

Publications

Social Science Theory for Environmental Sustainability: a Practical Guide by Marc J. Stern (2018), Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK. ISBN 978-0-198793199 (pbk), GBP 34.99.

This book contributes to growing efforts to examine human behaviour in order to better address environmental issues. It covers extensive theoretical and practical ground and, in doing so, challenges the common assumption that rational arguments and incentives offer an effective means to change behaviour. The guide is highly accessible to professionals, scientists, students and citizens alike and contains a diversity of ideas to facilitate more thoughtful action. That said, access to these insights requires deep engagement, an open mind and recognition of what this book is missing—broader social science theories related to power, politics and systemic change, and attention to contradictions among theories. The book's design facilitates piecemeal engagement for the busy reader, but the danger is that people simply cherry-pick theories to solve predefined problems (e.g. to spread my idea better I will use diffusion theory). This risks further legitimizing the problematic expert role of the few to devise solutions for the many, which would ironically contradict many theories in this book! This book's real value lies in its potential to help people question their own assumptions so as to explore more collaborative ways of framing problems and solutions.

Part I provides an overview of some cognitive biases and limitations that cause people to think they are much better at predicting and explaining behaviour than they actually are. This serves as a dose of humility in preparation for Part II—The Theories—which provides a concise summary of 30 explanatory theories and practical examples of their use, across five chapters/themes. An overview table in Chapter 3 matches these theories to potential real world uses, such as communication, negotiation and governance.

Chapter 4 presents nine theories to explain how values, beliefs and norms shape people's behaviour, to inform more persuasive messages and approaches. Yet, Chapter 5 shows how simply providing people with rational reasons to change, and incentives, is unlikely to work. The theories illuminate the intuitive processes that often affirm identities and inhibit learning. This reveals potential strategies for questioning assumptions, breaking down polarized conflict and fostering mutual empathy and trust. Chapter 6 then explores theories that help navigate among diverse people and ideas to develop and pursue shared goals. This chapter makes a compelling case that

collaborative efforts are more sustainable in the long-term and thus worth the hard work of negotiation and compromise.

Chapter 7 explores theories that can help organizations pursue their goals more effectively by enhancing intrinsic motivation and team performance, and managing project risk and competing accountabilities. It is argued that leaders are most effective at inspiring action and long-term commitment when they are seen as legitimate, trustworthy and competent, and encourage open questioning. This chapter also explores approaches to organizational learning; however, mostly in pursuit of predefined goals. This is a key shortcoming of this chapter, as it fails to offer tangible strategies for learning in ways that question initial goals. Broader social science work highlights the historical failure of dominant approaches to environmental governance (e.g. David Harvey, James Scott), and demonstrates the problematic ways organizations often manage to mobilize notions of success and expertise to reinforce their legitimacy and constrain meaningful learning (e.g. Thomas Kuhn, Bram Büscher).

Chapter 8 introduces systems theories to inform adaptive social-ecological governance but this promise is not fulfilled because system is defined in narrow terms. The theories focus mainly on the local scale and seek to further strategies/impacts, regardless of what they are. Again, this disregards broader social science work that shows how solutions paradoxically spread well when they allow those in power to accumulate power, often at the expense of sustainability and equitability outcomes. The recurring emphasis on meeting the basic needs of local people to make way for moral values (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) also shifts blame for widespread injustices towards marginalized actors and away from elite actors.

Part III offers a series of vignettes that show how people can use these theories to address problems, such as resisting development pressures, shifting to more collaborative management and reducing corporate consumption and costs. It closes with a series of key principles. I commend this part for making the diverse theories presented highly accessible and tangible. However, the examples highlighted primarily emphasize how to solve a given problem rather than question the framing of the problem. This reflects the general tendency of this book to understand people's existing values, beliefs and motivations to enact power over them. This overlooks the more complex forms of power that constructed those identities in the first place and actively hides contradictions (e.g. see

discourse, governmentality and hegemony theories). Chapters 5–7 offer the most valuable insights that, alongside broader social science theories, may help identify opportunities for more powerful systemic change. In summary, this book is a commendable effort that deserves attention but I hope that this review can guide people to extend their learning beyond it.

JOSEPHINE M. CHAMBERS *Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, Cambridge UK*
E-mail jmichambers@gmail.com

Cultural and Spiritual Significance of Nature in Protected Areas edited by Bas Verschuuren and Steve Brown (2018) 314 pp., Routledge, Abingdon, UK. ISBN 978-1-138091191 (pbk), GBP 35.19.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

These lines from T.S. Eliot have always resonated with me. As with all art, what we read into them is inevitably informed by our own experience and cultural influences. For me, they bring forth a powerful sense of place for the area in which I grew up and to where, after decades elsewhere, I have finally returned. The land is of outstanding natural beauty and extraordinary biodiversity; it is also a dynamic cultural landscape, maintained over the centuries for hunting, grazing, firewood, fungi and timber. In recent years it has been formally gazetted as a National Park.

The Cultural and Spiritual Significance of Nature in Protected Areas explores the nature of our connections with just these kinds of landscapes. The authors argue that cultural and spiritual bonds with nature can provide strong motivations for conservation. This is timely. Despite some progress in both policy and practice towards more people-centred, rights-based approaches, so-called fortress conservation—excluding people from protected areas on the premise that human activities are incompatible with conservation—is not yet dead. The concepts and stories in this publication also contrast with neoliberal conservation, with its focus on the marketization, privatization and commodification of nature.

Chapter 1 opens with reference to Alexander van Humboldt's 'deeply seated bond', the connection between knowledge and the arts, between science and emotion.