

Rucht, Dieter

Book Review — Digitized Version

[Rezension] Andrew Jamison, Ron Eyerman, Jacqueline Cramer: The making of the new environmental consciousness: a comparative study of the environmental movements in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990

Contemporary sociology: a journal of reviews

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The authors' aim is threefold: (1) to identify those cognitive elements which characterize environmentalism as a specific form of social and political criticism, (2) to illuminate the international and national influences on its development from a form of scientific criticism to a wider social movement, and (3) to report on the current state of the environmental movement in the three countries.

The first chapter explores the theoretical concepts and clarifies the key categories. The core of the book consists of three mainly descriptive chapters, each devoted to one country and structured along four developmental phases that are strikingly parallel. The final chapter aims at a comparison of the three cases and the factors that shaped their distinct profile, and a more general discussion of environmentalism as a new social movement. In theoretical terms, the authors characterize their approach as a middle path between the normative judgments of identify theories and the empiricist assumptions of resource-mobilization theories. Along these lines, they focus on the interplay between identity (knowledge interest) and political action.

As demonstrated in the empirical parts of the study, the movements in the three countries, though propagating a common environmentalist message and influenced by an international discourse, vary considerably in knowledge interests and political strategies. In a nutshell: The environmental movement in Sweden is dominated by technocratic, pragmatic, and utilitarian tendencies; it has a low profile and, to a large extent, has been absorbed by parties and state institutions. By contrast, the movement in Denmark is guided by a strong emphasis on cosmological discussion, personal commitment, and participatory democracy. The Dutch environmental movement, which reflects a wide range of tendencies from anarchy to pragmatism, has remained outside the established political discourse, though it is still quite influential. In all three countries a gradual shift toward more professional and success-oriented groups such as Greenpeace could be observed.

The properties of each movement are

The Making of the New Environmental Consciousness: A Comparative Study of the Environmental Movements in Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, by **Andrew Jamison, Ron Eyerman, and Jacqueline Cramer**, with **Jeppe Laessøe**. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 216 pp. \$25.00 paper. ISBN: 0-7486-0180-5.

explained by the national political cultures. Key factors are the strong interventionist state in Sweden, the traditional rural populism and the grass-roots culture in Denmark, and the polarization of social and political life in the Netherlands.

Overall, the authors present a well-organized, clearly written, and truly comparative study with many insights that may stimulate comparisons with other countries. The authors' effort to contextualize environmental movements is a challenge to the bulk of studies that treat environmentalism as a global movement without acknowledging its roots in time and place.

The authors are on the right track but could have gone further. The explanatory part of the study remains too sketchy. In particular, the concept of political culture has been neither disentangled into more specific dimensions nor complemented by other factors. Whereas political culture often serves as a dumping ground for unexplained variance, this study uses political culture as a tool to explain all variance. One wonders why the authors did not make use of, or at least critically discuss, the concept of political opportunity structure as developed by several movement scholars. In this respect, they have missed a chance to offer a more sophisticated explanation of their cases or to develop arguments against the general value of the political opportunity concept. In spite of this weakness, their book can be seen as an important contribution to social movement studies by adding much to our empirical knowledge of a particular kind of movement and, with the concept of knowledge interest, introducing a theoretical tool that is creative and challenging.