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SITING HAZARDOUS WASTE FACILITIES: LOCAL OPPOSITION AND THE MYTH OF PREEMPTION

DAVID MORELL and CHRISTOPHER MAGORIAN
Cambridge: Ballinger Publ. Co. 1982. Pp. 266. \$25.00.

This timely book appears amid upheavals and heated debates over toxic waste policy within the nation's agency mandated to manage an ever-burgeoning supply of toxics. While top administrators are being questioned about favoring toxic producers' interests, the U.S. government has been obliged to make a recent offer of 33 million dollars to purchase an entire Missouri town contaminated because of grossly irresponsible distribution of hazardous wastes therein. However, as becomes clear in Morell and Magorian's opening chapters, inequitable and/or irresponsible handling and siting of toxic waste is not only nothing new, but is also frequently a foregone conclusion as the result of the disorganized and ineffective manner in which the siting of hazardous wastes has often been undertaken. *Siting Hazardous Waste Facilities* not only raises the relevant questions, but also provides some reasonable and needed answers in the midst of the ongoing controversy over the appropriate toxics siting process.

The authors take an unbiased approach to the emotionally charged subject of locating hazardous waste facilities. Adhering to the unavoidable reality of growing hazardous waste production, an excellent case is made for the necessity of adopting consistent, workable, yet equitable means of successfully siting storage facilities. Providing a concise yet comprehensive treatment of the issues involved, the book is well-researched, referencing extensive source material. It is written in a manner that makes it valuable and informative reading not only to policy-makers and technical advisers, but also to affected citizens and concerned non-technical readers. By documenting several actual instances of attempted hazardous waste sitings, the authors' approach is that of pin-pointing the underlying socio-economic and political factors common to unsuccessful and vehemently opposed site proposals, as contrasted with those factors present when facilities have been successfully sited with less local resistance.

For the most part, the authors are thorough in their coverage of the important issues. However, they concentrate primarily on problems relevant and poignant in Eastern locales (New Jersey mainly). Admittedly, many hazardous waste facilities are currently established in the Northeast, but some exist in less populated Western locations now. Many observers believe the West will likely be slated for far more sites in the future. This book's only notable weakness, then, is in not directly addressing the issue

of siting toxics facilities in more desolate, sparsely populated, "unspoiled" potential sites in the Western states and the need for relevant policy specific to the problems which have arisen and will continue to do so in this context. One other omission by the authors is in neglecting a body of economic research wherein non-market goods and "bads" (e.g., health risk and other environmental quality esthetics) have been studied to determine their economic value to individuals. Morell and Magorian cite the lack of information on such non-quantified costs of facility sites, as compared to quantified benefits, as a significant stumbling block in achieving workable, accepted siting procedures; yet, environmental and natural resource economists have provided several means and examples of how such costs can be quantified (at least within a range) for purposes of comparison to benefits in a policy-making setting.

Overall, the authors' analysis of the underlying difficulties in siting hazardous waste facilities, supplemented with actual case studies, is generally well-constructed in its synthesis of input from several disciplines. However, many of the authors' observations have been noted by economists and political scientists elsewhere; the book's greatest strength lies in tying together the underlying reasons for community resistance with workable means of actual implementation of the hazardous waste siting process. In their concluding chapters, the authors outline their laudable recommendations of potentially feasible approaches for overcoming the currently unacceptable " 'paralyzed' status quo." Workable strategies for implementing the siting process are presented in which preemption must be considered and yet balanced with local negotiation and equitable compensation. The reader is thus provided with an understanding of the key aspects necessary to maintain greater equity and efficiency throughout the process of siting hazardous waste facilities. It would seem that if the siting process was imparted with viability such as the authors suggest, many instances of mismanagement, potentially injurious to both industry and community interests, could be avoided.

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