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Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3f55d6j0

Journal
Electronic Green Journal, 1(28)

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Publication Date
2009

DOI
10.5070/G312810802

Copyright Information

Peer reviewed

Review: Growing Smarter: Achieving Livable Communities, Environmental Justice, and Regional Equity
Robert Doyle Bullard (Ed.)

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We, the citizens of contemporary societies, rarely conceptualize the landscapes in which we live, work or play as physical measures of technological transformation. Even less frequently do we think about our environments in the broader sense, i.e., as interminglings of nature and culture that nevertheless create or maintain social inequality and environmental injustice. The authors of *Growing Smarter: Achieving Livable Communities, Environmental Justice, and Regional Equity* redefine "smart growth" through enacting upon metrics of progress that link urban ecology with issues of environmental safety and preservation of civil liberty. The project of the book, which includes essays written by urban planners, sociologists, economists and policy makers, responds to the question of maintaining public debate regarding regional equity by incorporating insights from a variety of disciplinary fields (Science and Technology Studies (STS), Public Health, Latino Studies, and Geography). Here I hear the echo of Robert Bullard, the father of environmental justice and editor of this volume, calling for a "multiethnic, multiracial, multi-issue, anti-racist movement" to promote resource distribution as the key to achieving "sustainability."

Indeed, environmental justice scholars have argued through a number of case studies that blatant injustice lies at the core of the distribution patterns of environmental risks to people of color and low-income social strata (see Bullard (ed.), *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*, 2005, and Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (eds.), *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World*, 2003). Although researchers have debated the explanatory potential of analytical concepts such as "race," "class" or "ethnicity," Michael Omi and Howard Winant assert that, at least in the United States, racial phenomena be lent political and methodological primacy (see *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 1994). In that vein it should be clear that environmental justice provides *Growing Smarter* with a rich framework for tracing the disproportionate distribution of risk by looking at how racism gets "built" into the system. Note here how the assumption of environmental ills springing from as well as sustaining social inequality pertains to a common discussion in STS circles, on whether or not technologies are inherently political (see Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor:A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*, 1986; Winner's article in Science, Technology, & Human Values, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1993; article by Joerges and Woolgar in Social Studies of Science, Vol. 29, No. 3, 1999). Note also that the way in which technologies embody class, racial, or ethnic content depends on the cultural frameworks upon which they are constructed and put into effect; smart growth, for example, is expected to thrive in contexts amenable to pragmatist, community-based and participatory policy-making.

The power of the narrative in *Growing Smarter* derives from its being a solid argument for why white environmental interests should include racial concerns to reshape smart growth's message. The volume's four sections consist of essays on race, land use, transportation and community building respectively, which continue the mapping the editor began in his introductory piece. Following the first general section —do read Carl Anthony's foreword— the second section places emphasis upon the use of geographical data to point out that "policies that create and perpetuate sprawl are not racially neutral in impact"

(p.151), thus offering a conclusion which applies to all sections. Next, the essays on transportation contribute to the scarcely considered debate about mass transit by showing how highway-funding policies entail suburban sprawl and the destruction of the urban fabric. *Growing Smarter* ends with a section on livable communities that carries out the book's threefold dictum of togetherness (communication between white/non-white environmental movements); comprehensiveness (environmental justice meets social equity); and convergence (addressing urban sprawl without neglecting institutional racism).

Amidst the richness of the contributions, I missed a section within the horizon of incorporating the new smart growth imperative in the "sustainable engineering" agenda, as well as an essay dealing with "smart growth" in its European counterpart. Overall, however, this well-organized book should be required reading for scholars/activists performing environmental justice work as well as for humanities or STS trained professionals interested in examples of ways in which our technologically mediated environments could be re-constructed.

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