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Review: Nature and Bureaucracy: The Wildness of Managed Landscapes

By David Jenkins

Reviewed by Bishnuprasad Mohapatra

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Jenkins, D., *Nature and Bureaucracy: The Wildness of Managed Landscapes*. New York: Routledge, 2023. 262pp. ISBN: 9781032285627, \$49.95.

Human influence in the natural space and its management has a long history. Particularly, the management of natural spaces emerged with the rise of capitalism, urbanization, and the formation of nation-states worldwide, further accelerated by the Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) development model. With the growing human influence, the rise of environmental concerns and conflict over natural landscapes around the globe are not only questions about the existing structure and function of bureaucracy, but also the earlier bureaucratic practices on natural spaces. In *Nature and Bureaucracy*, David Jenkins explores the earlier period and today's forms of bureaucratic practices over the natural landscape in the US and suggests sustainable paths for the management of natural landscapes. Jenkins analyzes how the human and natural landscapes are governed in the US from the *Insider* (as a practitioner of the system/public servant working on land management and control of the natural system) and *Outsider* (as a scholar of anthropology investigating bureaucracy and nature) perspectives, considering Max Weber's imaginations of bureaucracy and beyond.

This book is divided into two sections, with a few chapters that are modified versions of the previously published manuscripts. In the first section, the author deals with the bureaucracy of nature, taking the cases of trees, water and river systems, endangered species, fishing, and the natural resource management system of the US. In the second section, the author analyzes the nature of bureaucracy from Traditional Bureaucratic Knowledge (TBK) to Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) standpoints for maintaining harmony with nature. The major challenge of this book is in the analysis techniques of insider participant and outside scholar. Maintaining objectivity in this ethnographic research is not fully possible. However, the author successfully considers associated factors alongside his own experiences, justifying the importance of personal responses.

Jenkins argues that the management of natural landscapes focusing on economic rationality and controlling mechanisms is not the best strategy for environmental sustainability. The central question of the first part of the book is how natural landscapes have been regulated and bureaucratized in the name of public concern without considering larger ecological functions and environmental values. He analyzes US environmental policies and their (in)efficiency relating to natural landscape management. These policies regulated and tried to control natural spaces without considering or understanding the local people and their cultural value for natural spaces. In suggesting a better strategy, he draws on the importance of traditional knowledge in natural landscape management in the book's second part. This section shows the positive and negative impact that environmental regulations can bring in nature, the human system, and their nexus. Environmental rules and regulations are created for bureaucratic functions to manage the natural landscape but fail to acknowledge the native tradition or local responses to such practices. Past bureaucratic actions, what the author calls 'enemy ancestors' for environmental protection, need to be inculcated in present practices to avoid such failures. To save and preserve the existing natural spaces left on the earth, policymakers need to understand and accommodate the local peoples' perspectives and traditional ecological knowledge in policy decisions. The book conveys that we are in the age of total institutionalization, where bureaucracies always try to control by imposing rules and orders, eliminating the traditional cultural forms of nature-human interaction.

The book shares the valuable and worrisome experiences of the author over the administration of nature in the US, which not only questions the past and present form of natural landscape management but also its sustainability in the coming days. The major strength is how the author has converted his experience into both an insider and outsider perspective through appropriate theoretical arguments. This book will help research scholars, academics, bureaucrats, and professionals working in the environmental sectors, particularly social scientists, who are eager to know how to present their life experiences and cases with proper theoretical background and objectivity. By looking into the book's major arguments, future research can be used to understand the functioning of bureaucracy in managing natural landscapes and beyond.

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