

Greening the Globe

Recent decades have seen a rapid expansion of environmental activity in the world, including the signing of a growing number of environmental treaties and the formation of international organizations like the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). *Greening the Globe* employs world society theory (also known as world polity theory or sociological institutionalism) to explore the origins and consequences of international efforts to address environmental problems. Existing scholarship seems paradoxical: case studies frequently criticize treaties and regulatory structures as weak and ineffective, yet statistical studies find improvements in environmental conditions. This book addresses this paradox by articulating a Bee Swarm model of social change. International institutions rarely command the power or resources to impose social change directly. Nevertheless, they have recourse via indirect mechanisms: setting agendas, creating workspaces where problems can be addressed, empowering various pro-environmental agents, and propagating new cultural meanings and norms. As a result, world society generates social change even if formal institutional mechanisms and sanctions are weak.

Ann Hironaka is an associate professor of sociology at the University of California, Irvine. She studies environmental sociology, politics, and war from a global perspective. Her research examines the historical emergence of the global environmental regime and its impact on national policy and environmental practices around the world. Her work on environmentalism has appeared in the *American Sociological Review*, *International Organization*, and *Social Forces*. She is also a member of the American Sociological Association Task Force on Climate Change. Hironaka's first book, *Neverending Wars* (2005), examines the intractable civil wars of the contemporary era and the role of the international community in perpetuating these conflicts.

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World Society and Environmental Change

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To John Meyer, with thanks

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Preface and Acknowledgments

I first encountered John Meyer when I was a Stanford undergraduate student as I was embarking upon my first course in sociology. When I began to look at graduate schools, I was surprised to learn that John Meyer's perspective was not common within sociology. Having encountered John in my first venture, I had naively supposed that he broadly represented the discipline of sociology. Thus I returned to Stanford for graduate work in sociology, figuring I could easily spend years trying to figure out what John was saying. I am grateful for the first-rate methodological and theoretical training that John imparts to his students in an offhand way. I also feel privileged to have experienced firsthand his incomprehensible scribbles on the chalkboard (in the days before he began providing scribbles in PowerPoint), and the way in which he gazes out the window before delivering a particularly sharp or amusing insight.

Moreover, I am grateful to John for encouraging me to extend world society theory into the darker realm of violence and war. At times, I have felt like a black sheep for venturing beyond the happy world society domain of human rights and educational progress. Yet I now suspect that John has enfolded many black sheep into his flock, thanks to his intellectual breadth and generosity.

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