

Nature, Choice and Social Power

Erica Schoenberger

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Erica Schoenberger : Nature, Choice and Social Power before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nature, Choice and Social Power:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A challenging and rewarding critical analysis of our environmental problemsBy NAKThis is a clearly written, compelling analysis of our inability to fix our environmental problems. The author is a university professor who demonstrates an enviable level of technical mastery over the material. Schoenberger argues that our range of action is limited by 'how a society works to produce and allocate social power'. The concept of social power refers to control over resources, including physical ones like land and minerals but also humans. The analysis is grounded in a historical and political economy approach, touching on the interactions between

markets, the state, finance, industry, and competition. The analysis is sensible, realistic, and thorough. Schoenberger admits there are no quick solutions, but neither are these environmental problems insurmountable. The first step is an honest appraisal of how our collective action is constrained and the forces that structure our choices; this book provides such an appraisal. No doubt, this is a challenging text. It presents ideas that typically fall outside of the tired mainstream thinking on the environment. It requires a close reading to fully parse its historically-sensitive and empirically-grounded arguments. Nonetheless, the reward is high and the clear writing style make this an enjoyable experience. The reader's understanding of the nature of our environmental problems will benefit from the original case studies on gold mining, the internal combustion engine, and the American built environment, in addition to the conceptual diagram of social power, and the schematic of the interactions between capitalism, the market, and the state. The high quality of the book's substance and style should appeal to general readers as well as academic specialists. Its chief drawback is its price--Routledge is an academic publishing house, and as such the Kindle edition is priced at 39 dollars. Thoughtful and inspiring books like this are rare enough as it is. Hopefully the price will not dissuade dedicated readers of environmental history, political economy, geography, and sociology. The text belongs on undergraduate and graduate student reading lists as well as on the bookshelves of the public. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful and illuminating history and analysis of choices made in ...By Richard A. Cone

I've just finished reading Schoenberger's "Nature, Choice, and Social Power". A wonderful and illuminating history and analysis of choices made in the past that have led us into long-term, and emerging, social disorders, and climate change. Schoenberger describes how social power made these choices in the past to help guide us toward making better decisions in the future. The book is uplifting, and bravely hopeful, with keen and extensive scholarship written with surprising wit and insight. Paul Krugman's recent editorial in the NYTimes, 9/18/14, celebrates the thrust of Schoenberger's book: "Climate despair is all wrong. --[Economic growth depends on] the many choices we make; about what to consume, about which technologies to use -- by making the right choices saving the planet would be cheap and maybe even come free." To see how this might happen read this paradigm shifting book.

We are at an environmental impasse. Many blame our personal choices about the things we consume and the way we live. This is only part of the problem. Different forms of social power - political, economic and ideological - structure the choices we have available. This book analyses how we make social and environmental history and why we end up where we do. Using case studies from different environmental domains -- earth and water, air and fire -- Nature, Choice and Social Power examines the form that social power takes and how it can harm the environment and hinder our efforts to act in our own best interests. The case studies challenge conventional wisdoms about why gold is valuable, why the internal combustion engine triumphed, and when and why suburbs sprawled. The book shows how the power of individuals, the power of classes, the power of the market and the power of the state at different times and in different ways were critical to setting us on a path to environmental degradation. It also challenges conventional wisdoms about what we need to do now. Rather than reducing consumption and shrinking from outcomes we don't want, it proposes growing towards outcomes we do want. We invested massive resources in creating our problems; it will take equally large investments to fix them. Written in a clear and engaging style, the book is underpinned with a political economy framework and addresses how we should understand our responsibility to the environment and to each other as individuals within a large and impersonal system.

"A thoughtful, measured and ultimately compelling analysis of our collective inability to take the obvious measures needed to prevent the downward spiral of environmental degradation that currently threatens so much of the world around us. Beautifully written, this text is thoroughly recommended for student audiences at all levels as well as for general readers." --David Harvey, City University of New York Graduate Center, USA "Utterly original, always provocative, never predictable, Erica Schoenberger rethinks the environmental crisis here as a deeply sedimented social problem, and as a problem of social power. Nature, Choice, and Social Power takes a fresh look at the underlying causes and consequences of the environmental impasse, matched with refreshing responses to a host of stubborn questions. Schoenberger argues that getting by in a different, and less environmentally damaging way is a challenge too big for environmentalism-as-we-know-it on its own; moving forward must involve the renovation of democracy and the taming of markets too." --Jamie Peck, University of British Columbia, Canada "Erica Schoenberger has produced a truly stimulating and provocative book. Through detailed historical analyses she shows how environmental problems are the product of the configurations of social power and that our choices are constrained by such configurations. The wonderfully clear writing style makes her argument highly accessible to all. Invaluable." --Peter Dicken, University of Manchester, UK About the Author Erica Schoenberger is Professor of Geography and Environmental Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, USA.