Public participation in environmental assessment and decision making edited by T Dietz, P C Stern; The National Academies Press, Washington, DC, 2008, 322 pages, $59.00, ISBN 9780309123983

On a conceptual level, the subject of this book combines two of the most significant issues of our time: democratic process and protection of the natural world. Policy makers, planners, and the general populace increasingly put emphasis on and demand for involving the public in resolving questions of environmental health, protection, and well-being. Yet there are varying positions among both participation theorists and practitioners about the degree to which non-experts should be involved in analytic tasks. It is to these controversies and beyond that *Public Participation in Environmental Assessment and Decision Making* turns.

In the book the editors present the work of a fifteen-member panel of the National Research Council's Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change. Paul Stern and Thomas Dietz edit the book and serve as study director and panel chair, respectively. The volume is generally well organized and effective in synthesizing diverse academic literature and practical expertise. It will serve researchers and academics well, while also offering plenty of information for the practitioner looking for tools and advice. The editors and authors do a good job of defining and categorizing some frequently misunderstood concepts (eg stakeholder, directly affected public, observing public, and general public) and pointing out areas for which further research is needed.

The topic dealt with in the book is so vast and dynamic that a significant contribution of the editors is simply in organizing the existing information. Researchers will find this particularly helpful; at the very least, the book will give them a starting point from which to delve further into many aspects of public participation—from fundamental questions, such as what is the value of public deliberation for improving decision quality, to how particular processes will build legitimacy for outcomes and improve decision-making capacity.

The book begins with an introduction to the subject and a historical and theoretical review of public participation within the framework of environmental assessment and decision making, and then the authors describe the literature and empirical research on the effects of public participation. In the next three chapters the authors focus on practice and largely echo principles offered in other studies (eg Office of Management and Budget, and President's Council on Environmental Quality, 2005). Three sets of principles of good practice are examined in detail: for project management, for organizing the participation, and for integrating science. In the next two chapters the authors focus on how public participation is influenced by: (1) issue-related aspects of context (eg the environmental media, scientific knowledge, and uncertainty), and (2) people-related aspects of context (eg institutional aspects, who are the affected parties). The last chapter contains conclusions and recommendations. Although this sequence flows, the book would be more reader friendly if the chapters had been grouped into units.

Other shortcomings are that some of the more obscure aspects of public participation are neglected, particularly in regards to the framework within which deliberation about the environment takes place. Sometimes the reader loses track of the overall environmental assessment and decision-making focus. Also, international perspectives are missed. Particularly in the area of environmental impact assessment (EIA), some national approaches based on European Union directives restrict public participation in terms of which parties can participate and even limit EIA to consider only topics relevant to decision making (Petts, 1999). This makes for interesting contrast to the US approaches to public participation.

At times the focus of the book is on the environmental policy milieu (such as in the treatment of the uncertainty present at the frontiers of environmental science); at others it takes a broad-brush approach, addressing concerns relevant to all types of public policies (such as the use of decision analysis for integrating science and public input). Although impressively comprehensive, some important literature on public involvement in environmental decision making is absent [eg extensive work on public participation in scoping for environmental impact assessment (see Mulvihill, 2003; Mulvihill and Baker, 2001), or work on public involvement in the establishment of protected areas (eg Dalton, 2005)]. Perhaps by drawing evidence more often from the larger scale studies and meta-analyses (eg global environmental assessments), some of these very valuable, albeit 'niche' applications, are marginalized by the book.

Nevertheless, scholars of environmental policy and researchers will find the sections covering experimental and quasi-experimental studies on public participation most interesting. For policy analysts, theoretical justifications for participation discussed in the beginning of the book and referred to throughout will no doubt be extremely informative and applicable to a wide range of policy concerns. Practitioners, particularly environmental planners and policy makers, will find many parts of the book instructive and helpful [eg the reference to the International Avocation for Public Participation and to sources of case studies (page 112)]. Few books based on reports of this type can serve so succinctly as guidebook, handbook, or textbook—this is surely one of them.

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The politics of climate change by A Giddens; Polity Press, Oxford, 2009, 256 pages, £55.00 cloth, £12.99 paper, ISBN 9780745646923, 9780745646930

Sir Anthony Giddens, the renowned social theorist, boldly enters into the global warming debate by claiming, "we have no politics of climate change". Given frequent complaints that climate change suffers from too much politics, perhaps Giddens's argument is best restated as suggesting we currently have the *wrong* politics to limit climate change. In this book he outlines a set of political innovations aimed at helping the international community effectively address one of the greatest challenges of our time. *The Politics of Climate Change* stands out in the crowded terrain of climate change publications by placing politics—rather than science or economics—at the center of the analysis. Giddens's proposals for a new politics of climate change should provoke lively debate in the classroom as well as among academics and policy makers. Ironically, given the title of the book, Giddens largely glosses over the politics of moving towards this new political vision, which may disappoint readers hoping for a practical, how-to guide to climate policy making.

Giddens argues that a new politics of climate change must consist of a new set of concepts to guide decision making and involve rethinking the role of the central state. In the introduction Giddens contends climate change must be reframed as an issue of competing risks to encourage society to act before it is too late, rather than waiting for the effects of climate change to become tangible and immediate. Chapter 1 begins with the requisite overview of the biophysical science, but then moves to an interesting discussion in which Giddens situates debates between mainstream climate scientists and climate skeptics in the broader context of risk and uncertainty. In chapter 2 Giddens links the risks of climate change and energy security and argues that any effort to address climate change must involve a radical restructuring of the global energy system. In chapter 3 Giddens critiques key concepts within green thinking, such as the precautionary principle and sustainable development, arguing that they fail to provide useful guidance for decision making. Instead, he proposes a 'percentage principle' approach that involves balancing competing risks and calls for consideration of both underdevelopment and overdevelopment.