

Review: Environnement et écosociété: Histoire, acteurs, économie, gestion, droit, écologie, patrimoine, santé et sécurité publique (Environment and ecosociety: History, actors, economy, managing, law, heritage, health and public safety)

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Wackermann, Gabriel (Ed.). *Environnement et écosociété : Histoire, acteurs, économie, gestion, droit, écologie, patrimoine, santé et sécurité publique*. Paris: Ellipses, 2011. (in French). 764 pp. 978729863036. €35.50

As an important reference book in French (its title means “Environment and Ecosociety”) this is A-Z dictionary of 2000 terms related to the study of nature, ecology, and the environment in a broad sense, although linked with social action and aiming for social change. The editor, Gabriel Wackermann, is professor (emeritus) at La Sorbonne. Countless definitions are provided for hundreds of specialised concepts, expressions and subthemes uncommon to most dictionaries such as “écologie du paysage” (“landscape ecology”), “éco-matériau” (“eco-product”) (p. 240), “éco-prêt” (“eco-loan”) (p. 250) “éco-réfugié” (“eco-refugee”) (p. 252), or “Ecosquare” (p. 256). Entries are usually one page long and sometimes include bibliographical references (mostly in French). There are not just words beginning with the “eco” prefix gathered in this book! Aiming for an interdisciplinary approach and various connections, many concepts and disciplines (e.g. entries on “identity”, “ideology”, “island”, “imaginary”, etc.) are defined and discussed as well within the realm of environmental studies and eco-citizenship. One finds as well entries for persons and theoreticians (like Ernst Haeckel, who created the word “ecology”, p. 368) and various acronyms such as GAEC (“Groupement agricole d’exploitation en commun”, “Agricultural Grouping joint operation”, p. 361).

Beyond the familiar names and inevitable terms linked to the preservation of nature, the most interesting passages are dedicated to the more complex notions in environmental studies. Given its many dimensions and related debates, four separate entries and nine pages are dedicated solely to the definition (and delimitations) of sustainable development (pp. 201-209). This welcome deepening of some core concepts confirms the accuracy and pertinence of such reference books in specialized domains. The first entry on sustainable development begins with a clarification, reminding us that the ultimate goal is the well being of everyone and the advent of an eco-society (p. 201). Highly critical, the following entry discusses the main concepts of sustainable development (prevention, participation, solidarity, precaution, transparency) (p. 203). As a complement, the third entry on sustainable development highlights the obstacles to sustainable development (pp. 204-208). Elsewhere, another entry explains the dynamics of hydrology in Africa (p. 375). If a general domain is included, the authors always concentrate on an environmentally-friendly dimension, for example the entry on

marketing which focuses on “ethical marketing” highlighting products featuring biological components and recycled packaging (p. 446).

Knowledgeable, comprehensive, rigorous, clear and precise, with many unexpected entries (for example one on Martin Luther King, p. 415): this unique book is truly essential in its domain. Despite the fact it is wholly in French, this scholarly book, made for reference sections in university libraries, will be helpful for students looking for a rigorous definition of a specific term related to environmental studies, rural sociology and eco-citizenship without having to rely on the Internet’s “better and worse” potential underlying any search. The contributors’ tone is straightforward, often critical towards established institutions, governments and states in general. Most contributors rely on non-Anglophone sources; this book will bring a different framework to students in environmental studies in search of new theoretical perspectives. Hopefully, Gabriel Wackermann’s *Environnement et Écosociété* will soon be translated in many languages because it truly deserves it and our world needs this kind of resource.

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