Sustainable development is at the heart of “Traduire nos responsabilités planétaires. Recomposer nos paysages juridiques”. The purpose of the book is to promote the various innovative forms of sustainability and why it is important to do so. The book is a collection of articles written by various authors from around. The topic and theme of sustainability are both relevant and important because it is often overlooked by ‘decision makers’ in favour of other policy considerations such as economic growth or populism. The book’s intended audience is primarily for academics and scholars as opposed to practitioners. It is not a light read for a mass audience. In any event, the book provides one with an opportunity to reflect on the topic in an historical and practical manner.

The majority of the book examines ideas that touch on sustainability and responsibility in various contexts: civil society, economic matters, environmental factors and judicial and political issues. Such topics are discussed and analysed in individual articles throughout the book. The book leads one to contemplate various ideas in a way that traditionally one would not associate with the concept of sustainability. The book takes various themes and neatly puts them under a large ‘umbrella’ topic of sustainability. Typically one does not associate ideas such as a political system, constitutions or economic markets with the notion of sustainable development. The book is quite revolutionary in the sense that it highlights the concept of a ‘sustainable society’ and links it to all matters of civil governance. Such thinking may be innovative for governments and civil servants as it emphasises the importance of long term decision making and what effects result from it.

The book should be read by those who focus on matters of society, issues of governance and administration. The book has many topics and writers so it is also possible to read sections at a time and not feel lost by not reading it cover to cover.

There are various international ideas that the book brings to light. For example, D. Parthasarathy contributes from an Indian perspective. She highlights many ideas of Gandhi, who early on in his career highlighted the importance of the concept of sustainability by stating

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“thoughts and ideas on development are currently enjoying a resurgence as part of new social movements fighting for more sustainable, decentralized, small-scale and participatory forms of development”. Normally, one does not associate ideas on sustainability with early 20th century thinkers. The book is quite innovative in this sense because it brings to light how sustainability is more than just a post-modern idea – it has been around for generations.

Parthasarathy challenges that sustainability is a modern concept and her arguments are quite relevant and striking. She goes further back in time and also talks about how Hindu or Buddhist interpretations of responsibility are in a sense similar to the modern concept of sustainability. For example, she links the concept of Dhamma (a Buddhist idea concept of duty) to modern thoughts on the need to have a sense of responsibility.

Another positive contribution came from Jovita De Loatch through his introduction of practical sustainable development theories in relation to salmon fishing within the European Union. His article is insightful in that it challenges “rights-based theorists advocating stewardship obligations to better appreciate the importance of economic incentives that permeate virtually all of our lives”. The challenge, he points out, with an economic model, rather than a sustainable model, on salmon fishing matters is that it primarily addresses short term profit forecasts and not long term concerns. His article, as opposed to the article by Parthasarathy, is based on a tangible, mainstream matter. As a result, one is able to get a good sense of theoretical and practical commentary on the topic.

In conclusion, the book successfully highlights the need to incorporate sustainable development into mainstream policy making on various levels. The authors who have contributed to the book have diverse and unique backgrounds that enhance the diversity of commentary on sustainability. As different as the articles are, they all share a common objective, which is to promote the importance of the theme of sustainable development. The future of a responsible society must, in some form, adapt itself to taking into account responsibility and sustainability. The book is relenting in its pursuit to highlight various ways in which this idea will occur.