

Adopting Corporate Environmental Management Systems: Motivations and Results of ISO 14001 and EMAS Certification

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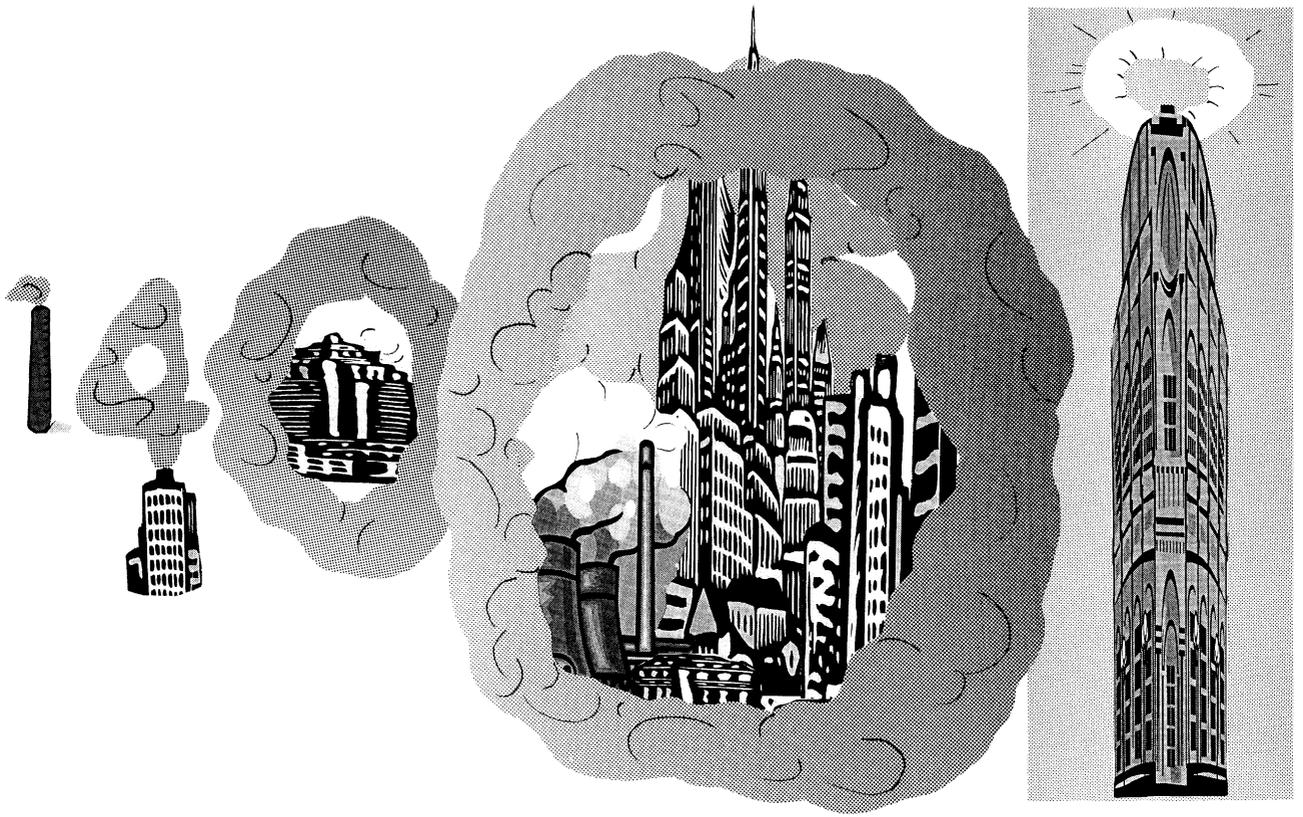
Multinational and domestic corporations around the world are adopting environmental management systems (EMS) and certifying them by international standards. ISO 14001 is becoming the dominant international standard for assessing environmental management processes and in Europe many firms are also registering their EMS according to the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). Yet, relatively few studies have explored the motivations of firms adopting and certifying EMS and even fewer have examined the results or impacts on the companies that do so. The few empirical analyses and case studies that have been done on corporate EMS provide insights into motivations and results primarily for large multinational corporations in the United States and Europe. We compare these findings with those of five in-depth case studies of smaller domestic energy and gas companies in Germany. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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Introduction

The adoption of environmental management systems (EMS) as frameworks for integrating corporate environmental protection policies, programs, and practices is growing among both domestic and multinational companies around the world. Many companies that adopt an EMS follow industry standards, such as 'Responsible Care' in the chemicals sector, or international guidelines such as ISO 14001 or the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).

The growth of EMS as a process for integrating corporate environmental policies and programs has been quite rapid over the past decade. The concept of external certification expanded with the introduction of the British Standard 7750 in the early 1990s, followed by the development of EMAS in 1993, and the promulgation of the ISO 14000 series in 1996. By mid-2001 more than 30300 organizations worldwide had their EMS certified under ISO 14001 guidelines established by the International Organization for Standardization in Switzerland. In Europe, nearly 4000 companies have registered under EMAS guide-



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