
REVIEWS

Ben Burt and Christian Clerk, eds., *Environment and Development in the Pacific Islands*. Pacific Policy Papers, no. 25. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University; Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1997. Pp. xiii, 299, illus., maps, references. A\$20.

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THIS IS A COLLECTION of eighteen papers intended to promote European–Pacific Islands links. Most focus on the theme that the same European-Pacific linkages that cause so many of the Pacific’s human and environmental problems may also be sources of solutions. Most of the papers were originally presented at a conference organized in 1995 by the Pacific Island Society of the United Kingdom and Ireland and by the United Kingdom Foundation for the South Pacific. The remaining papers are invited responses to arguments in the original chapters.

The collection is wide ranging and contains groups of papers on the relationships between environment and development: sustainable economic development, the control of development, logging and forestry, mining, fisheries management, land-use values and land-use options, local culture and human development, ecotourism, health and development, the difficulties in planning for the future, and the possibilities presented by European-Pacific linkages. All attempt to relate general bodies of theory to practice within the Pacific context.

The book’s value lies first in its review of a series of contemporary themes

in the general area of environmentally appropriate human development within the Pacific context. It is also especially valuable for its presentation of quite different viewpoints on a number of topics; one finds back-to-back chapters by authors with divergent views on the same general themes. Thus one finds side by side Sitiveni Halapua's and John Cameron's analyses of the possibilities and constraints on sustainability; Max Henderson's and Colin Filer's assessments of the possible role of forestry in Papua New Guinea; Tim Bayliss-Smith's and Paul Sillitoe's evaluations of the role of land-use values in defining development options; John Cameron's and Andrea Tuisovuna's analyses of the possibilities and limitations of public-health strategies; and, finally, Tom Spencer's and Christian Clerk's views on dealing with and managing uncertainty in the global environment.

These "exchanges" are particularly valuable for teachers who seek a range of views on certain key themes in environmental development. For example, in the first of three related contributions, Sitiveni Halapua—a development economist from the Pacific Islands Development Program at the East-West Center in Hawai'i—sets out a comprehensive, growth-led, government-managed, consensus-based model for development. In a rejoinder, John Cameron, from the School of Development Studies at the University of East Anglia, argues that "experience suggests that augmenting existing government machinery is neither necessary nor sufficient for sustaining, recovering and enhancing either the ecological or the human quality of existence. . . . Much larger questions of governance cannot be avoided" (p. 33). In the third of this set, Suliana Siwatibau—a development consultant currently based in Vanuatu—offers another vision of a development policy removed from government institutions, instead fueled by an informed, empowered populace assisted by a network of local and global nongovernmental organizations.

The three papers do more than outline parameters, programs, and future possibilities. Even more importantly, they reflect the ways in which disciplinary backgrounds, professional experiences, political philosophies and agendas, client expectations, and the daily realities of each of the authors constitute the political realities that render the debate so complex. The development economist heads a program that routinely brings him into contact with heads of governments who define and judge that program. His "clients" are constrained by the need to recognize and adopt Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank agendas to ensure funding for their policy programs, and he must in turn deal with these realities. To do so he must necessarily set aside the widespread evidence of corruption and questions about governance within Pacific governments. The academic can, from the freedom of academia, point to the continuing degradation of the

environment and the roles Pacific governments, driven by growth-based definitions of development and the need to support local elites and multinational interests that keep them in power, have played in the steadily worsening situation. Because his “clients” seek nothing more than a comprehensive, informed analysis, the academic is free to argue that to expect governments to perform any differently is somewhat naive without concern for the real political consequences of the approach. In the third paper an economist provides an interesting and frank profile of the influences that collectively define and plan development in the contemporary Pacific. She too shares the view that governments should not alone be entrusted with these programs and argues for a coalition of informed and empowered local and international interests that can play a significant role in the development of equitable, sustainable development.

In these papers, and throughout the other exchanges, one gets a real sense of the complexity of the issues confronting those who seek to engage in the debate about sustainable development in the Pacific. Anybody who thought that the debate might be simple should read this collection, not because it offers a prescription for sustainable development, but because it alerts the reader to the obstacles that must be overcome to make any progress at all in this crucial program.