

REVIEW: Environmental Principles and Policies: An Interdisciplinary Approach

By Sharon Beder. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006. Pp 304 incl. indices. \$54.95 (paperback). ISBN 0 86840 857 3.

Reviewed By Peter Edwards, Griffith University

Environmental Principles and Policies is a well balanced addition to the literature on environmental policy. Although this book is no “hard” critique of environmental and economic policies (as typically expected from Sharon Beder) the conclusion does sum up many of the critiques of economic-based environmental policies. Beder elucidates a number of environmental principles that have both been around for some time (for example, the precautionary principle), and principles that have emerged more recently in environmental discourses (for example, human rights). In the clearly laid-out manner of these principles, this book will be an excellent resource for, not only teachers and students of environmental studies (up to undergraduate level), but also the general public.

For a new book outlining key principles such as sustainability, polluter pays, precautionary, participation, the equity and human rights, there are sections that suffer from a lack of emerging issues and information. In Chapter 1 – “The Sustainability Principle”, there is a discussion of limits to growth (p. 13), yet no critical review of the emerging details of the influence of liberal foundations, such as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, and their agendas, that supported much of this population control research in the 1960s and 1970s. In Chapter 6 – “The Participation Principle”, Beder concentrates on the public’s right to information on environmental concerns, degradation, and/or pollution, glossing over much of the recent global emergence of community engagement and participatory/deliberative governance in environmental management. Again, in Chapter 7 – “Measuring Environmental Value”, Beder seems to allude that the only methods used to value the environment are monetary, especially, *cost-benefit analysis* (CBA). A reasonably well-accepted alternative is *total economic valuation* (TEV), which, despite its name, takes into account not only use values (benefits from direct, current human use, generally determined through CBA), but also non-use values (the value people get from a resource that they will never use or collective value, generally expressed in non-monetary terms).

In the final section of the book, “Markets for Conservation”, which includes Chapters 13 – “Quotas, Trades, Off-sets and Banks”, 14 – “The Sustainability Principle and Conservation Markets”, and 15 – “The Equity, Participation and Precautionary Principles Applied”, many of Beder’s sources of fisheries information are over ten years old. In the intervening time period, there have been quite a number of new studies and research (for example, Ransom Meyers, Boris Worm, Daniel Pauly, and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea – ICES, among others) that should have been included in a contemporary text of this nature. New trials have been implemented and policies developed in the past few years to take care of a number of the issues Beder brings up (particularly in British Columbia, Canada and the European Union).

In contrast, there are quite a number of areas where Beder introduces and explains simply, yet in great detail, some of the “newer” principles in the environmental realm, particularly Chapter 5 – “Human Rights Principles” and to some extent Chapter 6 and the right to know issue. Beder also brings up the often overlooked issue of racism and the environment, providing concrete examples from the ‘bastion of freedom and

equality', the United States, as well as other countries. A third important issue that Beder highlights is the issue of water trading in Australia. This is one area where she is rather critical, with good cause, in light of the determination of Australian governments to continue forward with this plan, despite multiple failures in countries around the world.

Although the tone of this book is rather measured when compared to most other works by Sharon Beder (for example "*Suited Themselves*"), it is an excellent book to introduce students and the interested public to a variety of environmental issues, in a lightly critical way. Particularly outstanding is the clarity of explanation, and the excellent variety of examples from a plethora of countries around the world. This is complemented by a wide variety of both traditional academic references and easily available internet references produced by governments and generally credible non-governmental organisations.
