

Pedersen, Review of Malgosia Fitzmaurice, David M. Ong and Panos Merkouris (eds)  
*Research Handbook on International Environmental Law* [2011] 1 *Web JCLI*  
<http://webjcli.ncl.ac.uk/2011/issue1/pedersen1.html>

**Malgosia Fitzmaurice, David M. Ong and Panos Merkouris  
(eds) *Research Handbook on International Environmental Law***

(Edward Elgar, 2010)  
703 pp (incl. indexes)  
ISBN978-1-84720-124-9 £195.00 Hardback

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Despite the ongoing impasse when it comes to agreeing on a legal regime succeeding the obligations of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, there can be little doubt that international environmental law has established itself as an important sub-discipline of international law. Likewise, there can be little doubt that international environmental law has come to play a significant role when it comes to influencing domestic environmental law developments. Notwithstanding this, international environmental law continues to suffer from (and is likely to do so for a foreseeable future) some of the familiar problems relating to ineffectiveness and relative low levels of compliance. At the same time, the continuous question of whether international law is becoming fragmented as a result of the rapid and often conflicting developments in various sub-disciplines of international law has increasingly found its separate application within debates on international environmental law.<sup>1</sup> In light of such developments, one perhaps straightforward observation is that international environmental law is a discipline in flux and evolution. Faced with this argument, researchers, students and practitioners of international

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<sup>1</sup> H van Asselt, 'Managing the Fragmentation of International Environmental Law: Forests at the Intersection of the Climate and Biodiversity Regimes' (2010) available on [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1703186&http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1703186](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1703186&http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1703186).

environmental law seeking a comprehensive overview of the subject could certainly do a lot worse than consulting *Research Handbook on International Environmental Law* edited by Malgosia Fitzmaurice, David Ong and Panos Merkouris which offers a comprehensive overview of the current state of affairs.

The *Research Handbook* falls in eight parts containing 30 separate chapters covering the topics of international environmental law as a system of international law, theories and concepts, substantive principles, human rights to a clean environment, responsibility and liability, dispute settlement and compliance, biodiversity and specific environmental protection regimes. In doing so, the *Research Handbook* includes contributions from some of the leading academics within the discipline of international environmental law. From the point of view of this reviewer, the *Research Handbook* offers an impressive and thorough one-stop source for contemporary international environmental law. To the seasoned international environmental lawyer the *Research Handbook* inevitably covers well-trodden ground in some respects. Having said that, particularly worth highlighting is the chapter by Gerhard Loibl examining the role of compliance mechanisms and procedures. In light of the weak enforcement of international environmental law, independent compliance committees are likely to play an increasingly important role. Loibl's chapter is a good place to start for anyone interested in pursuing this important area which is otherwise not afforded enough scholarly attention. In this light, this review particularly enjoyed the chapter by Feja Lesniewska examining the role of the non-compliance mechanisms under the Montreal Protocol to the Vienna Convention for the protection of the ozone layer.

Likewise, Duncan French's chapter on sustainable development serves as a reminder of the increasing influence which international environmental law has on other legal disciplines. French, for instance, highlights how the concept, which originated in international environmental law, has, through time, gone on to assert influence in other legal arenas as well. Other significant contributions include the chapter by Jona Razzaque on the increasing importance of procedural environmental rights. Interestingly, Razzaque observes that procedural rights of participation and access to information are better developed on the domestic level despite being heavily promoted on the international scene.

One downside, however, is the *Research Handbook's* rather steep price which is likely to put it out of reach for the growing body of students interested studying in international environmental law. This is a shame as the *Research Handbook* contains numerous chapters which are ideally suited for course reading materials in international environmental law classes. In addition, features which would arguably have improved the *Research Handbook* would have been the inclusion of separate chapters on the significant role played non-governmental organisations and other epistemic communities in the negotiation and making of international environmental law (beyond the coverage afforded in Ch. 1). Likewise, a discussion on the future role of international organisations as the primary forum for negotiating international environmental agreements would arguably have improved the book.

Nevertheless, *Research Handbook on International Environmental Law* is an impressive volume and the editors have put together a high quality collection. *Research Handbook on International Environmental Law* ought to be an invaluable reference source for both teachers and students of international environmental law in the years to come.