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Open for Business: Conservatives' Opposition to Environmental Regulation. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 496 pages. ISBN 9780262018272, \$35.00 hardcover. by Judith A. Layzer, 2012.
Eco-Business: A Big-Brand Takeover of Sustainability. Cambridge, MA: MIT P...

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***Eco-Business: A Big-Brand Takeover of Sustainability.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 208 pages. ISBN: 9780262018760, \$24.95 hardcover. Peter Dauvergne and Jane Lister. 2013.**

In the United States, major environmental crises during the 1960s and early 1970s sparked an aggressive policy response that remains the foundation for contemporary environmental policymaking. By contrast, political actors have met recent environmental challenges with far more stunted efforts. Two new books provide innovative lenses to analyze this puzzling gap between mounting environmental policy threats and an uneven political response. In her impressive *Open for Business: Conservatives' Opposition to Environmental Regulation*, Judith A. Layzer deftly describes how the interplay of antiregulatory conservative ideas and institutional incentives has driven US environmental policy retrenchment from the early 1980s onwards. In *Eco-Business: A Big-Brand Takeover of Sustainability*, Peter Dauvergne and Jane Lister pick up where Layzer leaves off, evaluating the ability of global business interests to fill the resulting policy gap through much-heralded corporate sustainability initiatives.

In *Open for Business*, Layzer charts the shifting efforts of antiregulatory conservatives in shaping US environmental policy. Previous scholars have occasionally read the history of US environmental policy as one of institutional durability. They highlight the seeming inability of intense conservative opponents to repeal major environmental legislation, even during moments of conservative political dominance. Layzer rejects this perspective in a work that creatively evaluates the interaction between political institutions and ideas. Drawing astute parallels to literatures on institutional change in the welfare policy domain, she paints a more nuanced and ultimately persuasive account that emphasizes the profound role that conservative ideas have played in driving indirect and low-profile challenges to US environmental policymaking over three decades. In Layzer's analytical framework, conservatives have created change through shaping the policymaking context, by changing problem definitions and by supporting under the radar challenges to policies. She argues that, even while major legislation has remained secure, conservatives have weakened environmental statutes during implementation and successfully blocked new legislation to address such pressing new challenges as global climate change. The result is a suite of US environmental policies that are increasingly unable to mitigate growing environmental risks. Drawing a welcome link to work by Jacob Hacker (2004) in the social policy literature, Layzer describes the resulting gap as a form of policy drift.

Perhaps the book's most provocative claim is that conservative ideas are not simply "a cloak for unprincipled self-interest" (xiv) but instead are the root cause of policy retrenchment. Layzer is unrelenting in her effort to make this case, exhaustively documenting the various ways in which conservative ideas became embedded within US political debates over the environment. Discussions of how conservative ideas condition individual actors' perceptions of their self-interest are particularly persuasive and help

make the case for changing ideas as a major driver of institutional change. Notably, Layzer's argument implies that the role of business in shaping environmental policymaking has been somewhat overstated. Rather, business relies on conservative ideas and ideational pathways of influence to shape the environmental policymaking process.

Layzer makes her case through detailed study of political debates over biodiversity, air pollution and climate change policy, moving from the "environmental decade" of the mid 1960s to 1970s to the election of President Obama in 2008. Quite apart from the book's considerable analytical value, this history alone makes the volume a valuable resource for scholars and students in the environmental policy space. Of course, Layzer accomplishes far more, fluidly describing the importance of conservative ideas in shaping the trajectory of these decade-long policy debates.

She places particular emphasis on the effective but low-profile tactics used by conservative ideologues to weaken or block environmental policy. These tactics range from judicial activism, where conservative influence has incrementally weakened the legal interpretation of key environmental statutes, to seemingly innocuous but ultimately far-reaching budget riders. She also emphasizes the growing resonance of anti-regulatory narratives within environmental discourse, actively cultivated by conservative thinkers preoccupied with economic efficiency and individual freedom. While her primary focus remains on environmental policy opponents' ideas and tactics, Layzer still gives due attention to the effects of conservative ideas on policy advocates. For example, she highlights how environmental policy proponents have strategically weakened their policy demands in the face of a growing conservative countermobilization.

The ambitious scope of the book affords Layzer the opportunity to compare conservative influence across time and across issue areas. Layzer argues that retrenchment has been an incremental but largely continuous process over time. Even such significant legislative advances as amendments to the Clean Air Act (1990) are contextualized within a pattern of overall retrenchment. For instance, the early 1990s was also characterized by simultaneous judicial weakening of biodiversity policy. By contrast, Layzer finds significant heterogeneity in conservative influence across issue domains. She highlights comparative conservative success in weakening biodiversity policy through the Endangered Species Act's implementation. She links conservative success in this domain to the issue's low profile, which facilitated conservative retrenchment tactics, and an institutional context that was receptive to conservative ideas. In particular, many of the Endangered Species Act's implementing agencies had pre-existing natural resource development mandates that primed the institutions to conservative arguments.

By contrast, air pollution policy is both more visible and is implemented by the EPA, an agency that has remained more resistant to conservative environmental ideas. The result has been more limited retrenchment in the air pollution domain. Finally, Layzer reads persistent government inaction on the climate file as the pinnacle of conservatives' success in blocking new environmental legislation that would significantly increase the scope of US environmental policy. Yet, while Layzer does highlight the visibility of

policy issues as a critical contextual factor in shaping the relative influence of conservative forces on policy outcomes, it is not clear that conservative forces can fully explain the stunted state of US climate policy. Thus, she spends insufficient time differentiating the importance of conservative ideas relative to other potential drivers of climate policy non-action.

At times, Layzer also leaves readers to adjudicate the relative importance of ideas on their own. While she supplies ample empirical detail, the text does not always surface its theoretical framework at key moments. Thus, a particularly dense typology of ideas introduced in the book's theory chapter might have been better flagged in the subsequent case studies. Similarly, Layzer almost certainly sells her analysis short in suggesting that she considers "an idea influential only if it was demonstrably in the public realm prior to its articulation by a decisionmaker" (29). The book's evidence is far more sophisticated than this inferential set-up suggests, and the importance of ideas in her argument turns not on such correlated sequences but on detailed attention to the mechanisms of conservative influence.

These minor clarifications could only bolster the many strengths of the text, not least the success with which Layzer demonstrates the potential for a dialogue between the social and environmental policy literatures. As *Open for Business* makes clear, the environmental policy field can make significant advances through creative engagement with work on institutional and ideational change. Layzer's book breaks impressive new ground and should become a central text in the environmental policy field, engendering significant scholarly and public debate.

In the context of the growing environmental policy gap that Layzer seeks to explain, private environmental governance efforts have sprung up around the world. For instance, the last decade has seen a proliferation of sustainability programs from such global brands as Walmart, Nike, General Electric and Starbucks, which commit these companies to integrate environmental decisionmaking into their corporate practices. In the absence of state action on pressing environmental needs, can such private sector efforts deliver environmental policy outcomes? In a compact new volume, *Eco-Business: A Big-Brand Takeover of Sustainability*, Peter Dauvergne and Jane Lister undertake a welcome new evaluation of the global trend towards corporate sustainability initiatives. Drawing a contrast to earlier corporate social responsibility efforts that they interpret as little more than greenwashing, Dauvergne and Lister suggest that the recent big-business turn towards sustainability reflects a real shift in strategic business positioning. At the same time, they ultimately reject the long-term environmental potential of this "eco-business" trend, suggesting that it has a limited ability to trigger the transformative change necessary for a sustainability transition. While corporate sustainability programs can spark some meaningful environmental change, this change is a by-product of a persistent business focus on profit maximization rather than a function of any long-term reprioritization of ecosystem or community well-being.

Dauvergne and Lister elaborate their skepticism of recent developments in the corporate social responsibility space by tracing the strategic needs of big global brands over time.

Pointing to the increasing complexity of globalizing production and growing uncertainty around global resource supplies, they describe how big brand supply chains have become increasingly vulnerable to disruption. In turn, a corporate shift to focus on environmental goals helps mitigate these risks by reducing resource dependence and by providing an opportunity to gain control over fragmented supply chain partners through such tools as eco-certifications and supply chain auditing. Increased resource utilization efficiency also raises firms' economic competitiveness and can drive profits and growth, both by enhancing brand loyalty amongst global consumers and by allowing price reductions. Dauvergne and Lister pay particular attention the importance of emerging middle class consumers to corporate growth strategies and the related need for efficient, low-cost goods to market to these communities. The result is that corporate sustainability initiatives may paradoxically facilitate significant increases in production and consumption through growth. This suggests that, while limited environmental gains are possible at the intersection of corporate economic interests and environmental needs, the prospects for such initiatives driving profound structural change may be more bounded.

Eco-Business is succinct and reads as a long-form essay. Yet, Dauvergne and Lister's rich analysis raises questions that should animate their own and other researchers' agendas for some time. Perhaps because of this, the text leaves the reader occasionally wanting for further elaboration. By pointing to the weaknesses associated with eco-business initiatives, the authors question the optimism that has characterized NGO partnerships with corporate sustainability efforts. Dauvergne and Lister also reserve some optimism for the potential of eco-business, at times suggesting that corporate sustainability efforts have the potential to generate global environmental governance at scales and speeds necessary to respond to a changing global economy. They never fully resolve this tension, offering little guidance on the conditions under which NGO partnerships may be more or less helpful in structuring business behavior. Further, are there opportunities for state decisionmakers to structure the governance context of eco-business to promote more beneficial policy outcomes? The relationship between the state and corporate action is left similarly underexplored.

Such a focus on the scope conditions for corporate social responsibility's potential would also help draw out a richer sense of variation among programs. For instance, while the book does an excellent job of documenting the many potential benefits to big-brands in implementing corporate sustainability initiatives, more guidance on the potential costs to business would also be invaluable. Clearly, Dauvergne and Lister have only scratched the surface of what is sure to become a major new research programme in thinking about the role of business actors in shaping contemporary environmental policymaking.

Read together, these new contributions offer a sobering analysis of current trends in environmental policymaking, highlighting in very different ways the serious challenges associated with delivering critical environmental policy reforms. At the same time, the two volumes highlight the theoretical sophistication of new academic work on environmental policy. In Layzer's case, an explicit attempt to dialogue with social policy suggests an exciting new frontier in environmental policy scholarship. Dauvergne and Lister overturn common nostrums in the global environmental governance space by

thoughtfully unpacking the logic of corporate sustainability initiatives. Together, the works highlight the role of careful policy research in pointing the way towards a more sustainable future.

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Works cited

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