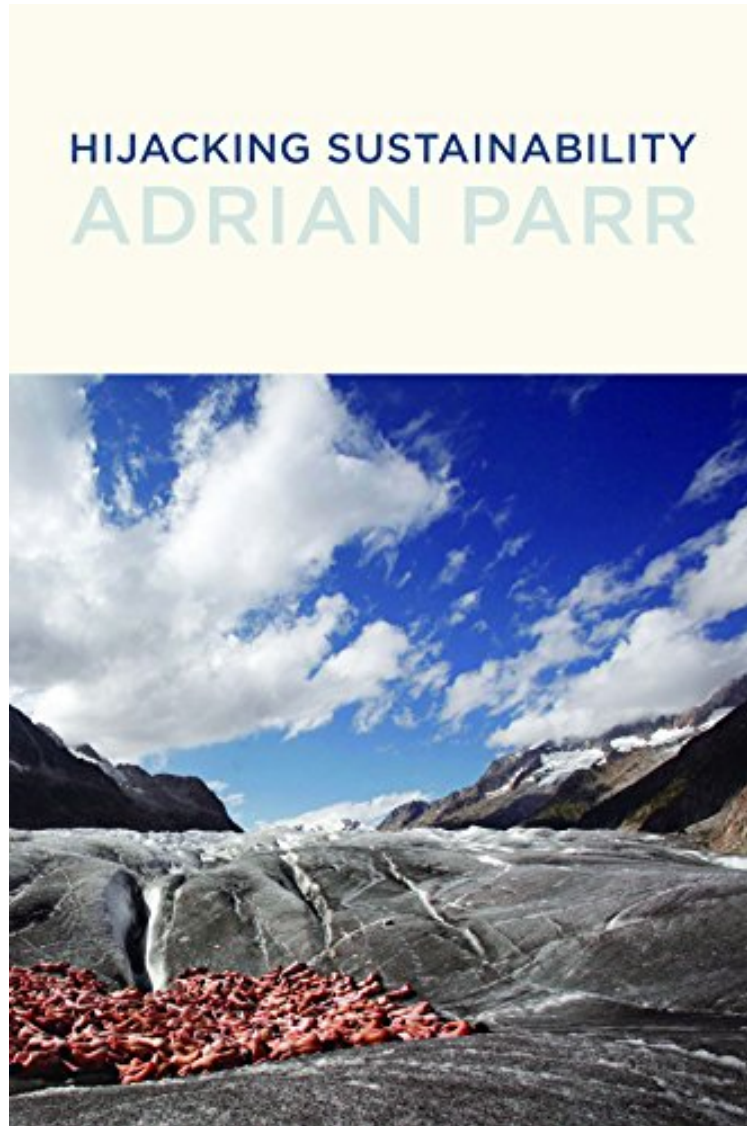


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Hijacking Sustainability (MIT Press)

Adrian Parr

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Adrian Parr : Hijacking Sustainability (MIT Press) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hijacking Sustainability (MIT Press):

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Promising title; piece-meal text
By Jessica Carew Kraft
If you're looking for a dialectical response to the nauseatingly pro-business wing of the sustainability movement, you'll find many gems in this book. The familiar cadences of postmodern critique of contemporary culture--including a rehashing of the Truman Show's hyperreality, and discourse on malls and big box retail as "junkspace"-- are punctuated by truly original perspectives on the paradoxes inherent in sustainability. How to authentically create community enmeshed in local production and local culture, when all around us the power structures and corporate megaliths are co-opting the

message of environmental responsibility? And indeed, to negotiate in a rights-based movement, sustainability advocates must necessarily use the leverage of multi-lateral, global engagement, despite their desire to empower the particular and the local. Parr's analysis of all of this is cutting and a propos. So the book begins promisingly, but it quickly becomes a disjointed compendium of the author's previous articles. She doesn't create a successful overarching structure that can handle topics as disparate as the Jimmy Carter solar panel controversy, the 2007 Green Oscars and burgeoning megaslums in the developing world. The reader is inspired by Parr's engaging and admittedly sententious prose style-- this is someone who is adamantly opposed to the military, won't stomach even a minute of greenwashing and doesn't pull punches from her attack on Wal-Mart, BP and the rest. But ultimately the sustainability movement must be about action, and Parr doesn't provide any kind of blueprint for escaping the so-called "hi-jacking."

The idea of "sustainability" has gone mainstream. Thanks to Prius-driving movie stars, it's even hip. What began as a grassroots movement to promote responsible development has become a bullet point in corporate ecobranding strategies. In *Hijacking Sustainability*, Adrian Parr describes how this has happened: how the goals of an environmental movement came to be mediated by corporate interests, government, and the military. Parr argues that the more popular sustainable development becomes, the more commodified it becomes; the more mainstream culture embraces the sustainability movement's concern over global warming and poverty, the more "sustainability culture" advances the profit-maximizing values of corporate capitalism. And the more issues of sustainability are aligned with those of national security, the more military values are conflated with the goals of sustainable development. Parr looks closely at five examples of the hijacking of sustainability: corporate image-greening; Hollywood activism; gated communities; the greening of the White House; and the incongruous efforts to achieve a "sustainable" army. Parr then examines key challenges to sustainability -- waste disposal, disaster relief and environmental refugees, slum development, and poverty. Sustainability, Parr says, offers an alternative narrative of the collective good -- an idea now compromised and endangered by corporate, military, and government interests.