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Environmental Policy and Politics in the European Union, by T. Delreux and S. Happaerts (London: Palgrave, 2016, ISBN 9780230244269); xv+304pp., £30.99 pb.

The European Union (EU) prides itself as a leader in environmental policy, having proclaimed sustainable development as an official goal to be integrated in all EU policies and decision-making. This book represents a successful endeavour to explain how the EU emerged from a polity with no such thing as an environmental policy prior to 1973, to one whose environmental legislation is nowadays among the most advanced and progressive worldwide.

This book is divided into three parts. The first part provides a historical overview of the manner in which regional and global dynamics have interacted to shape EU environmental policy over time. The focus here is on the founding treaties and their subsequent amendments, with the authors paying particular attention to also situate the evolution of EU environmental policies within the wider context of global environmental governance. The second part deals with politics, looking at the policymaking process and the interactions between the various EU institutions, civil society and business groups. Finally, the third part examines policies, i.e. the product or output of politics. Here the authors outline the content, underlying rationales, instruments and actual impact of a number of traditional EU environmental policies on the areas of, inter alia, waste, water, air and noise pollution. Particular attention is then paid to two highly contentious policy areas, namely those of climate change and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Overall, this book is extremely well organised, interesting and well-written. Its main strength is that it provides a highly accessible introduction to the EU's environmental policy by assuming no prior knowledge of the arcane peculiarities the EU. The structure of the book is clearly signposted and all the chapters take a step-by-step approach to explaining the various theories, concepts, frameworks and issues related to EU environmental governance. From an academic perspective, a number of interesting conclusions are drawn, the most intriguing being that the economic crisis and the subsequent subscription to the 'green growth' narrative has put EU environmental policy 'at the service of a broader economic objective, as was the case in the first decades of EU environmental policy' (p. 36).

In terms of critique, I would only note the lack of a concluding chapter that would pull everything together and pay particular attention to the challenges and prospects of future EU environmental policy and politics. This point aside, this book is an essential introduction to EU environmental policy and is suitable for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. I would also urge those researching and teaching on this topic to include this book on their reading list.

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