

Book Reviews

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Applied Economics and Public Policy, edited by Iain Begg and S.G.B. Henry. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 296 pp., \$64.95 cloth.

Just Results: Ethical Foundations for Policy Analysis, by Ralph D. Ellis. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998, 224 pp., \$48.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper.

Tales of the State: Narrative in Contemporary U.S. Politics and Public Policy, edited by Sanford F. Schram and Philip T. Neisser. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997, 270 pp., NPA.

Honest Numbers and Democracy, by Walter Williams. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998, 336 pp., \$55.00 cloth, \$23.95 paper.

Dorothy Parker, when she was reviewing for *The New Yorker* magazine some decades ago, would generally address her audience as the "constant reader." In glancing at the titles in this particular review, the *JPAM* constant reader might very well wonder what the prevailing theme is of these four seemingly dissimilar books that binds the four into an integrated review, for on the surface they are rather different. Iain Begg and S. G. B. Henry have assembled a collection of essays covering advances and modifications of "applied economics," or what many in the United States (the authors in this volume are almost all British) would refer to as "econometrics." Ralph Ellis poses a means by which ethical analysis could be more discussed and included in policy analysis, while Walter Williams insistently asks "How can American democracy survive without honest numbers and analyses to inform the choices of citizens and policymakers?" Finally, Sanford Schram, Philip Neisser, and their colleagues assert that policy analysis in the United States is usually misguided because it often examines the wrong (or at least incomplete) "stories."

To all appearances, then, these books represent a very disparate collection of authors (even more so since two of the volumes are edited). Let me first briefly describe

these works, comment on the persuasiveness of their arguments, and then pose what might be their overarching theme.

In *Applied Economics and Public Policy*, Iain Begg and S. G. B. Henry have collected 11 essays (plus their introduction) that were presented at the 50th anniversary of Cambridge University's Department of Applied Economics (DAE), which was originally established under the guidance of John Maynard Keynes. Much of the book is, understandably, laced with general equilibrium models (by Timothy Kehoe), quantification of survey data (by W. F. Cunningham et al.), and United Kingdom-based analyses (e.g., Charles Feinstein). To this particular reader, who managed to survive two semesters of econometrics somewhere long ago, the works are good, quotidian economic analyses, much of them remarkably ingenious, sometimes very specific, but that is the mission of the DAE (as opposed to a more conceptualized theory building).

DAE's trademark is to treat macroeconomic analysis as if it were a direct continuation of microeconomic analysis. Although some macroeconomists would differ, that is the crux of DAE's economic world view. The policy-oriented rationale behind this, according to the coeditors, is to "interpret potentially capricious behavioral phenomena in a way that provides worthwhile guidance for policy-makers" (p. 1).

What is particularly interesting in this collection is that the authors set aside the putative arrogance of economists and then go on to explain that economic modeling has often fallen short of its goals; moreover, they propose why that might be the case:

Here, we argue that such expectations have, at times, been unrealistic because behavioral changes have not been adequately incorporated into the models, and also because modeling techniques have often been mis-applied. (p. 2)

Begg and Henry continue to disparage the pervasiveness of data errors (and their effect upon economic analysis) while also suggesting that intuition has an important part to play in economic modeling, although the latter could potentially exacerbate the former. John Llewellyn later observes a more specific conceptual shortcoming, that is, the difficulty in determining how "individual equations interacted when they were assembled into a complete model of the economy" (p. 249), a concern long voiced among dynamic programmers.

This volume is, in short, more than a celebration of 50 years of "number crunching," although certainly there is some of that here. Rather, it is an acknowledgment by mathematical economists of what problems economic analysis needs to overcome if it is to provide better policy guidance. The question *JPAM's* constant readers must address is whether the technical materials overwhelm the message that indicates a recognition of economic analyses' generic shortcomings.

In *Just Results*, Ralph Ellis puts forth a set of *Ethical Foundations for Policy Analysis*. Ellis's stated purpose is to:

... inform and stimulate the philosophical thinking of policy analysis, while...urging a more practically applicable political philosophy—one that is relevant to the concern of addressing the concrete problems that real-life social and political problems must address. The goal, then, is to make utility, justice, and procedural legitimacy commensurable with each other in a coherent and practically accessible way. (p. 5)

To this end, he recounts (arguably) the most subjective and neglected component of policy analysis and finds it conceptually and analytically incomplete (e.g., Tang's [1986] *Ethics in Policy Analysis*). He details others' efforts in this line (ranging from Mill to Marx and, of course, Rawls to Nozick) without discerning a coherent analytic

thread. More specifically, he closely examines five value systems: egoistic hedonism, utilitarianism, and value systems based on justice, personalism, and ethical relativism.

After lengthy (and often thoughtful) criticisms of utilitarianism and rights-based decision principles, Ellis poses the heart of his analysis, what he calls a “nonutilitarian consequentialist concept of distributive justice” (chap. 5), which he describes as largely an exercise to quantify the values of personal “goods” under an umbrella of distributive justice. Ellis’s proposition is that these values can be included in a policymaker’s (perhaps intuitive and maybe political) benefit-cost analysis. The key concept here is to determine what composes those elements that Ellis calls a “degree of necessity” (DN); in other words, the

... extent to which workers choose to incur the increased risks necessary to obtain [certain] goods... [W]hat this means is that...housing for the homeless is more necessary than improvements in housing conditions for people of average means, and thus... this greater degree of necessity ought to be figured into the assessment of the true values of the two competing objectives. (pp. 163–64)

These DN values, he continues, can then be incorporated into a policymaker’s calculus as a function of the DN estimated for the comparative target populations (e.g., homeless vs. apartment dwellers vs. homeowners). Thus, Ellis arrives at an operationalization of a societal distributive justice and a more equitable allocative system (in this case, for housing subsidies).

There are, one suspects, some difficulties here that Ellis’s rather imaginative analysis has failed to capture. Conceptually, there is no reason to presume that an individual’s DN is not as suspect as simply asking a person for his or her preference. It would seem rather simple to “game” towards one’s own betterment. Economists have gone to great lengths in asking people to set and disclose their values (for instance, contingent valuation methodologies), yet they still are unable to counteract or discount the inventiveness of the human mind. Granted, inquiries involving large numbers of participants may override or discount individual chicaneries but, philosophically speaking, ethics primarily address the public effects upon the individual, not upon the aggregate. Another problem is that Ellis’s scheme gives little substantive advice as to the vexing policy of comparing allocations *across* programs (in economists’ terms, interpersonal utility comparisons), a quandary that has plagued analysts since at least Alice Rivlin’s [1971] *Systematic Thinking for Social Action*. This might explain a third, more practical problem: Unlike Tang’s [1986] and Guttman and Thompson’s [1990] works on public policy and ethics, Ellis has all but ignored the concrete example; that is, how are his ideas illustrated in real-life situations or practices? It would be difficult on the surface to write a book on ethics without addressing such incidents as Watergate, Iran-Contra, the savings and loan scandals, and other such “ethically challenged” activities. Yet this is exactly what Ellis has done. After a while, one suspects that he is more concerned with the philosophical as opposed to the workaday practices and their consequences. This is a somewhat awkward predicament for the author who proposed to address “the concrete problems that real-life social and political problems” as his central theme.

Sanford Schram and Philip Neisser have collected a number of essays, largely to expand upon ideas recently broached by authors such as Emery Roe [1994] and Deborah Stone [1997]; that is, the particular way in which one “tells the story” determines both one’s political perspective and the way the policy process can unfold (or be truncated). As explained in the editors’ introductory essay, “the politics of public policy-making is [*sic*] played out in terms of stories that mediate how public

problems are comprehended...Narrative therefore helps constitute the world as we know it" (pp. 2, 5). Literary interpretations and postpositivist discourse are part and parcel of a "story-telling" methodology. In addition, "meta-narratives" are necessary in order to impose a degree of completeness and coherency to a policy condition, thus making it amenable to policy resolution. Lastly, the editors indicate that the reason for narrative analysis is "to suggest a more democratic view of policy knowledge and in the process enter into efforts to democratize ongoing political and policy struggles" (p. 9).

Given that virtually anybody can prescribe a story to a public policy problem and, as the editors insist, they need not be predicated on "fact"¹ since "facts" themselves are often ambiguous or contradictory, one might legitimately wonder what Schram and his colleagues were doing in their research methodology seminars during the validity testing exercises. Roe himself addresses this dilemma when he warns, "In the situations of high uncertainty and complexity where narrative policy analysis is appropriate, it simply is not possible to decide if the policy narratives being analyzed are fiction, or if the science is right, or what form power and politics are really taking" [Roe, 1984, p. 8]. True enough, some of these essays are either obvious in their marginally interesting revelations (evoking a "yeah, I knew that, so what?" reaction), or stupifyingly jargon-laced, or they leave *JPAM's* constant reader to wonder where and how these posed "alternative" narratives might have an undiscovered value.² Their direct linkage to a more democratic policy analysis is surely obscure, except in the most postpositivist circumlocutory manner (i.e., a wider range of varied perspectives are surveyed, therefore ipso facto democracy is better served).

But, to be fair, some of the alternative narratives do offer a cautionary seed that might be otherwise overlooked by traditional policy research. Carl Swidorski argues that the American Constitution has been anything but the constant guardian of American freedoms; rather, it is highly dependent upon the political forces and biases at any given time. John Kenneth White indicates that the power of the President is more than commander in chief, he is the "Storyteller-in-Chief," as President Reagan and (until very lately) President Clinton have also amply demonstrated. Barbara Cuikshank suggests that part of the rhetoric (she calls it the "myth") of "welfare queens" could be attributed to police reporting practices, which are then accepted and used by politicians for their own purposes, and Phillip Sandro proposes that part of the small business entrepreneurial myth (e.g., the American economy runs on the jobs produced by a multitude of small businesses) is fostered by large business interests using their smaller kin as coverage for their own self-serving activities. As the editors would agree, these arguments are not necessarily "factual" or "correct"; rather, they are posed to offer examples of how "stories" or "myths" can shape politics.

Still, *JPAM's* constant reader might well suspect that Stone [1997] and Roe [1994] have already made the most of these arguments, conceptually if not in the particulars. Some of the chapters in *Tales of the State* are indeed illustrative, but one wishes that the editors had been more judicious in their selection (there are 19 essays plus an editor's introduction). After a while, narrative arguments that only occasionally increase our understanding become the approach's own worst enemy.

Walter Williams has long been associated with public policy analysis, as a practitioner in the early days of the federal Department of Health, Education, and

¹For instance, how many tabloids have headlined that Diane, Princess of Wales, really was not killed in an automobile crash in Paris, 1997? Mercifully, they have stopped short of pairing her up with Elvis.

²Edward Lawlor's [1996] *JPAM* review of policy-oriented books is particularly trenchant in this regard.

Welfare (DHEW), and more recently as one of the noted authors regarding, among other topics, policy implementation. In *Honest Numbers and Democracy*, he is concerned with (as his subtitle states), *Social Policy Analysis in the White House, Congress, and the Federal Agencies*. Williams, who was a policy practitioner during the early days of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, makes a number of critical charges that certainly warrant our attention. As early as his preface, he warns:

America, in the last handful of years before the end of the twentieth century, has developed an amazing technical capacity to bring mountains of data instantly to politicians, civil servants, and the public... . But a number of vexing questions underlie this technical bonanza, particularly whether those who use information—be they elected officials, government bureaucrats, advocacy groups, or the public—have the will or the wits to use it wisely. (p. x)

Williams later returns to this theme: “information can be employed unwisely or dishonestly; analysis can be wrongheaded or devious” (p. 7). Finally, he suggests the implication of the prevalence of bad data and worse analysis: “How can the American democracy survive without honest numbers and analyses to inform the choices of citizens and policymakers?” (p. xv).

Williams documents these charges over the course of the book by reviewing American presidents from Dwight Eisenhower through Bill Clinton. Surprisingly for many (including myself), at the very top of his list is Eisenhower because of his managerial and institutional acuity (an accolade Williams repeatedly makes); at the bottom of his ranking is Ronald Reagan because of his inability to use good analysis, followed closely by George Bush (for his managerial incompetence). Bill Clinton is a curious case for Williams, whom he describes as immensely smart and policy-oriented; however, “A crucial Clinton shortcoming, organizational incompetence, and a seeming virtue, a belief in hard facts combined with open-mindedness, brought disarray to the presidential policy-making process and made Clinton appear to be indecisive, lacking in core convictions, or both” (p. 175).

Williams' solutions are quite straightforward: “The main missing ingredients in the case of the federal government are the political will and analytic integrity to develop and use sound policy information and analysis in the executive branch and a level of bureaucratic mastery not seen in recent years in the White House and the agencies” (p. 23). What he wants, then, is for brave analysts not fearing policy or public repercussions to present “honest” numbers and then for steadfast policymakers to accept them. In brief, Williams proposes, in so many words, the heartbeat of traditional policy analysis: Have facts, will fix.

Well, yes, that would be swell, and no one would object—if one has undeniable facts and is honest, good things cannot help but happen. But surely Williams is practiced enough to know that the world is more complicated than his simplistic portrayal, that any policy issue worth its contentious salt can easily find (at least) two contrary positions and these can almost always be supported by good—probably self-serving but conceivably honest—policy analysis.³ There is a policy literature (of which Stone [1997] is only one) that argues that policy analysis is little more than politics by another name. Moreover, the postpositivists (to whom Williams pays only a scant mention through Lawlor's [1996] *JPAM* book review) would claim policy is determined by contending sides, each with its own set of prior positions

³A good example of opposing policy discourse is provided by Hank Jenkins-Smith [1990] in his *Democratic Politics and Policy Analysis*.

and “facts.”⁴ Even exemplary traditional policy analysts such as David Weimer [1998] and Duncan MacRae [McRae and Whittington, 1997] propose that interpretation is key to the analytic effect; if so, they open the gates to the demon, analytic subjectivity, and render the issue of simple honesty somewhat problematic, maybe even illusional. If these authors have even a semblance of credibility, then Williams is at best naive with his war stories and repeated assertions that honest numbers and intrepid policymakers brimming with integrity can right whatever is wrong in the policy analysis circus.

I do not wish to be mistaken in this criticism for a number-phobic analyst; certainly good data and subsequent analyses are extremely useful in preparing and assessing policies. And I would never condone “dishonest” numbers. However, I suspect that they fall into the “necessary but not sufficient” category; that is, more than “honest numbers” go into the making and maintaining of a democracy.⁵

In a sense, *JPAM*'s constant reader might view Williams as anachronistic in *Honest Numbers and Democracy*. What he yearns for is the “good old days,” in which policy analysis was the new and gifted and maybe even magical kid on the block, who, if you had him (or her) on your team (be it the DHEW or the Defense Department team), your positions and policies would be unassailable and, best of all, correct. But if we have learned anything in the past 40-odd years, we know that policy analysis is not by itself a talisman that can retire or neutralize interest group and bureaucratic politics, and that truth wears different clothes for different people.

Themes and Variations

With the evidence that we have reviewed four very different books, can one plausibly find a connecting theme, with appropriate variations? I think so. Let me offer three candidates.

First, there seems to be a growing tendency within the policy community to lend credence to the more interpretative side of the street. Begg and Henry explicitly make this claim in their volume, a concession one would be hard-pressed to discern in earlier books on economic policy analysis, such as Stokey and Zeckhauser [1978]. Schram and his coauthors are firmly in the interpretative camp. Only Ellis's discussion of ethics, which nominally should be firmly in the interpretative fold, argues for increased quantification, even when the subject matter is not especially conducive. Again, in this regard, Williams is an outlier, with his insistence that “honest numbers” are at the heart of the policy analysis malaise although he gives little care as to how one determines their “honesty.” It is not clear from his book where he might fall upon this interpretative-positivist spectrum.

Second, these books reflect a more visible linkage within the policy community regarding democracy, even if the actual forging is not always lucid. John Dryzek [1990] and Helen Ingram and Steven Ragged Smith [1993] were among the first to emphasize the public policy relationship with a democratic orientation (or, possibly, the disjunct between the two). It now seems to be a theme in the policy literature, specifically noted in Williams' title and part of Schram and Neisser's purpose. Nor, one suspects, would Begg and Henry contend to the contrary. If one can extrapolate from 75 percent of a sample of four (again, amazingly, Ellis's treatise *Just Results* does not even list “democracy” in the index), this recognition of the interaction between policy and the democratic ethos is welcomed—if not necessarily as an immediate goal, then at least in acknowledgment of possible past neglects.

⁴Even in as limited a perspective as encompassed by this review, see Schram and Neisser, *Tales of the State* (1997), for a clear alternative approach; also see Fischer and Forester (1993).

⁵I elaborate on this theme in deLeon [1998].

The last point reflects the most obvious: By now, *JPAM*'s constant reader should recognize that public policy analysis is no longer the intellectual satrap for a single discipline or two. Harold Lasswell might well have talked about a multidisciplinary field of inquiry, but few since him have walked the multidisciplinary walk. It has not been until relatively recently that the constant reader has seen a variety of methodological approaches (besides economics, law, and political science), all engaged in policy research. This might well be evanescent or it might be lasting; the publication of four books in 1998 hardly offers more than a fleeting clue. Still, I for one am hopeful (although not necessarily assured), if not by the immediate results, then at least by the collective efforts.

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Debating Technologies: A Methodological Contribution to the Design and Evaluation of Participatory Policy Analysis, by Igor Mayer. Tilburg, Netherlands: Tilburg University Press, 1997, 313 pp. D fl 65.00 paper.

Participatory policy analysis (PPA): Its meaning is uncertain; its methods are underdeveloped and lightly used by practicing analysts; and its advocates are a small minority in the policy community. Nevertheless, this approach to policy analysis is gaining currency in the discipline [see deLeon, 1997], and I predict that PPA methods will be incorporated over time into the standard practice of policy analysis.

This prediction is based on my view that the devastating critiques of the positivist foundations of traditional policy analysis [for example, see Dryzek, 1990; Fischer;

1990; Majone, 1989]—although certainly not leading to wholesale abandonment of the scientific façade of policy analysis and its techniques—will erode its legitimacy among analysts and their clients. Even now, I would argue, most practicing analysts understand they are not scientists—or even quasi scientists—operating in, but not interfering with, the world around them. They also comprehend the limitations of the traditional instruments in providing sound, context-based advice.

Even the most enthusiastic number-cruncher must pause when hearing traditional policy analysis described as the “policy sciences of tyranny” and policy analysts as pawns of the powerful. The most traditional analysts as well must have some concern about the gap between the ideal of rational analysis and their actual messy practice. If so, it should not be surprising to find that traditional policy analysts have an intuitive discomfort with the ontology and epistemological foundations of traditional economics-based policy analysis, and surely this discomfort opens them to alternatives that promise not only to make their analysis of complex issues more insightful and useful, but also to put them on the right side of democracy.

Unfortunately, the telling critiques of traditional policy analysis and its positivist foundations have not been accompanied by coherent theories that drive credible models of postpositivist practice. Although postpositivists may occupy the “intellectual high ground” in the field [Dryzek and Torgerson, 1993], they have done little to offer concerned analysts a model of practice that can improve analysis and make it more consonant with democracy. Even worse, some of the best critics of traditional policy analysis have been so detached from the world of practice that they have left themselves open to tart criticisms, like those of Lawlor [1996].

To answer those criticisms and move PPA forward as an alternative to traditional analysis (particularly in the analysis of complex, value-laden issues, where traditional analysis often fails), PPA needs a bounded definition that yields a set of methods constituting its practice. That is my belief, and it is the argument of Igor Mayer in *Debating Technologies: A Methodological Contribution to the Design and Evaluation of Participatory Policy Analysis*. He writes:

It is not satisfying to first discard traditional policy analysis, then present the theoretical arguments for a participatory alternative if, in the end, we are not able to show how PPA can be arranged practically and instrumentally. Therefore, more systematic insight is necessary on how the process works in practice and what participatory tools, instruments, and methods are available. (p. 8)

Later he expands on this theme:

[N]o methodology for the participatory variant exists. In general, proponents provide relatively little insight into their preferred methods and instruments. Most argue persuasively that policy analysis should be participatory but provide very few starting points for its design and evaluation. (p. 11)

Having identified the disconnection between the intense criticisms of traditional policy analysis and the formulation of credible competing models of practice, and between postpositivist models and postpositivist practice, Mayer sets out to make the links. He begins the task by identifying and summarizing the state of the art of PPA. He sifts through the tangled and often confusing literature on topics related, some obliquely, to PPA and wrestles it into coherence. He categorizes and synthesizes key ideas in the disparate research, deftly producing summary charts that neatly lay out such things as the “five models of policy analysis,” the “general overview of

participatory policy analysis,” and “the evolution of participatory methods.” As a result of this work, anyone wanting a terrific overview of PPA, its context, and the accumulated related literature can find it in the first four chapters of this book.

Having dealt with the unruly literature related to PPA, Mayer then specifies its boundaries, defining PPA as:

a practical discipline which contributes to policymaking by designing policy-analytic fora, establishing the conditions for participation, and facilitation and support of the policy-relevant debate and argumentation between the participants which take place within the forum. . . . The analyst in PPA is an organizer of participatory fora and a facilitator of the interactions which take place within this forum. (p. 75)

Although some will argue that this definition is too narrow, it is still a good starting place for turning PPA from a debate about theory to a focus on the elements of the practice. Most importantly, it sets some preliminary boundaries around the practice of PPA, so it is possible to determine what is and is not included under this label. If the definition is accepted, it allows answers to key questions such as “What does the practice of participatory policy analysis look like?” and “When it is appropriate?” Also, the definition lights the way to important policy research tasks to develop PPA: the design and evaluation of policy forums and the development and testing of techniques to make the forums successful.

By defining PPA functionally, Mayer has made it possible to go from a postpositivist theoretical framework to post-positivist practice—or maybe vice versa. It might be that practice leads theory, and that as policy analysts increasingly use methods with postpositivist foundations—especially if the methods are successful—they will incorporate the ontology and epistemology underlying the methods into their belief systems.

Mayer devotes more than half of *Debating Technologies* to case studies and evaluations of two types of PPA methods: scenario workshops and consensus conferences. Scenario workshops “attempt to integrate citizens as one of the important groups of stakeholders in policymaking” (p. 115). Such a workshop is defined as “a meeting of a number of people from different backgrounds (the participants have different levels of knowledge, experience, and interests) who, for a few hours to a few days, interactively analyze a policy issue according to a relatively fixed procedure and are aided by the use of future scenarios and chaired by a facilitator or moderator” (p. 234). A consensus conference:

. . . encourages debate on rather complex, controversial, and ethical issues between a panel of ordinary citizens or laymen and a panel of experts. [It is] one mechanism for consulting an informed and more or less representative group of ordinary citizens. The lay panel is selected from a group of applicants reacting to a newspaper ad. Aided and supported by the organizers, this lay panel is put in charge of aspects such as defining the main question for the conference, inviting a panel of experts who will answer these questions and composing a final report with recommendations for policy- and decision-makers. The emphasis is on the quality of the debate, new insights, and the policy recommendations made by the lay panel. (p. 235)

Mayer claims these PPA methods are two of five “third-generation” participatory techniques (the other three are the lay consensus conference, decision conferencing, and policy exercises) that have evolved from participatory methods formulated during the late 1960s and early 1970s. His case study and evaluation of scenario workshops traced a European Community effort to gain an understanding of citizen views on policies for sustainable urban living. To obtain these views, scenario workshops were conducted in five different cities across the continent.

Mayer describes in great detail his quasi-experimental evaluation of a consensus conference held in the Netherlands on “predictive human genetics,” including issues of genetic screening of the population; genetic testing of clients, patients, or unborn children for genetic disorders or diseases; and the social and ethical consequences of increasing knowledge of the human genome. This part of the book (five of eleven chapters) provides an in-depth case study of how a consensus conference was structured and how it affected participants.

Truth be told, this book was written as a thesis for Tilburg University, and it pays disproportionate attention to the consensus conference, presumably so Mayer could demonstrate his policy evaluation skills. Although these chapters satisfied the examination committee, they have too little payoff for most other readers to merit close attention.

Despite this lengthy evaluation side trip, *Debating Technologies* has substantial value because it lays a foundation for the practice of PPA on which others can build. Also, its case studies clearly show how PPA can be used in technology assessment (a specialized form of policy analysis) to address complex issues (thus the title, with its double meaning).

The value of the book is increased by its sources: It draws not only on the PPA literature that has received the most attention in North America, but also on a rich, but rarely cited, practice-oriented literature published as reports or in European journals and books that are out of the radar range of most North American policy scientists. For example, Mayer cites not only the better known literature on the participatory methods [e.g., Fischer, 1993; Kathlene and Martin, 1991; and Renn et al., 1993], he also makes use of documents, articles, and book chapters that describe and evaluate PPA experiments in Denmark, The Netherlands, and elsewhere in Europe.

As lagniappe, this book provides readers references to this obscure but valuable literature and with the discovery that Tilburg University has become an important, productive center for the study of PPA, especially its practical applications. In recent years, faculty members and doctoral students at Tilburg have written extensively on the subject. In addition to Mayer’s research, Jac Geurts, a senior policy science professor at the University, has published several articles and chapters on the topic, including an excellent monograph coauthored with Mayer [Geurts and Mayer, 1996]. Cisca Joldersma, at Tilburg University’s Work and Organization Research Center, has researched the use of gaming and simulation to facilitate participatory policymaking [Joldersma, 1997; Joldersma et al. 1995; Joldersma, Heyne, and Guerts, 1996], and Frank Bongers is writing a dissertation on the use of group decision support systems in PPA [reported in Geurts and Mayer, 1996].

At Tilburg University, Mayer was able to gain practical insights into PPA through work on the projects described in the book. Given that experience and the strength of Tilburg University’s work in PPA, it is not surprising that one of its own has written a book that makes substantial contributions to the conceptualization of the practice of PPA. Of course, Mayer does not have all of the answers, and much work remains to create a PPA practice that can effectively supplement and, for the analysis of many important questions, replace, traditional analysis. Nevertheless, the book is a valuable step forward.

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Sustaining Innovation: Creating Nonprofit and Government Organizations That Innovate Naturally, by Paul C. Light. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998, 350 pp., \$25.00 cloth.

For nonprofit and government managers and scholars, few topics are of more timely and critical interest than innovation, the subject of Paul Light's latest thought-provoking and illuminating offering. Widespread cynicism about the ability of public-serving organizations to respond effectively to crucial societal challenges has lent a new urgency to pressures for innovative action. "Reinvention" efforts and initiatives that reward and celebrate innovation success stories, like the Ford Foundation/Kennedy School Innovation Awards program and its progeny, are reflective of attempts to highlight and to foster more innovative postures among organizations operating in the public sphere. Light shares the conviction that it is essential for government and nonprofit organizations alike to shake off the prevailing "duck and cover" orientation toward innovation that has so often marked agency action. His book is aimed at developing a deeper understanding about how successful innovation might become more common practice—where the impetus comes from, how it can be cultivated, what serves to sustain it through challenges, and how it prevails in the face of often hostile circumstances.

By Light's admission, the book is designed to offer guidance to practicing managers. Yet along the way he manages to make noteworthy contributions to the theoretical understandings of public innovation that will prove of significant interest to scholars.

In its basic premise, the book mounts a strong challenge to the prevailing paradigm of the public sector innovation literature, which views successful innovation as the product of the work of the heroic, entrepreneurial individual who “directs” (often single-handedly) the innovation effort. This paradigm is explicitly presented in Levin and Sanger’s [1994] writings and implicit in the important work of Behn [1988, 1994] and others, whose focus falls on the individual leader as originator and field marshal of the innovation enterprise. Light, in contrast, looks for the keys to successful innovation not in the individual but *in the organization*. Successful innovation is seen as an outgrowth of institutional capacities created and fed by the orientations, culture, and routines of the agency. While these organizational elements are no doubt importantly shaped by its individual leaders (as they are in a number of cases the book cites), innovation becomes less a direct byproduct of the personal attributes of the manager/entrepreneur, and more a function of effective organizational practice.

To uncover lessons for how to create innovating organizations, Light culls the experiences of 26 nonprofit and government organizations in Minnesota. An eclectic group by any measure, their service orientations ran the gamut from domestic violence prevention, to theater and the performing arts, pollution prevention, education, community economic development, even a public zoo. What these organizations held in common was that each had pursued paths of action representing bold and highly original departures from the status quo in their fields, and each had maintained an organizational track record of sustained innovation over time. Out of the detailed case studies conducted on these disparate organizations, Light skillfully unveils common themes and orientations that seem responsible for their behavior.

Among the wellsprings of innovation Light identifies are organizational features that readers will find fit well in the stream of postbureaucratic thinking. While formal structure seemed less relevant than expected, organizational orientations clearly emphasized debureaucratization and empowerment. Innovating organizations, the book argues, seek routinely and aggressively to push authority downward and to vigorously encourage collaboration and communication that ignores conventional boundaries. Similarly, Light’s data point toward the need for a major shift in the role assumed by government and nonprofit managers from “agents of control” to “catalysts of creativity.” The chief tasks of the new manager are seen to reside in stripping away obstacles that inhibit the unleashing of an organization’s creativity and in generating an organizational culture and practices amenable to experimentation and tolerant of well-reasoned failure. Echoing the work of Denhardt [1993] and others, mission was found to hold the pivotal place as both the driving and centering force for innovation—the spur for creation of new ways of doing things and the screen for choices about when to take chances on new ideas.

For the organizations in this study, cultivating innovation meant not only energetically soliciting ideas from all corners of the organization (ideas offered by janitors and bus drivers yielded substantial payoffs to these groups), but also exhibiting a willingness to place real resources at risk in pursuit of their development. One of the more novel strategies employed by the majority of innovating organizations involved the creation of an innovation investment fund—a pool of “venture capital” consciously put at risk in support of new and promising ideas.

Most surprising among Light’s findings, however, was the importance of rigorous managerial systems. While managerial systems are often held to be antithetical to the creative impulse, for the organizations in Light’s study they paradoxically served to sustain it. Strong financial accounting systems, including “real time” budgeting enabled these organizations to risk funds in support of new ventures while providing protections from unwitting cost hemorrhaging. Strong systems of performance

measurement and accountability were critical to affording front-line workers greater discretion to experiment. “An innovating organization can only push authority downward... if it has good measures of performance coming back up,” according to Light (p. 174). In the world of practice, these findings should serve to send out a much needed wake-up call to organizations in the nonprofit sector who often resist devoting time and attention to managerial improvements, dismissing them as unwarranted distractions from their central cause-driven program efforts. It also should serve as an important reminder to government managers that managerial systems are not to be viewed as ends in themselves, but as means for liberating organizational energies.

Light burrows through the mountain of information his study assembled to extract these and other valuable insights, which are presented in a lively and engaging manner. The book deserves a wide audience among those interested in innovation, contemporary organizations, and public and nonprofit administration. And it will prove of special use to government and nonprofit managers themselves who will be heartened by the examples of organizations that succeeded against the odds, and will be informed by the lessons offered for how to facilitate innovation’s impulses in their own organizational settings.

There is one limitation that seemed to surface in this otherwise well-framed and informative offering. While the book aims to provide guidance to both government and nonprofit managers, governmental entities were significantly underrepresented in the innovation cases, outstripped by nonprofits 2 to 1. Additionally, Light takes pains to point out that those government agencies that surfaced in his sample tended—almost across the board—to look and to function more like nonprofits than like conventional governmental agencies. While the implicit message this sends is welcomed by those of us who have felt government would do well to take a page from the nonprofit lesson book, the relative sparseness of useful governmental cases raises the question of whether the greater complexity of the government’s institutional operating environment does not pose more inherently problematic challenges for government managers. For example, the vigor of contemporary legislative oversight of bureaucratic activity might well lead key external actors to label an innovation investment fund as wasteful, to view failure less tolerantly, and to frown on the loosening of agency top-down control. In contending with these external institutional constraints, the book is less effective in suggesting strategies for how to get from here to there. For this reason, it might be fruitfully read in tandem with Altshuler and Behn’s [1997] *Innovation in American Government*, another outstanding new volume that provides supplementing perspectives.

None of this should serve to overshadow the critically important advisories offered by Light, however, which retain their relevance to organizations across both sectors. His attempts to bridge the existing bifurcation in the government-nonprofit literatures and to facilitate learning across sectoral boundaries will earn appreciation from those of us whose work resides at the government-nonprofit interface. And the book should serve to energize an important discussion about innovation and organizational practice. In sum, Light delivers a compelling message about innovation’s organizational foundations and lessons for how to build them that can help in fostering public organizations more fully prepared to creatively meet the challenges of the decades ahead.

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Christian Hunold

From Promises to Performance: Achieving Global Environmental Goals, by Gary C. Bryner. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997, 400 pp., \$15.00 paper.

Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics, by Paul Wapner. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, 224 pp., \$56.50 cloth, \$18.95 paper.

Global Governance: Drawing Insights from the Environmental Experience, edited by Oran R. Young. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, 364 pp., \$22.50 paper.

That pollution does not stop at national boundaries has been one of the central messages of contemporary environmental movements. This insight, combined with publicity concerning transboundary environmental issues ranging from desertification to trade in hazardous wastes, has generated international pressure for enhanced environmental policy cooperation among nations. The response has been impressive: Since the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, the number of international environmental agreements has mushroomed to some 175. That said, observers disagree about whether mere growth in the number of treaties and conventions reflects genuine progress in the search for effective solutions to global environmental problems. Formal treaty-making, more so than customary international law, is often limited in its effectiveness by international anarchy resulting from the sovereignty of states.¹ While all three books reviewed here acknowledge the limitations of international law in overcoming collective action problems in international environmental policy, each proposes a different alternative. Gary Bryner examines whether effective international environmental policy may require the seemingly harmonious marriage of self-interest and the public good provided by markets. Oran Young and his collaborators explore the effectiveness of international environmental policy regimes. Paul Wapner, finally, argues that what little progress has been made toward more effective global environmental governance would have been unthinkable without the activism and support of transnational environmental advocacy groups.

This essay compares markets, international regimes, and global civil society as sources of global environmental governance. Two caveats are in order, however. First,

¹Some international lawyers, however, think that international environmental law has revised the notion of state sovereignty to include a concern for obligations as well as rights. [see Schrijver, 1997].

international regime is a more diffuse concept than *market* and, as we shall see, *global civil society*. Moreover, there is some room for overlap among these categories insofar as regimes may and increasingly do include market and/or civil society components. However, the regimes approach is sufficiently distinct from the two others to warrant separate treatment. Second, among the books discussed here, Bryner's is the least motivated by questions of international relations theory and remains closest to the perspectives and assumptions of policymakers. While the two other volumes are policy-oriented as well, they also seek to expand our conception of world politics. More so than Bryner, Young and Wapner examine environmental policy because they think it is emblematic of the ways that world politics is changing today.

Markets

Gary Bryner sets out to sketch a path for "achieving global environmental goals." The book clarifies the goals underlying various global environmental policy agreements as well as the political choices involved in reaching them. Following a survey of existing international environmental agreements and the challenges to their successful implementation, Bryner considers market-based incentives, such as tradable emissions allowances, as alternatives to conventional regulatory approaches. Bryner agrees with regulatory reformers that conventional regulatory approaches are often inefficient, but he is not prepared to downplay the flaws of markets. Thus, his review of experiments with market-based incentives in U.S. environmental policy concludes that "[a]lthough the theory of market instruments in regulation seems compelling, actually using these instruments raises a host of questions and concerns" (p. 149). In addition to the well-known problem of adequately pricing pollution, Bryner focuses on the ethical and political contexts in which markets actually operate. For example, markets cannot negate the fact that choices about how much pollution we are prepared to live with are fundamentally moral choices. Markets therefore cannot relieve us of making these choices. If market incentives are to promote environmentally desirable ends, they require fairly complex systems of political and bureaucratic oversight—much like the command-and-control regulations they are meant to replace.

A further problem is that firms appear to be less critical of bureaucracy per se than of the cost of environmental regulation, conventional or otherwise. If the private sector's enthusiasm for economic incentives in environmental policy is fueled primarily by the anticipation of cost savings than a more efficient system of environmental protection, however, market-based policies will likely provoke the same intense interest-group resistance faced by conventional regulatory approaches. Bryner concludes that although market-based incentives promise much-needed flexibility and decentralization, they will not suffice to bring about the more fundamental changes needed to push the political economy toward greater sustainability. What is more, he does not think that these changes will happen soon, domestically or in the global political economy. Even though markets hold out the promise of balancing economic and environmental goals, Bryner claims that an agenda for radical environmental change does not sit well with the evident preference of existing political and administrative systems for incrementalism.

There is thus no easy path from promises to performance here. Bryner's chief contribution to the debate on market-based incentives and the environment is the exhortation that choices concerning the pace of reaching environmental goals and the relative importance of competing goals should not be left to market forces or technical experts. Clearly, choosing policy goals should receive priority over choosing policy tools. While price signals may lower the cost of coordinating the actions of

millions of people, they are no substitute for a democratic process aimed at debating and choosing public policy goals. The chapter on market-based incentives necessarily draws on the U.S. experience, but the rest of the book is clearly global in focus, dealing with the political economy of global environmental regulation and the prospects for preserving the environment of less developed countries. This book is a clear-headed introduction to the promises and pitfalls of international environmental diplomacy and policy. Written for a nonspecialist audience, it can be profitably employed in undergraduate courses that examine environmental policy from an international perspective.

Regimes

Oran Young and his contributors employ the concept of *international regime* to anchor their analysis of the prospects for “governance without government” in global environmental policy. It may seem odd to think of international regimes as policy tools, but the authors look to them to address the “dramatic gap between the demand for governance and the capacity to supply governance in international society” (p. 274). To this end, they ask whether regime analysis has produced a distinctive conception of governance that permits us to narrow that gap. Conceptually, argue Olav Stokke and Paul Wapner in separate theoretical chapters, regime analysts must shed their statist and structural realist lenses. Insofar as regime analysis is “gradually taking a more inclusive approach in dealing with both the locus and mechanisms of governance” (p. 35), it may help us think through the meaning of global governance and how to provide more of it.

In domestic politics, of course, the concept of governance is interpreted to mean that the state ought not to row but only to steer [see Osbourne and Gaebler, 1992]. Applied to global politics, *governance* points to a richer conception of politics than is typically supplied by dominant state-centric conceptions of international relations. The authors assembled here look neither to the old days of hegemonic stability nor to some future world federation for solutions to the collective action problems that plague international society. Rather, they explore the interplay between diverse sets of state and nonstate actors in identifying and implementing solutions to more or less well-defined and understood international environmental policy challenges. For example, Marica Valiante, Paul Muldoon, and Lee Botts show that the Great Lakes Water Quality Management regime would have been far less effective if multiple Canadian and American voluntary associations had not joined together in a binational environmental advocacy and monitoring community to oversee the regime’s implementation. And Thomas Bernauer draws much the same conclusion from the study of regimes created to manage international rivers in different parts of the world.

One of the limitations of regime analysis, of course, has been its fairly strict compartmentalization along separate issue areas. While this state of affairs reflects the issue-specific nature of most regimes, the contributors inquire into the relationship between international regimes and global governance: Do examples of successful regimes herald a new conception of governance that will spread? Does the emergence of international regimes in different issue areas have broader consequences for the future of international society in general? And can the experience gained from environmental issues be applied to other governance problems that arise in world politics? Konrad von Moltke, for example, examines linkages among trade and environmental policy regimes, tracing the difficulties associated with reconciling trade and environmental goals to the mutually incompatible structural principles that have defined regimes in each issue area. Where trade regimes are governed by two simple ideas—efficiency and comparative advantage—von Moltke identifies five distinct

principles underlying environmental regimes: environmental integrity, cooperation, science and precaution, openness, and subsidiarity. At the institutional level as well, there are significant differences between trade and environmental regimes. Trade regimes are institutionalized through the principles of most-favored nation and national treatment; international environmental institutions, in contrast, lack such conceptual clarity—witness the heated debate in recent years on the meaning of sustainability. To some extent, then, the problem of reconciling trade and the environment seems to stem from the different expectations held by actors in the two regime types about what a regime is and how it should operate. At the same time, participants in environmental regimes may find that the lessons learned from studying trade regimes are of little use to them.

In keeping with their preference for thick description rather than generalizability, the authors' insights for global governance drawn from the environmental experience are somewhat tentative. First among them is the observation that international regimes do not operate in a social vacuum; the social environment in which regimes must operate comprises state as well as nonstate actors. A second major lesson concerns the question of regime effectiveness. To ease the difficulty of determining regime effectiveness (considering that few problems are ever solved by the regimes ostensibly created to solve them), Young proposes the notion of process management, which focuses attention on problem management rather than the more ambitious but possibly self-defeating notion of problem solving. Given the complexity of many transboundary environmental issues, this strikes me as a sensible suggestion as long as we take care to develop criteria that indicate when a problem is not being managed well.

Finally, as for the broader consequences of regimes, Young sums up the volume's findings that the creation and operation of issue-specific regimes are changing the rules of the state system in two ways. First, the traditional view of sovereignty as a basis for the assertion of rights on the part of states is being joined by a complementary view that sovereignty entails duties or obligations. And second, nonstate actors have obtained greater freedom of action vis-à-vis international regimes insofar as they not only live by but also shape the rules states make. Thus, one point at least is quite clear. The prospects for global governance stand and fall with the persistence of these changes—the extension of sovereignty to include obligations as well as the ability of nonstate actors to see to it that states take their obligations seriously. Having sketched and partially executed an ambitious research agenda, this book is a theoretically sophisticated and empirically rich addition to the literature on international environmental policy regimes.

Global Civil Society

Paul Wapner's book focuses on the societal dimension of global environmental politics, extending the concept of civil society to the global arena. He defines civil society as the realm of social action between the individual and the state, that is, the sphere of voluntary associations. While some political theorists would exclude the economy from their definition of civil society, Wapner's point is that, just as in domestic politics, there are arenas of world politics that are not directly controlled by and thus relatively autonomous of the state. This is true for global and transboundary environmental issues, where various transnational environmental groups engage in practices that Wapner collectively terms *world civic politics*. Three case studies reveal different political strategies. Greenpeace focuses on increasing environmental awareness through publicizing environmental atrocities, the World Wildlife Fund sponsors local projects that empower villagers in less developed countries to resist the further

degradation of their environments, and Friends of the Earth pressures governments the world over to work for improved environmental well-being.

Notwithstanding their different foci, Wapner argues, all three forms of activism seek primarily to politicize global civil society rather than influence state behavior. States remain important actors in world politics, to be sure, but the civic dimension of world politics described here provides a source of environmental governance in its own right, by directly and indirectly changing the assumptions and actions of people around the world. The self-organized publics of global civil society do not seek to employ state power to achieve their goals. Rather, networks of transnationally active nonstate organizations acting politically in global civil society provide an important *complementary* source of global environmental governance.

Wapner emphatically denies that world civic politics holds all the answers to global environmental problems. His more modest claim is that state-centric accounts of global environmental politics, and world politics more generally, are incomplete because they are informed by a limited understanding of politics as taking place within and between formal governmental institutions. Following writers like Foucault and Lukes, Wapner argues for the importance of the cultural, nongovernmental dimension of world politics. In this extrainstitutional sphere of politics, it is not law backed by force that regulates behavior, but less formal rules and norms that shape people's expectations concerning environmentally responsible behavior. Wapner concludes that government-backed international regimes are not the only means for addressing global environmental problems; world civic politics matters as well. A case in point is the Shell Corporation's recent discovery of its environmental and social conscience in response to complaints of transnational activist groups, such as Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch, concerning the disposal of North Sea oil rigs and the pollution of Nigerian oil fields and alleged collusion with the military government there.²

Wapner's account of world civic politics as a source of governance in its own right echoes Young's observation that international regimes do not operate in a social vacuum. The two books suggest, in fact, that we may have already seen the emergence of truly global forms of governance in international environmental policy. Furthermore, they provide evidence that there is indeed an ongoing global debate about the goals of international environmental policy that goes beyond a naive fascination with policy tools and technical fixes. In this context, it is reassuring to learn that the G-8 nations recently rejected a tradable emissions scheme for greenhouse gases on the ground that such a scheme would force higher pollution levels onto poorer, less technologically advanced nations. In spite of the tremendous current popularity of market-based approaches to solving public policy problems, major states appear to have rejected such an approach on moral grounds.

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²Wapner's decision to include the economy in his definition of global civility makes sense in light of the tremendous impact of transnational corporations on environmental well-being.