

# Electronic Green Journal

## **Review: The Country in the City: The Greening of the San Francisco Bay Area**

By Richard A. Walker

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*San Francisco, USA*

Richard A. Walker. *The Country in the City: The Greening of the San Francisco Bay Area*. (Forward by William Cronin) Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2007. 404 pp. ISBN: 0-295-98701-4 US\$35.

Richard A. Walker, Professor of Geography and Chair of the California Studies Center at the University of California, Berkeley, presents an alternative view of urban ecology, arguing that urban areas and their intermingled and attached green spaces co-evolve, rather than the typical story of green area being solely ran over by urban asphalt. Walker points out that cities need green spaces and surrounding rural areas. As documented in *The Country in the City*, this has especially been the case in the San Francisco Bay Area where militant green space activists have preserved a significant amount of green space.

In the forward, William Cronin notes that nowhere has the benefits of the mantra "thinking globally but acting locally" been more successful and that the book "is in fact the first comprehensive study of local environmental politics that has ever been written for any American city." Cronin points out that Walker avoids the "dichotomy ... too often segregate(ing) non-human nature from places of human dwelling and labor." (p. xi-xii).

Walker mentions the impact that locally bred and well-known luminaries like John Muir, David Brower and Karl Anthony have had on national environmental issues, but most of the focus is on local actors (many of whom have been women and people of color) who have made the San Francisco Bay Area the Ecotopia that it is today. The Bay Area has had an international impact, and Walker shares many accolades and achievements with the reader; "Bay Area environmentalism has been a player in this expansion to the wider world, promoting the green gospel internationally as it once did across United States." (p. 252). The success has not all been due to grassroots efforts; also to be credited are the wealthy and influential.

However, the book is not only cheerleading. An impressive amount of local knowledge is evident, with chapters about resource extraction, parks, suburban conservation, bay and ocean conservation, regional planning and growth control, land trusts, wine country politics, toxics, and environmental justice. With its dense amount of detail, the book is likely to be most appreciated by residents of the Bay Area with specialized local knowledge.

Walker leaves the reader with a warning: "As long as capital accumulation calls the tune, the juggernaut of urban growth will continue to roll on, and no city will ever be reconciled with the countryside" (p.254).

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