



Greening the Globe: World Society and Environmental Change

Ann Hironaka

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Recent decades have seen a rapid expansion of environmental activity in the world, including the signing of a growing number of environmental treaties and the formation of international organizations like the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). *Greening the Globe* employs world society theory (aka world polity theory or sociological institutionalism) to explore the origins and consequences of international efforts to address environmental problems. Existing scholarship seems paradoxical: case studies frequently criticize treaties and regulatory structures as weak and ineffective, yet statistical studies find improvements in environmental conditions. This book addresses this paradox by articulating a bee-swarm model of social change. International institutions rarely command the power or resources to directly impose social change. Nevertheless, they have recourse via indirect mechanisms: setting agendas, creating workspaces where problems can be addressed, empowering various pro-environmental agents, and propagating new cultural meanings and norms. As a result, world society generates social change even if formal institutional mechanisms and sanctions are weak.

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