

**Review: Hijacking Sustainability**  
By Adrian Parr

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Parr, Adrian. *Hijacking Sustainability*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009. 209pp. ISBN: 0262013061. US\$24.95, hardbound. Recycled paper.

*Hijacking Sustainability* is a needed addition to environmental literature field due to the fact that there is limited information available on the attack on and the greenwashing of sustainability. The book operates from the premise that “sustainability” has become the new buzzword of popular culture. Parr begins by defining sustainability as being understood as the “development that meets the needs of today without compromising the needs of future generations” (p.1). Throughout the book she “examines the new culture of sustainability and how these hegemonic relations are challenged in an effort to revitalize collective life” (p.9) by documenting how sustainability became mainstream and how corporate entities, the government and the military are co-opting the term for their own purposes.

The book is organized into two sections which are further divided into individual chapters. The first half deals with “The Popularization of Sustainability Culture”, which focuses on five examples of sustainability being hijacked. The second half examines the “Challenges to Sustainability Culture” which includes chapters on trash, disaster relief, slums, and poverty. While *Hijacking Sustainability* begins promisingly it soon corkscrews into an obtuse examination of such disparate topics as the greenwashing of junkspace, the energy policies of Carter and Reagan, and the 2007 Academy Awards. This does not mitigate the extensive research work the author did, represented by the impressive bibliography and index included at the end.

Parr makes excellent points about the doublethink nature of corporate and military sustainability. For example in chapter one she points out that “it is important not to confuse the adoption of sustainable technologies by big-box retailers with a sustainable business model” (p.24). In chapter 5, “Green Boots on the Ground,” the author argues that “to transform the culture of the military to be more environmentally friendly and focused on advancing and using principles of sustainability is a cynical exercise” (p.80), for the simple reason that the military’s primary function is to conduct war. Parr also gives examples of hijacking happening by well-meaning organizations like NGOs connected with the Favela-Bairro slums to neighborhood programs in Brazil.

While Parr covers a lot of ground in her well researched and documented book, she does not provide any suggestions or course of action on how people can address the problem. Because of the complex construction of the ideas and arguments presented in this book it is recommended only to serious researchers of governmental and corporate influence on environmental issues. For an easier to read work addressing the attack on sustainability, Sharon Beder’s 2002 edition of *Global Spin: The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism* is recommended.

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