



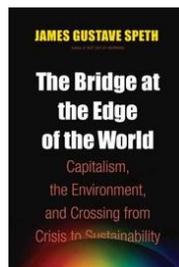
CSR International Book Review Digest

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The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability



Author: James Gustave Speth
Publisher: Yale University Press
Publication Date: 2008
Pages: 320

In *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*, James Gustave Speth delivers a thoughtful and impassioned plea to the next generation of environmental activists. Reflecting on nearly four decades of service in the environmental movement, Speth urges tomorrow's leaders to recognise the connection between social and environmental issues, and he encourages them to direct their efforts at the "systemic failures" of modern capitalism that drive our most pressing global challenges. So far, according to Speth, the environmental movement has been largely unsuccessful in curbing the environmental deterioration that results from pollution and the overuse of natural resources. Thousands of environmental organisations and activists are working tirelessly each day – lobbying for regulation and subsidies, drafting international guidelines and protocols, fighting corporate abuse through protest and litigation – and yet, the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide continues to rise, fisheries continue to be exploited,

our supply of freshwater continues to decline, and the list goes on. To the extent that activists have failed to prevent further environmental deterioration, they have done so because the problem is much (much) larger than any one issue or set of issues. Moving from crisis to sustainability, in Speth's view, requires a wholesale transformation of modern capitalism.

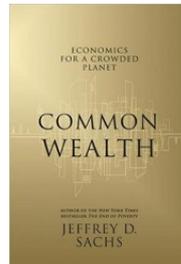
Speth's book is clearly one of big ideas. As Speth tells us, "affluent societies have reached or soon will reach the point where, as Keynes put it, the economic problem has been solved." As the struggle for subsistence gives way to the equally challenging task of improving individual and collective well-being, Speth asks the developed world to pause and reconsider its economic strategy. Market incentives within the existing system are not getting the job done. What we need, says Speth, is a new consciousness to replace the materialistic values that underpin our consumer culture and a new politics to transform the corporation into a force for good and focus our attention away from pure economic growth (as measured by GDP) and toward measures of sustainability.

Speth covers a lot of ground in *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*. He begins with the limitations and shortcomings of our current environmental movement and proceeds through detailed examinations of environmental economics, economic growth, human happiness, consumption, and the modern corporation. Speth makes it clear that, in his view, we are already in a state of crisis and that it is time for change. Here, an excerpt Speth takes from Milton Friedman is worth repeating: "When [a] crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around." Friedman (for better or worse) worked hard to keep his ideas alive until "the politically impossible [became] the politically inevitable." Here, Speth helps us to do the same in the name of sustainability.

Review by: Matthew Maguire, CSR International

Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet

Author: Jeffrey Sachs
Publisher: Penguin Press
Publication Date: 2008
Pages: 400



Imagine that an alien has come to our Earth. It would find a place dramatically challenged by economic, ecological and social problems. Problems that can be pointed out by the simple calculation of how many people live on the planet and how limited its resources are. How did the world come to this point? What will become of its inhabitants as the world population rises? And most importantly - what can the inhabitants do to cope with this?

The easiest way of breaking down the immense complexity of the answers to the alien would be to hand him a copy of *Common Wealth* by Jeffrey Sachs. Written from the point of view of an uninvolved observer, this book amazes one with bright thoughts, a reader-friendly presentation of topics and well-selected hard facts.

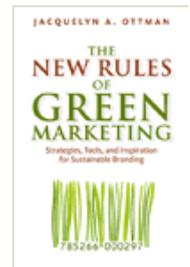
Sachs' style of writing ensures that the reader a good time, which is not at the expense of reduced input. The book feeds its reader with a remarkable scale of knowledge without losing the attention of its audience. It contains lots of advice and recommendations to act, and the reader can reach many of these conclusions on their own, based on Sachs' argumentation. Beside these pieces of advice, fed to the reader bit by bit, the overall message Sachs wants to state is understood loud and clear - wipe the tears off your faces, shake off the frustrations that numb you and keep on working for a better world. Why say "keep on" and not "start"? Because Sachs points out over and over again that the "start" already has been made and - despite what pessimists think - a number of goals have already been achieved.

This is a highly recommended book and has the potential of making Sachs your favourite author.

Review by: Pia Niehues, CSR International

The New Rules of Green Marketing

Author: Jacquelyn A. Ottman
Publisher: Greenleaf Publishing
Publication Date: 2011
Pages: 256



Jacquelyn Ottman's *The New Rules of Green Marketing* is a set of refreshing rules with which the green marketer should comply, particularly in the currently dynamic epoch of sustainability. A practical guide and comprehensive reference, *The New Rules of Green Marketing* deals with the issues raised by companies and individuals who are interested in mainstreaming sustainability in their approach to product development and communication. Ottman's style is engaging as she combines data and observations. She elaborates detailed strategies which are supplemented by case studies from multinational brands such as GE, HSBC, Nike, Procter & Gamble, Toyota and Wal-Mart. Towards the end of the book, Ottman dedicates a whole chapter to discuss the performance of two prominent leaders in sustainability practice, Timberland and Starbucks, which helps readers get a clearer picture of how to implement a holistic green marketing philosophy.

In the beginning of the book, Ottman presents readers with a list revealing the 20 New Rules of Green Marketing. The book's chapters elaborate on topics such as green mainstreaming, understanding the green consumer, the new green marketing paradigm, designing greener products, sustainability innovation, communicating sustainability with impact, establishing credibility and avoiding greenwash as well as partnering for success. A checklist is presented at the end of each chapter to help readers sum up the ideas covered.

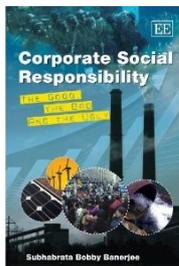
Ottman admits that the book is written primarily

from the perspective of an American, and this is demonstrated by the use of statistical data coming mostly from the US. In doing this, there is the potential concern that the sustainability campaign – a global phenomenon – might be perceived as the work of only developed nations, leaving questions and doubts about what other parts of the world need to do.

Nevertheless, *The New Rules of Green Marketing* deserves appreciation for its determined mission to present a sustainable and greener future. Whether you are a sustainability director, a brand executive, entrepreneur or venture capitalist, a professor or a student – or whoever else – its insightful tools will serve as a valuable and enlightening resource.

Review by: Mardian Marsono, CSR International

Corporate Social Responsibility: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly



Author: Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee
Publisher: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd
Publication Date: 2009
Pages: 224

I believe it is no coincidence that Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee has chosen a name for this book which would remind readers of a Hollywood Western. At some points in the book, readers will get the impression that it is High Noon and Banerjee is at twelve paces from the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility and is taking aim, getting ready to pull the trigger...

In *Corporate Social Responsibility: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, the author does not shy away from a comprehensive criticism of the concept of CSR, saying that 'the corporation, in its current form, is an inappropriate agent for social change.'

A very helpful section at the end of the book, called 'alternate visions' sums up what is essentially a critique of more than 140 pages, carefully thought

out and meticulously researched. Banerjee says that there are no true leaders in the CSR arena today – the same companies whose practices we call 'best in class' today are accused of all sorts of abuses in one corner of the globe or another. Banerjee says that the evidence linking CSR to financial success is dubious at best and that stakeholder dialogues never take place in conditions of equality between the two conversing sides. He goes on to say that CSR does not challenge corporate power and is designed to benefit the company, which means it cannot benefit society to any large extent.

The author suggests looking at the area of CSR by focusing on the good – those companies which take a proactive approach to responsibility; the bad – those who abuse the environment and the people where they work; and the ugly – those who show a responsible face while acting unethically and abusively behind the scenes.

Corporate Social Responsibility: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly is a useful addition to the debate on CSR and makes a lot of powerful points, while still leaving the verdict undecided and saying that more research is necessary.

It is by no means an easy read – information from more than 200 studies, articles and other publications is packed very densely in academic language. But if you are someone who tends to challenge the current thinking on CSR issues and research is your thing, then this book is for you!

Review by: Nazareth Seferian, CSR International

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