

Book Reviews

Dobson, Andrew, and Derek Bell, eds. 2006. *Environmental Citizenship*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Reviewed by P. Alex Latta
Wilfrid Laurier University

Environmental Citizenship is one of several recent publications to emerge as questions related to citizenship have moved toward center stage in the literature on ecological politics. The second major collection of work on the topic, this volume makes significant contributions to existing lines of inquiry, while also charting important new territory.

In their introduction, Dobson and Bell characterize the turn to environmental citizenship as an alternative to the reigning policy orthodoxy, which predominantly seeks to advance sustainable development through market-based incentives. While such incentives may be successful in encouraging individuals to *behave* in an environmentally responsible manner, Dobson and Bell claim there is good reason to doubt that they achieve lasting changes in *attitudes*. Rather than catering to self interest through the application of “fiscal carrots and sticks,” the discourses and practices of citizenship offer the opportunity to advance environmental sustainability by appealing to the capacity of individuals to embrace citizen obligation to the common good.

While the editors are correct that concern for attitude change and obligation is at the heart of much recent scholarship on the topic, this collection actually belies any easy consensus about what it means to read ecology onto citizenship (or vice-versa). Issues of rights, obligations, and virtues—the core concerns in the existing literature—do find a place in the book. Beyond these concerns, however, chapters focused on such topics as landscape perception, activist cultures, gender, and virtual democracy make for an extremely varied patchwork. Rather than constituting a failing, this diversity of perspectives is the book’s principal strength. Scholars from a range of different backgrounds and with a variety of interests will find points of entry into environmental citizenship via this collection, while those already familiar with the field will discover novel ways of approaching the subject.

Dobson and Bell group the contributions into two broad sections, “Theory and Practice,” and “Obstacles and Opportunities,” but a more finely grained classification is helpful for the purpose of review, beginning with four entries that address the notion of environmental citizenship in broadly programmatic terms. Among these, John Barry builds on his existing contributions to the liter-

ature in presenting a comprehensive model of “sustainability citizenship.” This model conjoins republican sensibilities about obligation with a radical understanding of sustainable development, politicization of the private sphere, and significant agency for civil society to shape greener states.

Two of these programmatic chapters provide critiques of existing accounts of environmental citizenship. Sherilyn MacGregor charges that most scholarship has thus far deployed falsely universal conceptions of the citizen that ignore the impact of social inequality, especially related to the gendered public/private divide, on the experience of citizenship. MacGregor argues that environmental citizenship instead must be understood as a matter of citizen relations, where gender, economic, and cultural justice are all considered. Julian Agyeman and Bob Evans echo MacGregor’s concerns, asserting that environmental citizenship does not provide useful footholds for radical political mobilizations that seek environmental justice. They argue that its relevance to oppositional movements depends on its inclusion *within* the broader umbrella of justice and social equity.

The remaining six chapters all address the question of where and how to start cultivating environmental citizenship. Three of these chapters are concerned in various ways with locating the cultures, spaces, social subjects, and discourses that may provide fertile ground for cultivating green *values*. Dave Horton identifies this ground in the exemplary green lifestyles of environmental activists, which might serve as both models and impetus for wider change. In contrast, Bronislaw Szerszynski suggests that abstract holistic perceptions of the earth as an object of care (such as we might associate with Horton’s exemplary environmental citizens) offer little purchase with the majority of the world’s population, which tends to hold a more embedded, place-based understanding of human-environment relationships. Accordingly, he argues that successful cultivation of environmental citizens depends upon situating the expansion of ecological consciousness in the “wayfinding” sensibilities of these local cultures.

The second group of “where-to-start” chapters is less concerned with cultivating values, and more preoccupied with linking ecological concerns into robust practices of democratic citizenship, an important agenda that has not received adequate attention in most previous work. David Schlosberg *et al.* outline a research project on virtual democracy in American environmental policy development, describing the promise and pitfalls of on-line citizenship according to discursive (or deliberative) principles that are central to current green political theory. The two final chapters examine the spectrum of approaches to green citizenship education. Both suggest that engagement with collaborative problem solving holds the most promise for cultivating citizens that are capable of meeting contemporary ecological challenges.

There are clear tensions between the different approaches to environmental citizenship pursued in this volume, not least signaled by the criticisms put forward by MacGregor and by Agyeman and Evans. Unfortunately, the chapters