

making, from environmental indicators to compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), and emphasize the need for integrated and holistic policy-making, concluding with a framework for future progress in local environmental agendas.

Constructing Local Environmental Agendas certainly reflects what is a dynamic and diverse area of research and successfully uses manifold empirical examples of commitment and energy to local level environmental initiatives. For the most part, the contributions avoid blind optimism in participation techniques and generally provide a critical-realist account of both opportunities and obstacles to more inclusive deliberative practices. However, there is less critical reflection on the reification of participation as a 'good' idea unquestionable in its 'rightness'. In addition, the emphasis on the front-end of participation initiatives means that there is little detailed consideration of how the products of participation might actually come together in environmental decision-making.

Of course, there are many problems inherent in the production of an edited text: one can always quibble with remit, ordering, and the selection or omission of topics. However, if there were to be one substantive criticism of *Constructing Local Environmental Agendas*, it would be its lack of theoretical content. There is disappointingly little engagement with the myriad of theoretical positions familiar to environmental debates and no innovative insights on how theory and practice could usefully be intertwined to address pervading issues of power and the politics of understanding at the local level in an increasingly globalized world. I would acknowledge that perhaps the nature of the beast, the edited volume, is not well suited to such a task, but it is certainly an aspect of local environmental agendas that deserves more attention.

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AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION. Henry Buller, Geoff A. Wilson and Andreas Höll (editors), Ashgate, Aldershot, 2000. ISBN 1 84014 504 8. £45 (hardback). 310 pp.

These are interesting times for students of the European Union's (EU) agri-environmental policy (AEP). Member states are currently putting in place the Rural Development Programmes which will provide the post-Agenda 2000 framework for an expanded AEP presence throughout EU territory. At

the same time, however, threats to the 'European Model of Agriculture', which agri-environmental measures are supposed to defend, are gathering on the horizon as the World Trade Organization (WTO) convenes a new round of trade talks aimed at further liberalization of agricultural support. The strength of the challenge from the liberalizers is still hard to judge at this stage, but it is clear that the way agri-environmental schemes are designed and implemented in the EU-15 will come under close scrutiny. Judging from this book, the product of an EU-funded study comparing the huge diversity of approaches to implementing Regulation 2078/92 in nine member states, together with AEP in that most staunch of proponents of a multifunctional agriculture, Switzerland, they face a difficult task.

As *Agri-Environmental Policy in the European Union* makes clear from the outset, varying agri-environmental priorities, institutional contexts and policy histories have led member states down different pathways of implementation. Some, like Sweden and the UK, have used agri-environmental schemes chiefly to protect farmed landscapes, while others, like Germany and Finland, have been most interested in using extensification measures to reduce farm-based pollution. A third group, which includes France, Spain and Austria, has operated the regulation like an income-support device in an effort to maintain extensive livestock farming in marginal areas. The authors sensibly avoid making judgements about the relative effectiveness and political defensibility of these various strategies, but they do point out that some states are much more successful than others in pulling down EU funds under the rules for co-financing national programmes. The best way to maximize spending (and EU receipts), it seems, is to offer 'horizontal' schemes across large areas of territory, but with simple conditions of entry for farmers. The principal beneficiaries of the AEP budget—Germany and Austria, followed closely by France, Sweden and Finland—all implement programmes of this broad type. Member states committed to targeted schemes, like the UK and Denmark, on the other hand, come well down the ranking in terms of total AEP spend. The corollary to this is some dramatic disparities in the level of farmer participation between countries, with 67% of all contracts funded under the agri-environmental regulation held by German, Austrian and French farmers.

A recurring theme of the book is the importance of national policy traditions in shaping the way AEP has developed in individual member states. Some of the most laggardly states, like Greece, Spain and

Portugal, have struggled to square the (chiefly northern-orientated) environmental priorities of Regulation 2078/92 with the traditionally very productivist thrust of their agricultural policies. As the book's excellent analyses of the situation in these southern member states reveal, glaring gaps in coverage remain, with still no significant provision for the protection of high natural value farming in Greece and poor coverage of Mediterranean mountain areas and *dehesas* in Spain. The newest members of the EU, on the other hand, have been much more adroit in using the Regulation to carry over already established policies for landscape protection and the support of farm incomes in marginal areas. Austria, one of the main beneficiaries of the AEP budget, was determined from an early stage in accession negotiations to preserve its ability to continue supporting mountain agriculture, and obtained approval for an ambitious agri-environmental programme from the European Commission well in advance of membership.

Even if it went no further than comparing the schemes and programmes currently on offer to farmers in these ten countries, this book would be a valuable addition to the literature. Fortunately, the contributors go beyond thick description to try to explain why there is such a variety of approaches to

AEP. True, some chapters are more successful than others in discussing the underlying political economy of AEP, with the chapter on France being particularly good in its analysis of the socio-cultural roots of agri-environmentalism in that country. The standardized structure of chapters, however, means that every contributor has to elaborate the nature of the agri-environmental debate, and give some consideration to the way in which policy traditions have informed AEP design and implementation. Inevitably, the book is much more about looking back than looking forward, and readers expecting an analysis of what the future holds for AEP in the context of the WTO will be disappointed at the rather hurriedly written closing chapter. An opportunity has been missed here to review, however briefly, the strengths and weaknesses of the EU's approach in an international context, and to examine some of the assumptions on which that policy is based. This aside, *Agri-Environmental Policy in the European Union* is an excellent contribution, which will stand for some time as the best available comparative study of the first five years of AEP in the EU.

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