

Book Reviews

Biermann, Frank, and Steffen Bauer, eds. 2005. *A World Environmental Organization: Solution or Threat for Effective International Environmental Governance?* Aldershot: Ashgate.

Reviewed by J. Samuel Barkin
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The possibility of a World Environmental Organization (WEO) has been a hot topic recently among scholars of global environmental politics. Arguments both for and against a fundamental reorganization of the institutional structure of international environmental governance, by both scholars and practitioners, have appeared in a variety of venues, including this journal. The self-proclaimed goal of Biermann and Bauer's *A World Environmental Organization* is to make both sides of this debate available in one volume, rather than add new arguments to those already on the table. In this goal, the volume succeeds admirably. It makes both the arguments for both sides, and the historical and institutional context of those arguments, available to the reader in one place.

The volume is organized in three parts. The first is designed to put the debate into a broader institutional and historical context. First the editors review the academic debate on the topic. The second chapter, by Lorraine Elliot, provides a history of the development of the institutional structure of international environmental governance. The third, by Joyeeta Gupta, examines the question specifically from the perspective of the global South. It makes the argument that the South must create a united negotiating front across all structures of global governance. Whatever the merits of this argument in its own terms, it does not, as all the other chapters do, focus specifically on the question of a world environmental organization.

The second part of the volume makes the case for a world environmental organization. Steve Charnovitz argues that a WEO is necessary as an institutional competitor to major international organizations in other issue-areas, particularly the World Trade Organization (WTO). Frank Biermann makes the case for promoting UNEP from its current status as a program within the UN to a specialized agency, politically and financially independent of the UN. This, he argues, would give it broader capabilities, akin to those of the WTO, the World Health Organization (WHO), or the International Labour Organization (ILO). John Kirton suggests that this is the wrong model, that in fact the global North should create an international organization modeled on the Commission for

Environmental Cooperation (CEC) of the North American Free Trade Area, rather than on the global specialized agencies.

All three of these chapters use existing organizations as models, without adequately addressing the question of whether they are appropriate models. Charnovitz asks why trade has a single organization, the WTO, whereas the environment does not. But one might argue that the appropriate equivalent to the environment is the economy generally, rather than trade specifically, and the economy is represented by a plethora of international organizations, organized in a wide variety of ways in response to the varying needs of different issue-areas within the realm of international economic governance. Biermann sees the WHO and ILO as examples of successful specialized agencies, but does not even attempt to make the case that international governance is superior in health and labor than in environmental issues. And Kirton holds up as a model the CEC, without addressing arguments that the successes of the CEC have been quite modest.

The third part of the book presents three arguments against a WEO. Konrad von Moltke argues that environmental issues are different enough from each other that having one organization to oversee all of them does not make sense. He proposes “clustering” of existing structures rather than the creation of new ones. Sebastian Oberthür and Thomas Gehring point to some of the disadvantages of large bureaucratic structures, and the advantages of bureaucratic competition. And Adil Najam suggests that what he calls “organizational tinkering” misses the point, that the problem is one of political will rather than organizational structure.

There are a number of themes that appear in this volume that do not neatly covary with the pro- and anti-WEO divide. One of these is the question of whether the problem in international environmental governance is essentially bureaucratic or political. Both Biermann and von Moltke, for example, argue from different sides of the WEO debate that designing the bureaucratic structure correctly will have a significant impact on the quality of governance. But Charnovitz and Najam seem to agree that the details of structure are not the important thing, that political will is key, although they present diametrically opposite views of how best to create political will. Another of these themes is the relationship between environmental governance and sustainable development. Some of the authors seem to use the terms more or less interchangeably. Others argue specifically for a separation of one from the other, while some of the authors argue that more effort has to be put into bringing the two together. Similarly, the question of the relationship between North and South in this debate is something that is ignored by some of the authors, but stressed by others. Kirton, for example, argues explicitly that the North must create its own WEO. Gupta argues, just as explicitly, that the South must not let it.

The debate on the merits of a WEO will no doubt continue. But the broad outlines of the debate are well encapsulated in this book. The crosscutting themes found in the chapters are representative of cleavages in the broader de-

bate. This volume is thus useful both as a reference for scholars interested in the debate and as a teaching tool for courses that pay significant attention to the question of reform of the institutions of global environmental governance.

Bulkeley, Harriet, and Michele Betsill. 2003. *Cities and Climate Change: Urban Sustainability and Global Environmental Governance*. London and New York: Routledge.

Reviewed by Kai N. Lee
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Agenda 21, set forth at the Earth Summit in 1992, provided a first draft of instructions for finding a sustainable world, in which meeting the needs of the present might not entail compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As has become apparent in the years since, Agenda 21 was a crude and incomplete chart. What we have is an atlas no better than the earliest maps of the age of discovery, when Europeans filled in large stretches of the Americas and Asia with drawings of monsters and labeled them “terra incognita.”

Harriet Bulkeley and Michele Betsill, young social scientists in the UK and US, respectively, have explored a significant region of the new world of sustainable development: the way that cities are undertaking climate protection initiatives. The results are both disappointing and hopeful—as one might expect from stories of pioneers in strange lands.

Urban populations now equal those in rural areas, and urban centers account for far more energy use and economic output than does the countryside. Cities in the developed economies drive greenhouse gas emissions worldwide through the consumption and investment choices of their residents, and it is logical to look to these places in the effort to contain and to mitigate climate change.

Cities and Climate Change is a policy evaluation of the Climate Change Program (CCP) of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), a transnational nongovernmental organization created in 1990 to provide linkages among local governments committed to global sustainability. The CCP is examined not in itself but through its effects in six local governments: Newcastle, Cambridgeshire, and Leicester in the United Kingdom, Newcastle in New South Wales, Australia (all based on empirical studies by Bulkeley), and Denver and Milwaukee in the United States (done by Betsill). These cities include declining industrial centers (both Newcastles, Milwaukee, Leicester) and growing service-based economies (Cambridgeshire, Denver). The former are seeking to join the ranks of the latter. For all, the financial advantages and political cachet of mitigating global warming provide incentives to local government leaders.

Surprisingly, the quantitative performance of the governmental programs is not evaluated, so the reader cannot compare the tonnes of greenhouse gases