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"Environmental Organisations in New Forms of Political Participation: Ecological Modernisation and the Making of Voluntary Rules"

Bostrom, Magnus

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Environmental organisations have been active since the early 1960s in putting environmental issues on the political agenda and in strengthening the environmental consciousness of the public. The struggle has been successful in the sense that there is now a strong demand for practical solutions among all kinds of actors. It is, however, difficult for states and political actors to manage environmental problems by traditional forms and instruments, due to the complex character of the problems. Therefore, environmental organisations take their own initiatives to participate in policy-making by developing new forms, within new arenas, with the help of new instruments (voluntary rules or standards). Special attention is paid to the possibilities of identifying and developing constructive roles in relation to other actors and institutions as well as the capacity to organise standardisation projects and to mobilise and make use of power resources such as symbolic capital and knowledge. In order to interpret characteristics and implications (possibilities and limitations) of standardisation strategies, I draw on the ecological modernisation perspective. Empirically, I refer to the role of Swedish environmental organisations in standardisation projects such as eco-labelling.

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