

gender and equality in computer education. The author critically analyzed women's experiences which result in their marginalization and alienation in the technological culture. This research will prove interesting for persons seeking to understand the link between technology and a patriarchal society. Even though Chapter Seven examined information technology-related higher education for mature Black women, there was a need for a chapter on the effect of technology on Black men or other minorities. Chris Freeman in "Social Inequality, Technology and Economic Growth" must be commended for his judicious utilization of statistics to prove that trends towards greater inequality as a result of technology will impact on our lives.

The work *Technology and Inequality* includes case studies in Canada, United States and Britain, however, there should have been inclusion of a chapter or illustrations on the impact of technology in a Third World country or developing society. The impact of global capitalism as a contributory factor on this technological inequality should have been explored.

The ideas raised in these studies will leave the reader with unanswered questions such as: is all technology associated with inequality? Do governments attempt to reduce these inequalities? It is obvious that universal possession of a particular technology is impossible. Thus, there will always be some form of disparity.

In retrospect, this book proves that the ongoing debate over the usefulness or the disadvantages of technology will depend on the individuals or particular society. There is no simple panacea to solve the economic and social inequalities which arise from technological development.

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Neil Middleton and Phil O'Keefe, *Redefining Sustainable Development*, London: Pluto Press, 2001, ISBN: 0-7453-1610-7 (Cloth) and 0-7453-1605-0 (Paper).

Sustainability has become one of the latest buzzwords in the field of development work, both international and home-

grown. Middleton and O'Keefe argue that this word is used in different contexts but without a clear definition of what it means, beginning with the Brundtland Commission's report that left the term deliberately unclear to protect it from attack. The authors contend that this vagueness has created or exacerbated serious issues at the heart of development work. The starting point for examining the term is to locate it in three areas identified by the report: economic, ecological and social. The authors discuss in detail each of these stated areas in three separate chapters. In the book's introduction, the authors state that: "*No effective development or humanitarian work is possible without a grasp of its political nature, so we are also arguing for a complete reassessment of the ways in which we use the adjective 'sustainable'.*" (p. 16) Their focus on issues of markets, capitalism and power positions them within a Marxist framework.

In chapter two, the authors begin with explaining the position from which they explore the discourse of sustainable development. They agree with post-structuralism that discourse both reflects and creates different realities of people and groups and that people use language as a vehicle by which to understand the world and societies. However, they state the post-structuralism in an extreme form of relativism "is a rejection of politics and a surrender to power" which they argue leads to such problems as "*the disappearance of poverty from political discourse*" (p. 20). Thus Middleton and O'Keefe are clear that their discussions on language, which follow, are based in an understanding of issues of power. The discourse of sustainable development, according to the authors, includes the voiced goal "to raise the standard of living" for impoverished countries and "give them access to resources sufficient to allow them to compete effectively in the world markets" (p. 25). The discourse conceals the real vision of the problem with poverty, as held by those with economic control, is "*that the poor are unable to consume enough*" (p. 26). Thus the discourse of sustainable development conceals the actual goal of such work, which is to ensure the continued functioning of capitalist markets.

In the context of environmental sustainability, they discuss the false dichotomy of nature and that which is unnatural or human made. They argue that this division places interests of sustainable development in the rural areas, or country, thereby neglecting urban issues (with some exceptions). The false sepa-

ration of human made environments (urban centres) from nature leads to a focus on nature as 'other.' The connections to nature are either as a resource commodity or as a romanticized inspirational area to protect. Thus global markets seek out these resources for exploitation in order to increase profits, while development work seeks to protect traditional ways of land use, which preserve rather than destroy the environment. The issue is one of scale. Development work does not and cannot happen at the level at which global capitalism works. Thus the authors describe such development work as piecemeal at best, and palliative care at worst.

The authors next turn their attention to economics. They describe economic theory as a faith-based discipline. Three different and conflicting interpretations of economic markets are laid out, with the authors siding with a Marxist interpretation. Through each of these chapters they make the point that environmental, economic and social forms of sustainability and development are linked. At the heart of all of these is the control and power of the transnational corporations. This results in all three areas of sustainability being tied to the perpetuation of capitalism. The authors make a key point, that if sustainability is not about social justice then it is not actually about sustainability, as they define it.

The focus of chapter five is on social justice. Notions of justice, in current discourse, are located in the philosophy of idealism and the focus on the individual – which, not coincidentally, is the same philosophy within which capitalism is found. The long discussion of the history of justice and its different realms leads to the statement of justice as based in individual rights that are negotiated in the development of social contracts. However, Middleton and O'Keefe state that for social justice to be effective and address the larger issues of injustice perpetuated by capitalism, distributive justice must instead be about classes negotiating the development of social contracts, thus moving justice from the individual level to the societal level.

When all three of these terms (ecological, economic and social) are used without defining them or explicating the underpinnings, then the result is that the underlying issues of power are not addressed. Development organizations are necessarily linked (via funding) to governments which in turn are inextricably linked to corporations. All use these terms in a way that does not

address the historical context. The unexamined use of the terms serves, much of the time, to perpetuate the status quo. The authors warn that aid organizations that do not understand the depth of complexity around sustainable development risk becoming a part of the push to increase consumption in the world; this is unsustainable in itself.

The solution given by Middleton and O'Keefe in the conclusion is to recognize the direct links (via funds) from development organizations to governments that fund them and thus to corporate agendas. Development organizations will never be able to truly politicize; thus the people they are working with must be allowed the opportunity to politicize in their own communities and countries. Control over aid and development programs should not be token consultation with local people, but rather should give them complete control over the program, funds and all decision-making. This is truly empowerment and allows for the people and communities to make their own choices about responding to capitalist agendas, at both the micro and macro levels simultaneously.

Overall, the brief summation given in this review belies the complexities that are addressed within the book's covers. The authors go into considerable depth in examining the intricacies operating behind the scenes of sustainable development in the areas of ecological, economic and social development. There are a few concerns. The first is the use of inaccessible language. While the topics covered are certainly complex and multi-dimensional, the authors' use of language compounds the complexity.

Another concern is related to the ultimate attempt to develop an alternative to capitalism. The authors state that this is not realizable, and other solutions must be considered in the meantime. The problem is that the solutions they propose are still up against one of the first critiques they made of development work at the beginning of their book: that such work cannot compete on the same scale as capitalism and thus will be piecemeal at best and palliative at worst. Their critique of development also applies to their own solutions. This flaw does not belong to the authors alone. As with other Marxist writings, we are left with thoughts of revolution or evolution, but with no road map to show us how to get to either one. The examination of other solutions would enrich this text. For example the authors could have given

us a discussion of the impacts and potentials of the global social protest movement against global capitalism and corporate power, as exemplified by the “Battle in Seattle.”

Yet our critique does not diminish the success in the rest of the book in revealing the historical materialist context of sustainable development. Does this book advance our knowledge of sustainable development? The answer is a resounding yes. Understanding the context is vital for organizations and development workers to ensure that they are, at the least, not perpetuating the very forces of capitalism that create the problems in the first place. The book should have a wide appeal, particularly to those who are concerned with global sustainable development. Above all, it would make a good reference book for a course on international political economy or development studies.

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