Research Handbook on the Law and Politics of Migration [book review]

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Chapter 3 deconstructs the concept and study of policy uptake, noting that policy uptake itself is a complex issue. This chapter focuses on the dependent variables in her study, social and policy uptakes. Suman argues for recognizing policy uptake as a field of study: since citizen sensing is a viable monitoring method, then both social (whether others/society adopts it) and policy uptake are worth studying. Social uptake is deconstructed first, as Suman explains that social uptake is useful since it can influence or push forward policy uptake. This requires carefully defining social uptake, identifying criteria by which to measure it, and its influence on policy uptake. Next, Suman focuses on policy uptake, starting with a literature review and a discussion of policy uptake’s nuances and how those nuances influence her study. As an example, a policy uptake may be manifest (in which citizen sensing is openly acknowledged by the institution as a reason for the uptake); or silent (in which no such acknowledgment is made). She finishes the chapter by discussing the quality of the data available (which results is an interesting data pyramid, p. 93); and what she will study in her empirical analysis.

Chapter 4 provides the meat of the book. It empirically answers the question of when policy uptake occurs in a way that mitigates or eliminates the risk being addressed. Suman walks the reader through her methodology and the process behind the development of her research. It is a meandering road that explains both the findings and the limits of her approach and includes the various testing and fieldwork she developed in order to both justify and conduct her research (see the chart on page 124 for a visual of this process). Her first step is two case studies: she dives deeply into them, using both literature and interviews to build the story. Next, using the case studies, she develops her hypotheses for how and why policy uptake occurs. This next step relies initially on observation, feedback, and an extensive data set compiled by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, which was already exploring how citizen science could be used in developing environmental policy. Initially frustrated when her parameters cut down the possible dataset to just ten use cases, Suman then decided to use a mixed methods approach. This analysis demonstrated that both social and policy uptake require high risk combined with good technology and strong data dissemination. Building on this result, Suman returns to her case studies to pinpoint additional data, ultimately concluding that policy uptake can be largely contextual and that gathering all data around a citizen sensing project can be a daunting task.

Ultimately, while policy makers seemed interested in receiving citizen data, citizens themselves typically lacked the desire to influence policy, which meant that policy uptake was frequently an unforeseen outcome that occurs when policy makers perceive an institutional gap and when citizen sensors have champions (especially institutional champions). Finally, Chapter 5 offers a conclusion in which Suman briefly summarizes her study, how she developed it, her results, and both the limitations she saw in her study and the potential future research the study could foster.

Overall, the book provides an intense, in-depth view of a very specific question, using a relatively narrow dataset. Those interested in the niche topic of environmental citizen sensing and its impact on institutional policies will find the book a delightful and thorough read; those interested in reviewing an example of a research project using a mixed-methods approach may also find it worth a read. While not a book for a general audience, it will likely prove useful for those within the environmental citizen sensing space.

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The Research Handbook on the Law and Politics of Migration is a compelling collection of twenty-five articles analyzing the overlapping areas of law, politics, and migration from multiple angles. The text is certainly timely, with many political debates centering around migration and borders. The introduction by Catherine Dauvergne helpfully grounds the reader in the text’s main themes and coverage areas. The book is divided into five sections, the first of which interrogates the question of how immigration and political rhetoric interact. The
second section examines the institutions involved in the day-to-day management of immigration systems, and section three focuses in on the courts in particular. Section four deals with some of the different immigration detention apparatuses and their features around the globe, while the fifth section highlights difficult international law challenges relating to these issues. The text feels organized in a way that forms a cohesive whole for the reader, as each article and its associated section lead the researcher through one part of the larger web of migration conceptually.

The text is anything but repetitious, as the topics of politics and immigration are vast. The authors each approach the same universe of topics from unique focus areas. This is helpful for both novice and expert readers as they get their bearings on each section’s core themes. For instance, in section four covering immigration detention institutions, the chapter “Immigration detention and the production of race in the UK” is a different lens on the broader topic than later chapters such as “Immigration detention in the age of COVID-19” or “Privacy rights at the Canadian border: judicial assumptions and the limits of the Charter.” These chapters do not provide an exhaustive overview of the section’s overarching topic, but rather build a foundation for future research.

The chapter “The geopolitics of knowledge production in international migration law,” from the third section of the text discussing the courts’ role in immigration, crystallized some of the text’s main ideas. The article lays out the ways in which norms from the global north about excluding certain populations from migration to a nation can be seen as the default in international law. This is in contrast with academics and courts from the global south that have emphasized other approaches to migration. Bibliometric statistics from the chapter show the asymmetry in perspectives in international law scholarly publications. This raises questions the author explores on the politics and economics driving the global north’s approaches to international law being viewed as the standard. This chapter works well in conjunction with others like “Unsettling migration studies: Indigeneity and immigration in settler colonial states.” The reader is left with a more nuanced understanding of who is overlooked in immigration and international law.

The text will likely be useful for librarians if they are working with patrons investigating international migration. The text contains a list of abbreviations of key terms and a well-constructed index. The authors conclude each article with a list of works cited that are excellent for further analysis of the topics explored. Researchers will likely find the Research Handbook on the Law and Politics of Migration an aid to think through the complex state of migration, international law, and various intersections with politics.

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Research Handbook on Law, Governance and Planetary Boundaries constitutes a crucial and innovative collection. The handbook opens by acknowledging the inadequacy of existing international environmental law and related domestic legal regimes in our era of profound socio-ecological breakdown. Climate change and other aspects of the global ecological crisis, such as acute biodiversity loss and environmental justice issues along lines of race, gender, Indigenous status, the Global South and North divide, etc., require more transformative approaches than those steeped in our current “neoliberal sustainable development” paradigm. Thus, the planetary boundaries framework offers a potentially vital path forward for ecological governance from global to local scales.

As the editors unpack in Chapter 1, the planetary boundaries are an influential framework initially proposed by Johan Rockström and related environmental science researchers in 2009. This framework posits that there are nine boundaries within the Earth system required to maintain a “safe operating space for humanity,” the crossing of which results in “dangerous levels’ or, where applicable, ‘tipping points’ in Earth system processes” crucial for human existence. The nine planetary boundaries as articulated in 2009 include climate change, biodiversity loss rate, nitrogen and phosphorus cycles interference, use of global freshwater, land use change, acidification of oceans, chemical pollution, stratospheric ozone depletion, and atmospheric aerosol loading. The researchers estimated that three of the boundaries (climate change, biodiversity loss, and nitrogen cycles interference) already