



Book Review

Agri-environmental Governance as an Assemblage: Multiplicity, Power and Transformation

Edited by Jérémie Forney, Chris Rosin, Hugh Campbell

Routledge Publishing, 2018, ISBN 978-1-138070-73-8

This new edited collection provides a welcome addition to the growing literature taking assemblage theory as its starting point in trying to understand the paradoxes and complexities found in contemporary agri-environmental governance. In their introduction to the volume the editors argue strongly that the book represents an overt effort to think beyond existing conceptual frameworks based on the exposition and critique of neoliberalism and capitalism. Ideas of assemblage and territorialisation frame the book's three distinct parts. The chapters in Part 1 focus on the complex multiplicities that emerge when different forms of agri-environmental governance are seen as territorialized assemblages. Part 2 shifts attention to the struggles to fix and stabilize particular orderings of actors for specific ends. These struggles render the making of assemblages inherently political, but as the chapters show these politics are often played out in very subtle ways. The chapters in this section are a very useful rejoinder to criticisms that power and politics are absent from assemblage theory. Part 3 shifts the book beyond the description and critique often associated with assemblage theories. Instead the chapters in this section ask how assemblage and territorialisation can help in the generation of alternative agri-environmental imaginaries and practices.

The book draws together a wide range of established and emerging researchers, and covers an enormous amount of terrain among its cases. These range from Gisela Welz's

examination of food labeling policy in relation to halloumi in the Republic of Cyprus; to Karly Burch et al.'s work on food safety standards in Japan following the 2011 accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant; through to Michael Carolan's argument for 'weak' scholarship as the basis for contesting the emerging claims and imaginaries of 'big data'. The breadth of scholarship evident in the range of cases, places and practices examined could have led to a confusing jumble of a book. To their credit the editors have adroitly framed the conceptual, and structural, dimensions of the chapters so as to enable the particularities of individual cases to be teased out, but in a way that clearly and coherently contributes to the wider intellectual project of the book. My only minor criticism of the book is that the arguments about the wider project of questioning, and undermining, dominant categories, of recognizing multiplicity, the overdetermination of context, and the development of alternative and enactive forms of research (pages 10-13) could have justified an explicit end piece. These are important questions and I would have welcomed the editors extending their reflections on them.

The book is worthy of attention from a wide range of scholars and students concerned with agri-environmental governance, and wanting to develop a sense of how assemblage work can contribute to forging new approaches to existing 'wicked problems'. It does not provide a recipe about how to 'do' assemblage work, or what will be found, but through its range of cases it provides a rich body of examples of

how assemblage work might be done, what might be found, and what might be imagined differently. In a world where the range of agri-environmental problems confronting us seems to be growing while the range of possible solutions are diminishing the book is a timely expression of hope that assemblages can be imagined, ordered and practised in alternative ways. I strongly recommend that anyone interested in the past, present and future of agri-environmental governance read, and reflect on, the imaginative resources offered by this book.

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