

BOOK REVIEW

A CONTRIBUTION FOR UNDERSTANDING THE GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT IN BRAZIL

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Book: BURSZTYN, Maria Augusta; BURSZTYN, Marcel. **Fundamentos de Política e Gestão Ambiental: caminhos para a sustentabilidade**². Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2012. 612 p.

The book “The bases of the Environmental Policy and Management: pathways to sustainability” was published in Portuguese only and its title presents the main theme. Its 612 pages make it possible to see the density of the study, not just because of its extension, but due to the diversity and complexity of the topics discussed by the book. This study will surely become required reading among undergraduate and post graduate courses, as well as among managers who work with environmental issues. The authors succeed in bringing together a variety of subjects in a single volume. Whenever it was possible they made interesting analyzes, without being simplistic, with important information that makes readers reflect on relevant topics.

The authors, Maria Augusta Bursztyn and Marcel Bursztyn, have dedicated their lives to the subject and provided important contribution to the institutionalization process of the environmental theme in Brazilian academic and governmental fields. They played an important role in the government when conducted studies for the National Environment Programme (PNMA) and in the academia, when they had important contribution to the creation of the Sustainable Development Centre (CDS) at University of Brasilia.

The study not just presents a theoretical and conceptual review of environmental issues in Brazil and worldwide, but also approaches the historical process, which, in a

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certain way, is linked to the authors' lives. Thus, much of what is presented in the book is not just a compilation of earlier works, but also the description of their own experiences acquired in the development of sustainability. The book shows moments of progress, such as the environmental management institutionalization process in Brazil and also perplexing moments when it depicts the difficulty of putting into practice the environmental discourse. It recently occurred in the Rio + 20 Conference which, according to the authors, started with "a pessimism mood in regards to effective outcomes".

The book summarizes the difficult journey towards sustainability, which can be briefed by the contrast between advances and setbacks in environmental policy and management agenda in Brazil and around the globe. On the other hand, the number of topics listed in the study shows the importance society gives to the theme. The world may still be away from sustainability, but, nowadays the information we have about it is much broader in terms of quantity and quality than that from decades ago. The same can be said about the public policies and initiatives from the private sector. Although many problems remain unsolved, the advances towards more sustainable practices is undeniable.

Two key milestones can be identified in the institutional evolution of the environmental theme, internationally. The first one is "Rio 92" that, despite the controversy, it called the world's attention to a closer look at the problem. The second important moment came with the growing debate on climate change. Important events helped setting this debate, for example, recurrent natural disasters like the Katrina hurricane, in 2005, in the US. Another event which motivated the debate was the Nobel Prize given to the IPCC and Al Gore, in 2007, in recognition for his efforts to build and disseminate greater knowledge about climate change worldwide.

The authors argue that the negative impact of climate change will be stronger on the developing countries and disadvantaged populations, thus increasing social, economic and environmental inequalities. The authors address concepts such as vulnerability, adaptation, mitigation, international negotiations and present Brazil's role within this scenario.

The book is divided into twelve chapters. The first one discusses development and environment by addressing what the authors' consider to be the modern utopias of humanity such as industrialism, socialism, social democracy, neoliberalism and sustainable development which, according to them, is a post-industrial utopia. They also approach the difficult integration between economy and ecology by bringing up the concept of weak sustainability *versus* strong sustainability.

In the second and third chapters, a historical review on the evolution of the environmental issues is made. They start in early civilizations and the domination of nature by man and get to the rise and decline of societies such as the Nile and Mesopotamian. The authors talk about the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, held in Stockholm, in 1972, and about the concepts of eco-development and sustainable development, the Brundtland Report and the Rio Declaration as well as about the international environmental conventions.

Subsequently, in chapter four, they go through issues related to public policies such as regulations and environmental governance. Chapter five states on the book's title:

environmental policy and management. Within it, the writers approach the polluter payer principle as well as prevention, precaution and participation principles.

Chapter six addresses regulatory and economic environmental management and policy tools. The seventh chapter is a reflection on the global environmental crisis. It describes the transition from “environment” to “climate” issue and its reflex on the international politics. Topics such as sovereignty, development, ownership and free trade as well as the discussion on the importance of an environmental global organization, which emerged at Rio + 20, are object of analysis in the eightieth chapter.

Chapter nine is entirely dedicated to international climate agreements, biodiversity, desertification and hazardous wastes. Chapter ten covers issues related to global warming and climate change.

The two last chapters address the environmental policy and management in Brazil. A review of legal environmental frameworks was made and it started at the Water Code, passed through the Forestry Code, and Hunting and Fishing Codes and ended up at the National Environmental System (Sisnama). These chapters also discuss environmental and territorial development programs such as Planafloro, Prodeagro, UNEP and PPG7. They describe the environmental impact assessment, the National Protected Areas System (SNUC) and the Ecological-Economic Zoning (EEZ) as well.

Briefly, the last two chapters are about the environmental policy and management institutionalization process in Brazil and highlight the crucial debate on the decentralization of environmental management and its challenges.

In the authors’ opinion, the Brazilian environmental policy evolution is marked by a complex set of circumstances that shaped up the country’s institutional political profile and distinctive socioeconomic features. Maria Augusta and Marcel summarize the study rising relevant considerations on the last page of the book, explaining what is called by them “the current environmental governance in Brazil”. Among these considerations are the following: the growing economic practices concerned with the sustainability principles; the gap between the rapid increase in the demand for environmental management and the slow evolution on the supplying of environmental management tools; the need for qualified human resources able to operate the growing and increasingly complex institutional environmental management system; the administrative discontinuity, the political pressures and economic lobbies; ecological disasters of great magnitude that points out the need for preventive and corrective actions to be taken by governments, businessmen and citizens; economic globalization and the overall awareness of environmental problems that lead to new forms of international pressure for environmental quality; the trend towards administrative deconcentration and decentralization of governmental actions; the growing intellectual support from the academic community; the challenges of reconciling energy demands and environmental quality requirements; successive economic crises, which tend to delegitimize environmental decisions involving more costs to productive agents or risk to the number of jobs; and limitations of the government.

The book’s subtitle, “pathways to sustainability” was accurate, because, in my point of view, it is a way to present that the political and environmental management is an object under construction. It shows that there are different paths and they are

tortuous and not often followed. These paths present alternative routes, but there are rocks on the way. On page 135, the authors raised the pessimistic view that “the world has not changed since Rio 92, as has not changed after the Stockholm Conference in 1972. After adjustments, the ship follows its course, with all its internal contradictions, dilemmas and dead ends”. It corroborates the statement done in the beginning of the book where the authors presented the idea that it is impossible stopping the boat to repair it. It is demanding reshaping the boat while it is sailing. Anyway, this interdisciplinary work brings together many important issues that have shaped the environmental discussion in recent decades. It is excellent for teachers and students and also for public policy makers, because many of the themes presented in the book go beyond the environmental subject and enter different areas such as Economics, Sociology, History, Geography, Biology, International Relations, Law and others. It is impossible to detail all the concerning subjects given their diversity. However, the authors give hints that lead to an excellent literature review. Undoubtedly, it is a reference to this research field in Brazil and as the title says, it presents the bases for understanding the genesis and the evolution of the environmental policy and management.

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