

BOOK REVIEW

Just sustainabilities: development in an unequal world**David R. Orvos***

Department of Environmental Studies, Sweet Briar College, Sweet Briar, Virginia 24595, USA

Agyeman J, Bullard RD, Evans B (eds) (2003), *Just sustainabilities: development in an unequal world*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 367 pp. \$24.95 (£16.50)

Ultimately, if human sustainability is ever to become a way of life, particularly in my country, the case for it must be iron clad and indisputable by elected and appointed government officials. Less developed countries (LDCs) and more developed countries (MDCs) must agree on issues of inequity and injustice for the long-term survival of our species. The case presented in *Just sustainabilities* is powerful and provides such an indisputable and referenced source. It thoroughly examines the link between racial oppression and exploitation. I particularly appreciated the continued emphasis on environmental justice and its role in sustainable development. How can we have one without the other? *Just sustainabilities* argues that justice – environmental and socioeconomic – must be first and foremost when countries enter into policy formulating discussions of sustainable development. The case is overwhelming as presented in the book and well supported with case histories from several continents. I was intrigued by the evolving nexus of environmental justice and sustainable development and the evidence of lack of social justice in the case histories.

The editors and authors of *Just sustainabilities* are established and respected colleagues in this relatively new discipline. The diversity of views supercedes any

discontinuity from using so many authors. The book is well organized with the introductory theories, concepts, and challenges quite amenable to reading by a student in any introductory environmental class. The remainder of the book discusses local and regional examples and examines in depth the lack of justice and equity in each. I believe the text should be required reading in any significant sustainable development course as it offers a plethora of possibilities for an instructor using the included case histories to facilitate discussion and research. I was consistently challenged by the diverse views of the authors and appreciated the documented references. The concluding chapter serves as an excellent summary of the book.

However, this is not light reading! For the general public *Just sustainabilities* is probably too intense and overly detailed. However, the message is important enough that I hope the editors consider a 'lighter' version in the future for the lay public. It is the public that must ultimately support the policies that will evolve from the message of this book.

Few books link scholarly research, theory, and activism in the manner that *Just sustainabilities* successfully accomplishes. This is indeed a seminal achievement that I highly recommend. The authors have generated a significant work whose message must be disseminated to the world. It is a plan for equitable sustainable development that we must incorporate!

Editorial responsibility: Mary Batson (Managing Editor), Oldendorf/Luhe, Germany

*Submitted: July 28, 2003; Accepted: July 28, 2003
Proofs received from author(s): October 8, 2003
Published on the web: October 28, 2003*