

Environmental Principles and Policies: An Interdisciplinary Approach. Sharon Beder. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006, 304 pp. ISBN 0 86840 857 3

Sharon Beder's *Environmental Principles and Policies* provides a thorough and insightful view of environmental principles and their implementation in environmental policy. I have reservations about whether the book lives up to its sub-title "*An interdisciplinary approach*", however. The author does comprehensively cover three principles relevant to human interactions with the natural environment and the ramifications of human activity on the environment, and of degradation of the environment on human health. However, the discussion focuses on and prioritises scientific knowledge and expertise with limited inclusion of other types and forms of knowledge and their contribution to environmental concerns.

I found the historical overview in the Introduction particularly useful. It describes the emergence of environmental awareness in response to signs of environmental degradation and outlines the development of six key principles relevant to environmental management and human rights. The principles discussed throughout the book are the sustainability principle; the polluter pays principle; the precautionary principle; the equity principle; human rights principles and the participation principle.

The book is divided into five parts – I. Environmental protection principles, II. Social principles and environmental protection, III. Economic methods of environmental valuation, IV. Economic instruments for pollution control and V. Markets for conservation. In the first six chapters (Parts I and II) each of the principles on which the book is based is deconstructed and the range of meanings associated with them, and their implications for practice, are described. Part III examines the economic methods of valuing the environment and the limitations of these. Part IV discusses economic incentives and disincentives such as payments for pollution emission and trading schemes such as carbon offsets. Examples are drawn from across the globe and detail not only current policy and implementation but also the evolution of environmental management approaches. Part V outlines examples of market based conservation measures such as quotas, trades, offsets and banks; and the interrelationships between these measures and the environmental principles.

The author clearly describes, with examples, limitations in the development and implementation of policies and the associated environmental consequences. In particular, she details the implications of economic growth models and valuation of the environment in economic terms such as cost-benefit analysis, on environmental policy frameworks and implementation. It is clear from the thorough analysis provided that economic concerns such as development and company profit margins drive the implementation of much environmental policy. It is also apparent that, even with the application of human rights principles in tandem with environmental principles, policy can function, or be exploited, to maintain the rights of first world nations and the wealthy to the detriment of developing nations and socially marginalised, economically disadvantaged groups. Economic benefits can be obtained by companies while offsetting the social, economic and health consequences of, for example, pollution to marginalised populations.

Discussion of the economic consequences of environmental policy, and the role of economic determinants in the development and application of environmental principles and policy lends to the interdisciplinary nature of the book. The author notes, in the conclusion, that social and cultural implications of environmental policy are largely

overlooked. In English speaking countries, environmental values are typically assessed in economic (monetary) terms. Cultural environmental values such as Indigenous perspectives of land, since they do not have an economic or market value per se, are largely overlooked. Dominant Western ideologies view environmental features as independent entities and often as commodities, rather than as interdependent parts of an holistic entity.

Overall, *Environmental Principles and Policies* provides a comprehensive view of the limitations of environmental policies where they are informed by Western economic models. It provides an excellent critique of economics-based environmental policies and provides numerous examples of the limitations of these policies in protecting the environment. The six principles on which the book is structured and the various meanings ascribed to them are discussed comprehensively. I consider that the book would be a valuable resource for students of environmental management, and environmental economics.

Nan Hewitt

School of Natural Sciences, Edith Cowan University