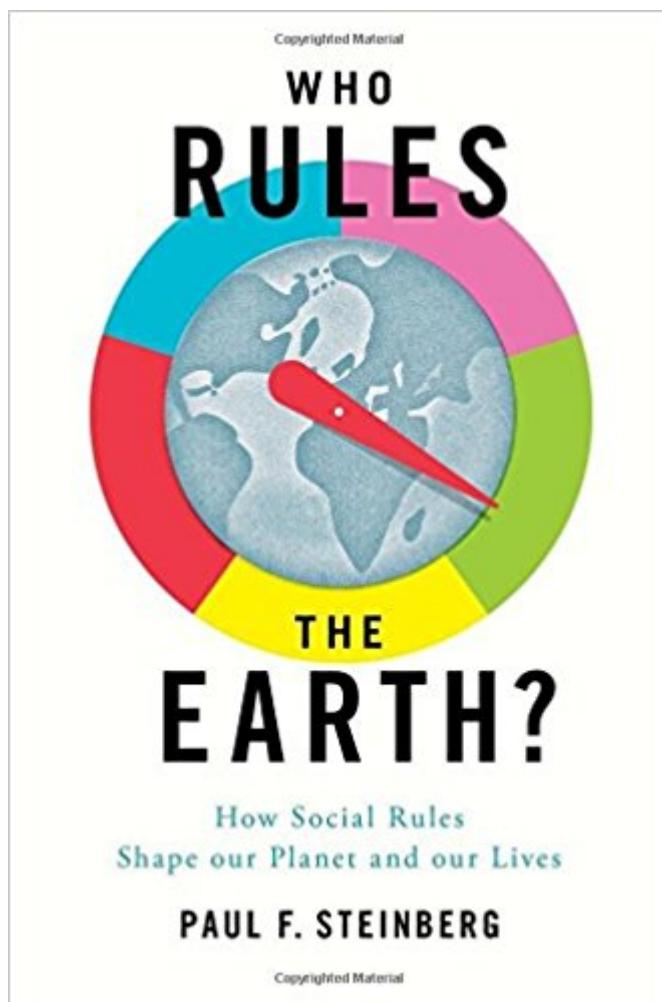


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# Who Rules The Earth?: How Social Rules Shape Our Planet And Our Lives



## Synopsis

Worldwide, half a million people die from air pollution each year-more than perish in all wars combined. One in every five mammal species on the planet is threatened with extinction. Our climate is warming, our forests are in decline, and every day we hear news of the latest ecological crisis. What will it really take to move society onto a more sustainable path? Many of us are already doing the "little things" to help the earth, like recycling or buying organic produce. These are important steps-but they're not enough. In *Who Rules the Earth?*, Paul Steinberg, a leading scholar of environmental politics, shows that the shift toward a sustainable world requires modifying the very rules that guide human behavior and shape the ways we interact with the earth. We know these rules by familiar names like city codes, product design standards, business contracts, public policies, cultural norms, and national constitutions. Though these rules are largely invisible, their impact across the planet has been dramatic. By changing the rules, Ontario, Canada has cut the levels of pesticides in its waterways in half. The city of Copenhagen has adopted new planning codes that will reduce its carbon footprint to zero by 2025. In the United States, a handful of industry mavericks designed new rules to promote greener buildings, and transformed the world's largest industry into a more sustainable enterprise. Steinberg takes the reader on a series of journeys, from a familiar walk on the beach to a remote village deep in the jungles of Peru, helping the reader to "see" the social rules that pattern our physical reality and showing why these are the big levers that will ultimately determine the health of our planet. By unveiling the influence of social rules at all levels of society-from private property to government policy, and from the rules governing our oceans to the dynamics of innovation and change within corporations and communities-*Who Rules the Earth?* is essential reading for anyone who understands that sustainability is not just a personal choice, but a political struggle.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gerner Innovative Teaching Award "Revealing the hidden architecture of rules that must be changed to protect our planet, Steinberg offers a fresh perspective on how to achieve a sustainable future. Who Rules the Earth? will be a source of inspiration for anyone who wonders what more we can do to overcome our most daunting environmental challenges." -Robert F. Kennedy, Jr."Paul Steinberg provides profound insights into how societies function and why this matters for the health of the planet. After reading this book, you will not view the world in the same way again." -Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, Minister of Environment and Energy for Costa Rica, 2002-2006, and Vice President, Center for Environment and Peace, Conservation International"This book makes a fascinating contribution to understanding the forces that shape our world." -Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change"I was genuinely moved by this book. Steinberg goes where few scholars have dared, taking an incredibly rich research literature on global environmental governance and distilling practical insights that, instead of just making us feel good about ourselves, might actually help us solve our toughest environmental problems. I am going to make this required reading not only for my students, but also my children." -Ben Cashore, Professor of Environmental Governance & Political Science, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies"Steinberg masterfully 'skims the cream' from the best social science research to argue that environmental reformers must focus their energies on changing institutions, and suggests concrete ways in which to accomplish this ambitious goal. A great read!" -Lisa L. Martin, Professor of Political Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison"Steinberg does an excellent job of drawing together existing research to offer a coherent, accessible argument about how it applies to the current ecological problem...Overall, Who Rules the Earth? offers a clear argument, firm grounding in research, and practical guidance for those who want to have a voice in shaping the rules that we live by" --Gerda Kits, Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith

Paul F. Steinberg is the Malcolm Lewis Professor of Sustainability and Society and Professor of Political Science and Environmental Policy at Harvey Mudd College. He is the author of Comparative Environmental Politics and Environmental Leadership in Developing Countries, which

won the International Studies Association's Harold and Margaret Sprout Award for the best book in international environmental affairs. He is the director of the Social Rules Project, a multi-media initiative designed to raise public awareness about the importance of changing policies and other binding rules to promote sustainability.

I teach and study environmental politics at a small college, and this is one of the most inspiring books I have read in some time. In a clear, accessible, and inspiring way Steinberg synthesizes a vast quantity of social science research in order to illustrate the importance of social rules in shaping our interactions with the earth. In a political moment when we are constantly told that our individual lifestyle choices are all we can do to protect the environment, Steinberg shows that individuals CAN make a difference -- by working to shape the social rules (laws, institutions, widely shared and followed norms) that have far more profound impacts on the environment than whether or not we recycle a can. I recommend that everyone who is interested in the environment -- or in social change of any sort -- read this book!

It makes the point convincingly that legal constructs and political policies drive infrastructure development and activities that affect climate change, etc. I like the guy's approach, but I think it is just not as accessible as it needs to be. It's an important concept, and I think he's doing his best to get the word out, but it isn't penetrating the fog of confusion caused by too many media options.

Great book.

Very well written. Several key aspects for anyone in advocacy, although his focus is on sustainability. To make changes we must alter the effective rules that drive behavior.

This is the complete review as it appears at my blog dedicated to reading, writing (no 'rithmatic!), movies, & TV. Blog reviews often contain links which are not reproduced here, nor will updates or modifications to the blog review be replicated here. Graphic and children's reviews on the blog typically feature two or three images from the book's interior, which are not reproduced here. Note that I don't really do stars. To me a book is either worth reading or it isn't. I can't rate it three-fifths worth reading! The only reason I've relented and started putting stars up there is to credit the good ones, which were being unfairly uncredited. So, all you'll ever see from me is a five-star or a one-star (since no stars isn't a rating, unfortunately). I rated this book WORTHY! ErratumPage 202

"...must make due..." should be "...must make do..." Now here's a book that dispenses with forewords and introductions and gets right down to it. Kudos to author Paul Steinberg for showing that it can be done, even in a book of this nature! There was a problem with the Adobe Digital Editions version of this novel. This seems to occur a lot with PDF format ADE copies - whereby pairs of letters are blanked out for reasons which escape me. The letters are still there - for example, if I go to page 149 and search for the words 'stiff fines' the document search finds them immediately. It's just that I cannot see the entire words. Instead, what I see on that line is: "...are hit with sti\_\_\_ines. \_\_e..." Which, had the letters (marked by underscores here) been visible, I would have seen: "...are hit with stiff fines. The..." The letter combinations affected here seem to be 'ffi', 'fi', 'ft', and 'Th' (note that lower case 'th' was not so affected!). Also, all numbers, including dates, years, and monetary amounts are banished to invisibility, too, making dates look really weird, like "May \_\_, \_\_\_\_," (Note that I've added underscores because HTML annoyingly removes what it deems to be extra spaces). I assume that these issues will be fixed in the final version. The version I read was an advance review copy. There was also a problem with the page selector at the bottom of the screen - it didn't recognize the pages - not even page 202 when it was on page 202! The book opens with a story of a doctor's efforts to ban non-essential pesticides from use in the small town of Hudson, in Quebec, Canada. The effort is documented in a film; A Chemical Reaction, which I have not seen, but which looks, from the film poster on that page, to be one which plays to emotions (as judged by the prominent placing of the baby) rather than to cold, hard fact, but as I said, I haven't yet seen this documentary, so I can judge it only from the poster - maybe it plays to emotions and cold hard fact! June Irwin, the doctor, prevailed, despite strong challenges from pesticide companies, one of which included the apparent intent of one of the prosecution to drink pesticide in the courtroom (talking of appeals to emotion instead of to rationality and science!). Fortunately, this wasn't allowed. A domino effect then went into play, with other communities, including the entire province of Ontario, seeking to regulate pesticides in the same way. A year after the rules went into effect in Ontario, concentrations of common pesticides in the waterways dropped by half. The book mentions nothing of health issues here, unfortunately. Yes, pesticides were in use, yes concentrations fell, but what of the health issues? Where there were pesticide-related health issues? Where these resolved or alleviated after the pesticide levels dropped? The book is disturbingly silent on this important aspect. Almost needless to say, this kind of change couldn't happen here - here being the good ol' USA, where corporate lobbies are all-powerful and politicians kow-tow to them pathetically. Even if there are direct correlations between health and pesticide use, the lobbies are too powerful, and power and money speak a lot louder than children's health. The most powerful

country in the world has clearly demonstrated this time and time again. In the US, the pesticide-supporters (that is, industry and lobbyists) rallied and made an assault on the state legislatures, asking them to pass legislation preempting local communities. Is there anything less democratic than this? The number of such states went up by about six-fold. Of course, it's still in each individual householder's hands to choose not to spray pesticides on their own property. But this book isn't merely a list of anecdotes, fascinating as such things can be. The opening chapter is merely a lead-in to explore how we came to have the rules we do have, and whether or not it's feasible to effect change. Should we give up on a good idea, because we think it's so good that someone, somewhere, must already have thought of it? Why is it that organizations are frequently ill-suited to the tasks they seem to have taken upon themselves? I must confess that I largely skimmed chapter four, which was thirty pages of intense focus on the threatened Cerulean Warbler and its migration. Important as this knowledge is, it was a bit too much information for me! A shorter summary would have done it nicely. This felt like the author was painting a mural where a small line diagram would have served adequately, but better things were to come. The very next chapter explores a variety of topics, from the initiation and final defeat of leaded gasoline to McDonald's fries (which have to be 9/32nds of an inch thick, don't you know?!), to Peruvian business laws, to the true cost of coal-derived energy, to Dutch tulips and cleaning circuit boards! Whereas one chapter (such as chapter seven) takes a big picture - via a detailed history of the unprecedented international cooperation required to form the European economic community came together for example, another (such as chapter eight) takes a much more local view of how things get done - or fail to. That's where we learn this astounding fact, which is obvious in a background sort of way, but which is quite startling when it's stated quite baldly like this: "Forests absorb an astounding one third of all fossil fuel emissions each year; the destruction of forests today, primarily in the tropics, releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than is produced by the entire transportation sector." Sobering, huh? We desperately need the very trees that we're so gleefully slaughtering en masse. This book is associated with a video game called "Law of the Jungle" which I haven't played, but it's available at the link. I recommend this book as a very worthy read.

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