

analysis is made of policies, and policies often seem to be included in the definition of governance. In the concluding chapter, that criticizes the World Bank and the Dutch for their definition of governance as being ‘overly determined’ by economics, while in fact these donors include economic policies as selection criteria. Yet it is remarkable (but seemingly unnoticed in the book) that IDA and Dutch allocation policies (at least in the first period) in practice seem to be determined by the governance indicators composed by Kaufmann et al. — that are *not* dominated by economics.

In his conclusion Hout also argues that the policy theory on aid selectivity as applied by these three donors is incorrect. If donors only reward good governance, this leads to a lack of support for states that need to improve their governance. However, Hout’s book shows that none of the three donors has applied this theory fully. The World Bank had already set up a Poverty Reduction and Economic Management network (PREM) to help countries improve governance in 1997. In 2001 special attention was given to Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) and more recently the World Bank has supported ‘fragile states’. The MCA Corporation set up a ‘threshold programme’ to help the non-qualifying countries with improving their governance, which also contradicts the theory. In 1998, the Netherlands established a bilateral programme for institutional and governance strengthening. After 2002, the application of the policy theory weakened further.

Hout also criticizes the dominance of income per capita as an indicator for the level of poverty. In the empirical analysis on aid allocation, GDP per capita proved to be significant for all three donors, while the HDI was not. Hout recommends that the latter should be used more often to determine whether countries are eligible for assistance. However, he does not mention the disadvantage. It can be expected that higher health and education components of the HDI will be associated with more political stability and with more accountable and effective governments — aspects of governance. If a low score on the HDI would lead to more aid, it may imply that countries with bad governance are rewarded.

#### Reference

World Bank (1998) *Assessing Aid—What Works, What Doesn’t, and Why*. Washington, DC: The World Bank

#### Geske Dijkstra

Erasmus University Rotterdam, Public Administration, M8-16, PO Box 1738, 3000 DR Rotterdam.

E-mail: [dijkstra@fsw.eur.nl](mailto:dijkstra@fsw.eur.nl)

**Peter P. Rogers, Kazi F. Jalal and John A. Boyd, *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*. London: Earthscan, 2008 416 pp. £18.99 paperback.**

It has been more than two decades since the Brundtland Report popularized ‘sustainable development’. Critics of the term have published a vast literature demonstrating its conceptual slipperiness and feel-good fuzziness. These very problems have ensured the sustainability of the term itself and endowed it with massive appeal to mainstream international agencies and radical environmental organizations alike. The concept has also proved its staying power in the classroom in eponymous introductory courses that seek to fuse critical analyses with concrete strategies and policy recommendations that

can help steer the world towards, for the lack of a better term, sustainable development. Yet there remains a curious gap in the academic textbook literature in the shape of an introductory volume that is accessible yet challenging, and comprehensive without being overwhelming. Unfortunately, this volume by Rogers, Jalal and Boyd fails to fill the void.

The authors come from different backgrounds with connections to Harvard University and the Asian Development Bank (the latter is too frequently the source of examples used in the book). According to their brief biographies, Rogers is Professor of Environmental Engineering and City Planning at Harvard; Jalal is also affiliated with Harvard as a Lecturer in the Extension School and was Chief of the Office of Environment and Social Development of the Asian Development Bank, where Boyd, formerly a lawyer at the US State Department, was a Principal Sector Specialist on Sustainable Development.

What is striking in this otherwise intriguing and impressive combination is the lack of a social scientist, whose absence is sorely felt in several passages dealing with basic concepts. We are told, for example, that globalization is an ‘event’ that has already happened (p. 387)! The authors also seem unable to differentiate between ‘capital’ and ‘capitalism’, finding it ‘ironic’ that the leaders of the Soviet Union who were ‘avowed anticapitalists’ would invest heavily in capital-intensive ‘megalithic projects’ (p. 261).

A similar sense of casual sloppiness is also evident in the writing and presentation of the book. Both *wikipedia* and *about.com* (another reference website) are used as sources. There are a number of small editorial lapses that mar the reading experience (for example, Narmada Dam is spelled as Narmader Dam on p. 146). The tone of writing is often too informal. Almost every concept and idea is broken down into powerpoint-ready components that are presented in bullet points. In too many sections, the authors merely quote others’ work without adding a single sentence or thought of their own. For example, in discussing the ‘three dimensions’ of sustainability — economic, environmental and social (p. 42) — they find it acceptable to explain the ‘ecological approach’ (sic) (p. 44) by simply quoting two short passages, one from Michael Redclift and the other from what is cited confusingly as ‘(IUCN, WWF, UNEP, 1987)’. Where definitions and explanations of concepts go beyond short quotations, they frequently remain in the realm of convenient jargon and deliver little critical scrutiny. Problematic concepts such as good governance, participation, and empowerment are deployed with barely a hint of the controversies and criticisms surrounding them in development studies.

Towards the end of the book the authors defend their decision not to ‘engage the current major sustainability issues’ such as ‘population growth and urbanization, deforestation, food and water shortages, and global warming’ (all of which get little substantive coverage except for population) in favour of focusing on ‘methodologies, institutions, and the policy frameworks’ (p. 381). This strategy could have paid off handsomely had the authors introduced background information on relevant issue areas wherever possible. For example, a discussion of the role of corporations and their attempts to become socially responsible could have been built around certification programmes. Yet such opportunities are either squandered or delivered in a way that compromises the flow of the book.

The authors also neglect important actors and institutions such as environmental social movements and non-governmental organizations. While the latter do get mentioned several times, the main substantive section that is supposed to deal with NGOs comes late in the book and focuses mostly on social entrepreneurs (pp. 362–4).

For a book that claims to be interested in policy frameworks, the politics of scientific uncertainty and the role of experts in policy making get short shrift. Adding insult to injury, the authors claim that the '1997 Kyoto Agreement on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions... is notable for the compromises offered by most of the wealthy countries, with proposals for large reductions' (p. 380).

The preface states that the book 'is based in part on lectures and materials used in a course on sustainable development at the Harvard Extension School' and that it was used, 'in draft form... as the textbook for the courses in the fall of 2004 and 2005' (p. 12). Regrettably, it has not progressed beyond the draft stage and cannot be recommended to anyone looking for a solid introduction to sustainable development.

### **Murat Arsel**

Institute of Social Studies, PO Box 29776, 2502 LT The Hague, The Netherlands.  
E-mail: arsel@iss.nl

### **Saturnino M. Borras, Jr., *Pro-Poor Land Reform: A Critique*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2007. xvii + 411 pp. \$40.00 paperback.**

*Pro-Poor Land Reform* is another fine study by Saturnino Borras, who for the past decade has written numerous articles and books about agrarian politics in non-Western countries. The book emphasizes agrarian reform in the Philippines but is aimed at an audience far wider than specialists on that country. Borras grounds the whole study in debates about land reform among scholars, policy makers and political activists around the world. Because Borras does this well and writes clearly, the book will be enlightening for all three of these audiences.

One major theme of the book is that an analysis of any land re-allocation successes and failures must distinguish between 'redistributive' and 'non-redistributive' reforms. Redistributive land reform 'is achieved only when there is actual net transfer of... effective control' over land to landless or land-poor peasants (p. 10). Reform that does not do that is non-redistributive.

Borras shows that conclusions about land reform accomplishments and shortfalls are often erroneous, because they are based on information that does not distinguish between the redistributive and non-redistributive outcomes. Borras also takes issue with those who *a priori* reject, as many activists pressing for agrarian reform have, reform that involves redistributing public lands or changing tenancy conditions. He shows that re-allocating public lands and converting share tenancy to leasehold tenancy can — and in some places actually does — redistribute power and control to needy peasant households. Borras also shows the folly of accepting the re-allocation of private lands as inherently redistributive. It may be, but one has to look closely to find out, because it could merely be a redistribution of land among people already owning land or a phoney arrangement between the landowner and tenants that gives the appearance of redistributing control to the latter while actually leaving it with the former. The distinction between redistributive and non-redistributive land re-allocations is also central to Borras's critique of market-led land reform, which many policy makers, the World Bank, and other powerful agencies vigorously advocate. Such reform, Borras concludes, is non-redistributive.

To substantiate this theme, Borras first draws on literature about several countries and then looks closely at land reform in the Philippines, especially the Comprehensive