



PUBLICATION FACTS

JOURNAL

ECOSYSTEMS, SOCIETY, AND
HEALTH: PATHWAYS THROUGH
DIVERSITY, CONVERGENCE, AND
INTEGRATION

PUBLICATION DATE

2015

PAGES

3-28

AUTHORS

Hallstrom, Lars
Parkes, Margot W.
Guehlstorf, Nicholas P.

CONVERGENCE AND DIVERSITY: INTEGRATING ENCOUNTERS WITH HEALTH, ECOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

ABSTRACT

This book brings into conversation three vast subject areas: environment, health, and society. Although their issues and concerns are deeply interconnected, their research and policy agendas are frequently confined to disciplinary, administrative, sectoral, and knowledge-based silos. Both public media and academic publications have tended to portray significant problems (and their solutions in particular) as falling into only one domain: environmental risk, public health, or social science. Given the scope of each area, the prospect of identifying convergence and connection among them can seem daunting and unmanageable.

Despite this challenge, acknowledging and respecting the complexity of contemporary issues has also led to recognition that integrative approaches to ecosystems, health, and society are not only possible, but increasingly necessary. This interdisciplinary collection of research is brought together to explore or reconstruct a story of a convergence that respects this diversity. As research on environment, health, and society continues to expand - as is happening in this text - it is important to identify and systematize our knowledge of the embedded connections and relax the desire for short-term solutions. The issues and patterns we identify in this chapter, and the works included in this book, offer a narrative of the inter-linked, cross-

national, and interdisciplinary research that is now in progress.

In keeping with all of the chapters in the book, this introduction begins with an acknowledgment of the diverse interests and research concerns of the authors, which have provoked the need for this book. As co-editors, it is notable that our interests are rather different but have emerged, respectively, from environmental, health, and social concerns. Recognition of the neglect of the societal complexities of science, especially in relation to issues of environmental democracy, was a key driver for Hallstrom. For Parkes, a health-driven concern with the emergence of water-related diseases related to intensive agriculture fuelled attention to watersheds, intersectoral governance, and the social-ecological context for health. The risks associated with genetically modified organisms was one of the issues that prompted Guehlstorf to navigate scholarly terrain spanning environmental hazards, product-based health risks, and an awareness of the political and legal ramifications of industrial legacies that now bridge continents.

The range and scope of contributions to this book lay bare the deeply embedded connections and narratives that link social, health, and environmental concerns. Drawing on a range of scholarly backgrounds and approaches, the book spans contexts from Cuban fisheries, to Canadian and Chinese health care services, to watersheds from North America to New Zealand. As co-editors, we continue to learn from each of these contributions and we encourage the reader to encounter, explore, and engage with the diversity, convergence, and integration at the interface of health, ecological, and social concerns.

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