

## Reviews

reflexivity about how she is “constructing” what she supposedly is “discovering.”

On the other hand, Grimes seems to be in touch with the last developments in anthropology that ask for “multi-sited” ethnographies to account for the complex postmodern world characterized by multiple diasporas, exiles and the like. Therefore, if Grimes wisely describes the contradictions many Putlecans undergo in their everyday experiences, I am here pointing out what surprised me as a contradiction in Grimes ethnography: a recognition of the problems involved in “representing the other,” an awareness that the uni-site traditional ethnography cannot account for the postmodern situation in which “traditional” societies like Putla are involved, but a “realist” account of Putlecans migration processes in which she always has the authorial voice.

Despite this unresolved contradiction, this is a very informative book about the migration processes of people who live in a small town in Southern Mexico and who modify, negotiate and articulate their identities in very complex ways due to their relationship with “el otro lado.” If Grimes’ account is somehow contradictory, it is because that seems to be the postmodern condition, not only for our “subject of study” as she so well proves, but also for us, those who want to understand them.

### **International Management of the Environment: Pollution Control in North America, by Emmett N. Lombard. Westport, CT: Praeger (1999), x, 198 pp.**

**Reviewed by Glen Atkinson, Department of Economics, University of Nevada, Reno.**

Professor Lombard tells the reader, in considerable detail, that the emerging global economy is changing the nature of the regulatory process, and this change will create losers as well as winners. Though he includes the effects of the emerging global economy on environmental regulation, Lombard narrows his focus from the global economy to the three NAFTA participants, Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The emphasis is not on the policies of the NAFTA, but on the evolution of pollution controls of these three nations. This work will help the reader to understand the background for integrating environmental policies in the global economy as well as NAFTA.

Three forces are identified in this book that are driving the reform of environmental regulation in North America. First, each country is relying less on government standards, shifting instead to self-regulation and voluntary standards. “Self,” in this case, refers to corporations and industrial organizations, not individual persons. Second, devolution of regulatory authority from central governments to state-local governments is occurring in each country. Third, because of the first two forces, public participation is becoming more limited in the discussion to establish pollution standards.

The emergence of global markets means that corporations must deal in a host of regulatory systems. This could increase the cost of doing business, so firms have an interest in rationalizing

## Reviews

and harmonizing these standards. Rather than negotiating global standards through government authorities, the trend is to allow private bodies to establish these rules. Private parties will develop compatibility of technical standards, such as software compatibility or accounting rules, at a reasonably high level because these standards can reduce their costs of production. Unfortunately profit-seeking enterprises have no similar interest in setting high environmental standards because these will increase the firm's costs of production. What economists term "social costs," such as pollution, have been monitored by governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the past. Governments are abdicating their responsibility in these matters in the interest of flexibility. Moreover, NGOs with an interest in reducing pollution are not able to participate in these forums for establishing voluntary standards. Also, NGOs usually have been organized on a national basis, and find it difficult to organize across borders.

A confounding development is that in the face of trying to harmonize standards across national boundaries, political authority is being devolved within each of the North American nations. This shift is quite complicated because each of the nations had such dissimilar governmental structures at the beginning. Mexico has the most centralized structure and Canada has the least. Neither Canada nor Mexico relies on judicial enforcement, nor are the legislative bodies as responsible for environmental policies as in the United States. However, the trend is clearly toward decentralization in each country.

A very troubling feature of self-regulation and decentralization is the use of environmental audits by business firms to monitor emission control. As an element of self-regulation, states are encouraging firms to audit their compliance with industry standards. In some cases the audit information is confidential and cannot be used to prosecute violators. Academics and NGOs will not have access to emissions data, and if such information surfaces in court, the firm may be immune to punishment for its transgressions.

Pollution standards are set by the industry, monitoring is performed by the firm, and evidence generated by the monitor may not be used to punish the guilty. In addition, governmental administration is being shifted from national to local authorities at the same time business capital is becoming more footloose in the quest for tax havens and lax regulatory regimes.

After the examination of the evolution of environmental policies in the three separate North American nations, Professor Lombard turns his attention briefly to some trans-border programs between the United States and Mexico and the United States and Canada. He concludes that it is too soon to tell how much progress is being made on the Mexican border. On the other hand, the cooperative effort on the Great Lakes region by the United States and Canada is, in Lombard's view, unprecedented (p.161).

The most promising feature of the Great Lakes project that could be extended to a larger international setting is the creation of an emissions inventory. Professor Lombard concludes that the best means to the re-establishment of public participation, in this era of self-regulation and decentralization, is to generate such an inventory with compatible software. If the NGOs cannot be involved in the establishment of the standards nor the monitoring of polluting entities, they must be able to monitor emissions at the regional level.

This book is not for the casual reader. It is filled with details of the changing administrative structures in the three nations of North America. The book is grounded in thorough research and is aimed at scholars and policy-makers who want to affect the direction of environmental programs. The author concludes that self-regulation and decentralization will continue. So the challenge is how to ensure effective public participation within those limits. The effectiveness of monitoring will be determined by the quality of data and who will be allowed to participate in the process. This will also determine who the losers and winners will be in this era of regulatory flexibility.