

**Human Ecology: Fragments of Anti-Fragmentary Views of the World** edited by Dieter Steiner and Markus Nauser. London: Routledge, 1993. Pp. xxv + 365; index. £65.00 (hardback). ISBN 0 415 06777 4

*Human Ecology* is a worthwhile text, neatly coordinating a wide variety of debates in the field. The collection is developed from a series of papers presented in 1989 at the 'Person-Society-Environment' conference which explored the possibilities of transdisciplinarity in 'human ecology'. The book assumes two purposes. First, to promote interdisciplinary discussion and theory-modelling around the concept of human ecology. And second, to save the earth. What is brave about both pursuits is that they are attempted in a collectivist fashion.

As the title indicates, the book is fragmented; each chapter has a different author from the last. Some chapters are short, pithy pieces (for instance, Huppenbauer's 'Philosophical remarks on the project of human ecology') which challenge common sense ideas about, for example, the theory/practice dichotomy. Others are more lengthy discourses, with sometimes over-laboured descriptions of subjects apparently outside the author's realm of expertise. Both Weichhart and Steiner's Chapters (five and four, respectively), though presenting interesting insights into transdisciplinarity, fall into the trap of over-describing. (Do we need reminding that Freud delineated three functions of the unconscious – the id, ego and superego? – Weichhart, p.90.)

Additionally, there are a few serious problems with the text, not least of which is the writing style. Sometimes the English is awkward. But more importantly, there is a stylistic conflict between the introductions to each section (particularly the General and Part I Introductions), which are highly theorised, and the succeeding articles, which often are not. This leads me to wonder whether much of the book would be impenetrable to students, while other parts would seem more like superficial surveys to those in the field. On the other hand, this 'inconsistency' might well be a strength. The token 'political' (?) stream of consciousness piece by Dagmar Reichert ('Subjection Objected'), cleverly follows a more traditional and practically-orientated contribution from Hans-Joachim Mosler ('The self-organisation of ecologically sound behaviour' [– or considering how to improve people's behaviour and thereby save the earth]).

'Eclectic' well-describes the volume, with articles ranging from those with an economics bent (see Gonzague Pillet's interesting improvement on Daly's 'environmental economics') to those which reconsider the geography project; seeing it in a necessarily more politicised position (particularly Peter Gould's piece on the diffusion of AIDS). And, the bulk of the contributions are linked by the strong introductions, Steiner's conceptual model of triangular relations of person – society – environment and the theory of 'structuration' as conceptualised by Anthony Giddens. Giddens's notion in fact provides inspiration for an entire section of the volume, and is often referred to at length in individual articles. (Actually, I found it odd, that an article by him was not procured for the volume. This would, perhaps, have saved each author rehearsing the central tenets of Giddens's arguments as a preface to making their own.)

So, though lacking in some depth and suffering from some unnecessary repetition, the volume provides an excellent overview of many key debates in this nascent field. Even the occasionally grudging explanations of theories are worth the reading, contributing, as they do, to active transdisciplinarity.

In fact, what is particularly worthwhile about the book is the near-systematic cross-referencing between articles made by each author. This coordination must be seen as a huge achievement for the project – and as an inspiration for those of us promoting transdisciplinarity ... *and* the saving of the earth.

The editors shield themselves from criticism by offering up the volume, and human ecology as a whole, as 'work in progress'. Well it's good, brave work.

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**Sustainable Development** edited by Olav Stokke (Papers from the 6th EADI General Conference). London: Frank Cass, in association with The European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes, EADI, 1991. Pp. 132. No index. £27.50 (hardback). ISBN 0 7146 3449 2

This book is the second collection of papers to be published from the 1990 EADI 1990 Oslo conference on 'New Challenges for European Development Research'. The first collection in *The European Journal of Development Research* focused on current changes taking place in Europe, East and West. This present volume, which has already been published as a Special Issue of EJDR, is devoted to exploring sustainable development, primarily as it relates to the developing world.

The book begins well, with Olav Stokke providing an excellent Introduction which outlines the current debate about sustainability and investigates the prospects of maintaining sustainability against a background of structural changes in the international political and economic environment and also within the context of the EC. This is a mature analysis, stemming from a clear grasp of the political as well as economic imperatives of sustainable development and the constraints operating at both the global as well as national levels. The discussion of the need for effective ecological regimes and for more international regulation regarding the utilisation of natural resources is welcome. This discussion is set against the recognition that formal governmental structures are not alone in exercising political power and hence acknowledges the need to bring grassroots and non-governmental movements into the policy-making process if sustainability is to be maintained.

However, Stokke's grasp of the complexity involved in implementing policies aimed at maintaining sustainability is not reflected in the other contributions and thus, in the book as a whole. Brookfield's search for an adequate definition of sustainability leads to a somewhat over-optimistic view of the capacity of human adaptation to maintain sustainability in the face of environmental degradation. His emphasis on restorative human management fails to take account of the different political, economic, social, institutional as cultural contexts within which humans act. The remaining chapters present even narrower approaches, one confining itself to the well-worn problem of refining methods to internalise environmental externalities while the last chapter of the book presents an overly technical review of steps needed to be taken to address climatic change.

This book asks more questions than its answers, and promises more than it gives. It is not a book for beginners, being more suitable for those who are already familiar with the literature and debates on sustainability, especially in the