

---

## Book Review

---

Reviewed by Luc Hens

Email: luchens51@gmail.com

**Ethics in Action for Sustainable Development**

**by: Jeffrey D. Sachs**

**Published 2022**

**by Columbia University Press,**

**New York Chichester, West Sussex, UK, 466pp**

**ISBN: 9780231202862 (Hardback)**

**ISBN: 9780231202879 (Trad Paperback)**

**ISBN: 9780231554756 (eBook)**

Sustainable development (SD) necessitates a multi- and inter-disciplinary approach. However the different components have been unequally developed. While themes such as climate change, land use and landscapes have been well developed, in particular during the most recent three decades, our knowledge about the ethnological background and sustainable building, lags behind. This latter is particularly the case for aspects in the environmental sociology and psychology realm: the links between environment and our social organisation the less developed methods to study perception and behaviour might serve as illustrations of this claim. A prominent area on which the publications are rather scarce is environmental ethics and the moral implications.

In *Ethics in Action for Sustainable Development* a series of religious experts and practitioners from a wide variety of academic disciplines and religious traditions address the ethical fundamentals of SD.

Their basic aim is to protect the environmental heritage human dignity and economic justice on an international basis. They see rising dangers of the environmental crisis but equally of the poverty, disease and waste crises.

The book is structured in 12 parts ranging from reflections on the 'common goods', over education for SD and justice for the poor and reflections on corruption. Each part entails a variable (2–7) number of clusters for which the common ground dovetails in ten meetings on these subjects.

The discussion is crystallised in a holistic attempt to identify ten grounds of practical ethical action: end poverty, promote peace, support to migrants and refugees, support also to the 'common good', climate justice, ban modern slavery, support to indigenous populations and undertake action.

This book is not based on the results of quantitative research. It derives its strength from the intellectual consensus on an ethical basis for the SDGs.

It is at the same time a remarkable book trying to match scientific information in SD with the insights of religious leaders (the foreword of the book is by Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew) of the world's major religions and ethical traditions. This hybrid basis is also partially reflected in the format of the book. The individual

chapters seldomly entail a reference list, but one finds notes and comments at the end of each chapter. Collecting this information and overviewing its diversity is a strong intellectual effort by the editor, Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, the director of the Centre for Sustainable Development at Columbia University,

The book offers an excellent basis to deepen and expand documented discussions on the ethics for SD.