



# **XVI: The Role of Institutions and Policymaking in Conservation**

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## **Principles for Institutions Making Conservation Policy:**

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- **The Humility Principle**
  - We must recognize and accept the limits of human knowledge and our capacities to "manage" the environment.
- **The Precautionary Principle**
  - When uncertainty is very great we must act with restraint and care.
- **The Reversibility Principle**
  - We must not make irreversible changes or mistakes.

# Institutions and Conservation Policy

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- **Educational Institutions**
  - **Ivory Tower Effect**
  - **Curriculum Limitations**
    - **Universities are slow to change.**
    - **Reductionism is encouraged; holistic disciplines are slow to develop.**
  - **Ecological/environmental education should start sooner and be pervasive in the curriculum.**
  - **Most working activists that have and are influencing public policy are not part of the educational establishment.**

# **Educational Institutions continued--**

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- **Most educational institutions are not "green".**
  - **Traditional college education is shaped around providing the students with the philosophical, scientific, technological and business skills in order to extend human dominion over the earth.**
    - **church-affiliated schools**
    - **land-grant universities (ag-world)**
    - **unsustainable businesses have infiltrated many large educational institutions (just look at ISU!)**

# **Governments**

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- **Horizontal structure is not responsive to solving conflicts.**
- **Agencies policies are often conflicting.**
- **Response times are politically determined and not environmentally friendly.**
- **Influence of lobbyists and unsustainable business interests/special interest groups may skew or disable agencies.**

# Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)

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- **Large NGOs**
  - Compromise is a way of life.
  - Mainstream groups are part of the system (staffed by the same kind of bureaucrats everyone else has)
- **Grassroots NGOs**
  - More holistic in approach.

# **Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) (*continued*)**

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- **NGOs play an important role in shaping current policy.**
  - **Link conservation's scientific community to government agencies.**
  - **Work at various levels of the vertical structure and on a multiplicity of issues.**
  - **Are very flexible in their approaches and often form coalitions on issues.**

# Business

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- Most businesses do not have an environmental policy; not "green".
- The separation of "production" and "place" that occurs in today's businesses is a recipe for environmental disaster.
- Current economic theory used by the business community is unsustainable and does not consider the "externalities" associated with the natural environment.
- There is a movement toward "green" business but progress is slow.

# Consumers

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- **Consumers must exhibit a moral and social responsibility to the environment before change can occur:**
  - **They must understand the issues and their impact at the cash register.**
  - **They must exhibit a willingness to pay the costs associated with environmental impacts of their lifestyles.**
  - **Unsustainable lifestyles must change to sustainable ones .**

# Legal Institutions

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- **Market based approaches don't work.**
  - **markets are based on exploitation of something or somebody.**
  - **externalities are not included in the market**
  - **There is considerable question whether externalities can or should be included in markets.**
  - **Our current system is not truly free-market and does not work even in "classical" economic terms. It is set up to devalue important natural resources in order to keep economic growth strong.**

# legal institutions continued

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- **Laws are the only check on market exploitation that is effective.**
- **Voluntary compliance has proven itself undependable and questionable at best (just look at the nonpoint pollution problem in Iowa).**

# Religious Institutions

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- Liberation theology.
- Interfaith programs (Joint Appeal 1992).
- May be one of the most effective ways to train for environmental awareness.
- Most deep ecologists argue our root causes are due to moral/spiritual alienation.

# Media

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- **Media tends to focus on short-term hype.**
- **Journalists may not understand the issues.**
- **Scientists do not understand journalists.**
- **Everyone wants to use journalists.**
- **Journalists can be effective in bringing issues to the public forum for debate and resolution.**
- **Media can serve as a powerful tool for environmental education if used judiciously.**

# Directions for Conservation Biology

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- Move away from discipline driven science and encourage "issue driven" research.
- Reward holistic scientists at the university level (not just the molecular biologists).BB