Negotiating Environmental Change
New Perspectives from Social Science

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This book by leading researchers presents a critical review of debates in environmental social science over the past decade. Three broad areas are covered in ten chapters: the problems of scientific uncertainty and its role in shaping environmental policy and decisions; the development of institutional frameworks for governing natural resources; and the link between economic and technological change and the environment. The book begins with an overview essay examining how perspectives across environmental social science have shifted over the past decade and looking forward to the emergence of new research agendas.

‘The ESRC/GEC programme has made a major contribution in terms of environmental social science research. The chapters in this book provide incisive, detailed and reflective critiques of the development of knowledge over the last ten years and provide powerful and important messages about the challenges presented by the complex relationship between environmental and social change. The book should be essential reading for all researchers and also for all policymakers who are grappling with questions about how to respond to environment/society controversies.’
– Judith Petts, Birmingham University, UK and Member of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution

‘Global environmental change will be with us forever. But how it happens in the future, and with what effect on the planet and its peoples depends to a large extent on how the international agreements, national politics and local actions play out. This collection provides the most comprehensive assessment yet of these critical interconnections, and reveals how social scientists are making an invaluable contribution to the creation of more science and just livelihoods in a future world.’
– Tim O’Riordan, University of East Anglia, UK

‘An aphrodisiac to the tepid response of positivist social science. People are not merely actors, perpetrators and victims, in an environmental drama. The critical social theorists in this book constructively show us how people are improvising the stage and the script as we update our understanding of nature, what constitutes a good life, and our individual and collective options.’
– Richard B. Norgaard, University of California, Berkeley, US

‘Negotiating Environmental Change is a child of the ESRCs Global Environmental Change Programme, by far the biggest piece of work by social scientists in the United Kingdom during the 1990s. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the balance sheet needs to be drawn up: what do our policies, insights and values owe to the collaborative efforts of social scientists? This book suggests that ideas and approaches that were conceived at a time when the “Ozone Hole”, Global Warming and Biodiversity Losses were beginning to resonate in academic and policy circles have now entered the British and European psyche. The challenge of forward thinking in the twenty-first century, in which the environment is central to most of the issues that concern social science, is to demonstrate that the environment is not a “separate territory”. Environmental thinking and practice affects us in various guises: governance and democracy, business and management, risk and everyday consumption: the substance of this book. Negotiating Environmental Change makes clear the contribution that new thinking is making to problems that were not looked upon as “environmental” a decade ago, but which we now see as being at the forefront of global research and policy agendas.’
– Michael Redclift, King’s College London, UK