

Earth System Governance: Facing the Challenges of Climate Change

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YOUNG, Oran R. *Institutional Dynamics: Emergent Patterns in International Environmental Governance*. Cambridge (Massachusetts, USA): The MIT Press, 2010. Earth System Governance Series. 225p. (Paperback; alkaline paper). ISBN 978-0-262-51440-8.

I have been a member of the Scientific Steering Committee of the Earth System Governance Project (ESG, of which Oran Young is an icon) since 2009. Before that I had heard of him and of his work in this field. It was only in April 2011 (ESG Conference in Fort Collins, Colorado, USA) that I had the chance to meet and talk to him at greater length, and fully realize the importance of his contribution – not to mention the very nice human being he is.

In parallel to his very distinguished career as a Professor in North American universities, Young was a member of the Scientific Steering Committee of the IHDP (the United Nations University Program on International Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, to which ESG is affiliated and owes its existence) from 2006 to 2010. His work on emerging patterns in environmental governance began, as he states in this book, in the 1970s – when he distinguished governance from government (which he explains as a move meant to provide a point of departure for analyzing the supply of governance in anarchical settings, such as our international society).

He explains that throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s his main interest was the formation or creation of regimes – which led to an extended effort to understand what he calls institutional bargaining (looking for features that differentiate it from other sorts of bargaining). In the 1990s his attention shifted to the effectiveness of regimes, a subject in which he remains interested and to which he has dedicated much time and energy. However, his goal in the book herein reviewed is to take one step forward – toward the development of a useful and usable theory of institutional dynamics.

This book is made all the more interesting by the facts that (1) while writing it, he was involved with three different communities: of scientists (engaged in generating new knowledge), of global change research (which looks for ways to understand complex and diverse systems, the behavior of which is affected by all sorts of interactions), and of practitioners (responsible for creating and administering the regimes under study); and (2) his book was reviewed by three anonymous MIT Press reviewers, whose contribution (along with those of colleagues and students) he recognizes.

The book comes with a series foreword (by the ESG leader Frank Biermann, of VUA, NL, and Oran R. Young, editors of the series), and with a Preface by the author. It is structured in seven chapters.

Chapter 1 (Emergent Patterns: Concepts and Hypotheses, pp. 1-22) introduces the subject and in sub-items deals with (defines) Regimes as Complex and Dynamic Systems; Emergent Patterns in Environmental Governance; Progressive Development; Punctuated Equilibrium; Arrested Development; Diversion; Collapse; The Endogenous-Exogenous Alignment Thesis; Case Studies (Stratospheric Ozone, Antarctica, Climate, Whales and Fur Seals), and concludes with Moving Ahead. Having set the stage, he explains that the following chapters will explore cases which exemplify one of the emergent patterns identified and that they all have a common structure (which, as the author says, resembles a legal brief). This common structure has the following items: Overview: the Big Picture; Facts: Analysis; Endogenous Factors; Exogenous Factors; Endogenous-Exogenous Alignment; Forecast; and Conclusion.

Along these lines, the following five chapters study, through cases, the emerging patterns identified earlier. Chapter 2 deals with Progressive Development: the Regime for Stratospheric Ozone (pp. 23-52); Chapter 3, Punctuated Equilibrium: The Antarctic Treaty System (pp. 53-82); Chapter 4, Arrested Development: the Climate Regime (pp. 83-116); Chapter 5, Diversion – The Regime for Whales and Whaling (pp. 117-145); Chapter 6, Collapse: the Regime for Northern Fur Seals (pp. 147-170).

Chapter 7 concludes – Toward a Theory of Institutional Change: Accomplishments and Challenges, once more organized in sub-items: Introduction; Thesis Robustness; Additional Patterns; Underlying Causes; Research Frontiers; Policy Relevance; Conclusion (pp. 171-195). The author considers that some of the patterns which he has identified are more promising than others, and explains why – but it is worth reading the book to find out what he has to say on the matter.

Notes will be found in pp. 93-94; References in pp. 95-205; a very helpful index appears in pp. 207-225. Charts and tables will be found in every chapter.

It was indeed a pleasure, and a privilege, to review this book – definitely a must for those involved with, or interested in, the subject. Reading it was not only extremely interesting, but raised many questions in my mind. One of them is the absence of



Latin American (not to mention Brazilian) authors (and, consequently, of a Latin American perspective) in the very extensive list of references. Latin America is (or should be) one of the big players in this scenario, given the importance of our natural resources and the fact that we are – as everybody else – already suffering the effects of climate change. Brazil, for instance, was a driving force in the Kyoto Protocol (climate change); furthermore, it has been a party to the Antarctic Treaty since 1961, to its environmental protocol since 1998 - and it keeps a base and develops scientific research in Antarctica, by itself or in cooperation with other countries.

We must deal with this problem in communication... I suspect that the incipient degree of internationalization of our universities has something to do with this, but it is true many Latin Americans study and work in European, North American or Australian universities and institutions. Why are we not making ourselves heard? Could it be because we do not publish in English? Or is it because we forget our origins/perspective when we study or work abroad? Is it a consequence of geopolitics? Food for thought...

