for university libraries, but worth an individual investment for anyone actively engaged with environmental ideas and their attendant politics.

GUY M. ROBINSON

University of Adelaide