FOREWORD

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The studies in this book show how organizations, including national states, adapt to the pressures and rules of the modern environmental movement, and try to change or manage these rules. Andy Hoffman and Marc Ventresca have put together a most impressive set of studies covering many fronts. Their collaborators discuss the nature of environmental policy pressures and the varied responses of different types of organizations in different types of countries. They are concerned with the conditions under which organizations produce purely symbolic as opposed to more implemented responses, and the attempts of organizations to create and perhaps manipulate the environmental rules under which they are to function.

In the background, and central to the driving forces faced by both modern organizations and the researchers here, is a social movement of great urgency and impact. In the last three or four decades, "the environment" has come to be a main focus of attention in all leading countries and in world society as a whole. Public concern with the topic has a number of properties that make it both powerful and pervasive.

First, environmental concerns are matters both of social organization and of an embedded culture and set of meanings. We talk differently about the air, water, earth, and biosystem than we used to, and perceive many detailed problems and crises. Large numbers of new social organizations arise focusing on these problems: public and private structures that did not exist a few years ago. Local organizations question water quality, national organizations track wildlife declines, and many international organizations call attention to widespread problems (Chapter 2).

Second, the new patterns of talk and organization occur at every level of social life from the most local to the most global. The concerns at each level are often in-

tegrated with those at other levels. So people with reasonable skills at public talk can now quickly see the problems of the local stream as linked to global problems of water pollution, or hot days as instances of the greenhouse effect. Similarly, local environmental organizations are linked in networks to national and global ones. The local air reflects a world problem, and the world problem is shown to be a problem of local air.

Third, the whole system of discourse and organization takes a universal and global turn. We are all given more and more reasons to be concerned with, and feel entitled and obligated to be concerned with, environmental events everywhere else. The rain forest is a property of the world, not just (for example) Brazil. Wherever you travel in the modern world, you are likely to find at least some recognition of the universal problems and issues involved. An endangered species is endangered for all of us. More directly, worldwide interdependencies are involved in flows of disease-carrying dust, genetic material, species invasions, and so on. We have the right and obligation to complain about any problem anywhere, and to complain in general and universal scientific terms.

Fourth, the problems of the natural environment, though specific and technical and disparate in character, fall under a general rubric. They reflect a broad and integrated set of problems and crises: an overall moral confrontation. Thus the term "environment" reflects a highly general and highly codified frame within which an enormous number of specific issues can be tightly fit. In a technical sense this is not obviously true; many environmental problems could be seen in isolation. But "the environment" is not a technical matter. It is a global frame for understanding. Urban sprawl around one city can now be seen as a multidimensional assault on the whole ecosystem.

An enormously expanded institution full of meanings and organizations has come into place. The natural environment, as interpreted in the scientific language of the new culture by the new organizational system, is now a codified part of the social environment within which we all live.

This book is about the impact of this great institutional system on the public and private organizations that make up so much of modern social life. It is about whether and how organizations come to terms with the new pressures and rules. It is about how and when they feed back and modify the rapidly evolving controls and rules making up the new environmental regime.

The book contains academic analyses of the ways modern organizations adapt to and modify their wider social environment—in this case, those components of the social environment that celebrate and regulate the natural environment. The writers are following the tradition called institutional analysis: the line of thought,

in modern organization theory, that emphasizes the breadth of interdependence of organizations with their social settings. In this tradition, organizations are not only involved in some exchanges (such as of resources or products) with the social world around them: they are created and legitimated by this world, and their identities depend on it. On the other side, they make strenuous and sometimes successful efforts, not only to do business within their contexts, but to build and change the fundamental rules by which they themselves live.

This intellectual tradition turns out to be especially useful in analyzing the interrelations of organizations with modern environmentalism, as this book convincingly demonstrates. Fundamentally, this is because the modern movement concerned with the natural environment is a very broad cultural force changing the rules defining public and private actors, including all sorts of organizations. Thus new rules regulating, say, air pollution, are not simply matters of technical costs or exchanges. They have a broad moral and cultural character, activating fundamental rights and obligations that are supposed to be part of the identity of all of us. Thus they penetrate modern organizations' technical transactions, but also the broader moral obligations that are to determine what organizations do or don't do. There's a difference between charging too much for a product and poisoning the local water supply.

The authors of the chapters in this book understand and share that vision. They understand that the natural environment is in crisis on many fronts. Many changes, and much adaptation, are desperately needed. So the research questions here have a moral and policy urgency. But this is true of the organizations they study, too. The crucial character of environmental crises and problems is taken for granted here. It pervades the thinking of researchers, organizations, and most readers. The urgency involves the questions researchers ask and the ways organizations tend to relate to environmental pressures. Important themes of the studies in this book follow:

- Organizations confront an environmental system defined in terms of objective scientific laws, studies, and measures (Chapters 2 and 5).

- There is a tendency to respond to environmental regulation with symbolic conformity (Chapters 6 – 9, 11). This kind of conformity is practically required, may be highly rewarded, and may in the long run be consequential (Chapters 8 and 9). The fears that organizational responses are *only* symbolic are endemic—both in the research community represented here, and in the wider world. Throughout this book, questions of overall effectiveness of environmental regulation recur. Partly this reflects uncertainty about ef-

fective implementation. But it also reflects the shared urgency associated with constantly expanding perceptions of environmental problems and crises. Today, pictures of environmental problems expand faster than any set of possible solutions.

- Countries differ not only in how they respond to the pressures of modern environmentalism, but in the organizational forms of their responses. More corporatist (that is, European) responses involve more effective cooperation (Chapters 15 and 18). Market society and the adversarial polity (as in the United States) may produce more response (Chapters 7 and 16), but market rationality may distort the formulation of environmental problems (Chapters 5 and 14).

- Industries and ecological settings differ in how much impact environmental pressures have (Chapters 3 and 6). In high-impact industries, stabilized and codified responses may be more likely—but this does not mean the responses are homogeneous (Chapter 6).

- There is much variation among organizations in their response to environmental regulation (Chapters 6, 7, 10–13, 17). Sometimes organizations feel obliged to stick with their old organizational fields, with their customary arrangements and accounts (Chapters 4, 14, 15). The researchers tend to see fields that work by negotiation as more effective than those that work through adversarial or competitive arrangements (but see Chapter 16).

- Finally, a dominant theme throughout the studies in this book is that organizations try to affect environmental rules that regulate them. There is much institutional entrepreneurship, and active management of the regulatory world around focal organizations. The authors here reject the common picture of organizations as passive instruments of a dominating external control system. They see organizations as trying to lead the wider polities in which they are embedded with various mixtures of vision, self-interest, and self-protection (Chapters 7, 10–12, 14–15, and 17–18). There is, on one hand, a tendency to fear the influence of dominating large corporations over environmental regulations. But in the studies here, on the other hand, this is balanced by a picture of organizations that are involved in long-term cooperative arrangements. The question of who is co-opting whom is left partially open. No simple account of dominance is plausible. In the complex pattern of relationships and the context of rapidly expanding perceptions of environmental problems, yesterday's solutions may come to be seen, today, as sellouts.

But the common framework is clear. It is shared by most researchers, readers, and the general public. It involves a vision: the natural environment is filled with overwhelming problems and crises that must be solved by extant organizations (and new ones). The fear that these organizations will not try to deal with these problems, or will try to minimize or evade the problems, is part of public discourse. It is a force leading to constant organizational expansion in the modern system, as organizations come to terms with expanding pressures.

None of us are in the best position to assess the overall effectiveness of contemporary efforts at environmental regulation. But this book makes it clear that the environmental movement has had enormous impact on modern organizations. Everywhere the researchers look, they find organizations trying to deal with new pressures: structuring symbolic and implemented conformity, manipulating the regulations they face, trying to find forms for incorporating environmental concerns, and implementing reinterpreted external controls. None of this may work well, but note what the researchers do not find: they do not find organizational systems that simply ignore the whole business: the cultural changes and organizational pressures have built the problematic "natural environment" into issues in the social environment with which every organization must try to deal.