

The Top 50 Sustainability Books

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A high-impact, full-colour distillation of the best thinking to date on the pressing social and environmental challenges we face as a society. [More details.](#)

FROM THE INTERVIEWS...

The level of change that is going to be forced on our economies, our value chains, our companies and the people who work in business is going to be both profound, and profoundly exciting. There are few times in world history where I would rather have been alive.

John Elkington

We're going to solve these problems: extreme poverty will end by the year 2025. That's what I said in the book and I think that's what's going to happen.

Jeffrey D. Sachs

The simple truth is that there are no companies that are sustainable in the world today; there are none. What we have are companies that are experimenting with pieces of the puzzle.

Stuart L. Hart

Negligence begins tomorrow, because now we know what to do.

William McDonough

In America they said I was trying to tear down Wall Street and that would suck the juice out of the American dream.

Charles Handy

One tends to forget it's not the oil companies that drive our cars; we drive them and burn the fuel. We don't have to do it, and to entirely blame industry for making a profit from selling us petrol is quite naive. The whole of society is in the game together and to single out industry for attack is quite wrong.

James Lovelock

I always remember, on Donella Meadows' office door was a little motto which said 'Even if I knew the world would end tomorrow I'd plant a tree today.'

Dennis L. Meadows

Will our grandchildren know what a company is? ... it seems that the real institutional challenge is to create a new type of institution.

Simon Zadek

I am very sceptical about a moralistic appeal and I'm extremely sceptical about markets providing sustainable civilisation.

Ernst von Weizsäcker

I was just in Borneo watching 19 square kilometres of lush rainforest that had been recreated from scratch in six or seven years. Nobody knew you could do that.

Amory B. Lovins

Environmental concern is still very much a First World concern. Most of the world are still pretty worried about the fact that their kids can die from easily curable infectious diseases.

Bjørn Lomborg

I think there is unfortunately no level of human suffering that causes policy to change.

Susan George

Sustainability is boring. What would you say if I were to ask you about your relationship with your wife? How would you characterise it? As sustainable? If this is the bigger goal - sustainability - then I feel really sorry because it doesn't celebrate human creativity and human nature.

Michael Braungart

I think the system as a whole is structurally unsustainable. That means it has to be transformed. It can't be patched up.

Ervin Laszlo

BOOK DESCRIPTION

These are the Top 50 Sustainability Books as voted for by the University of Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership's alumni network of over 3,000 senior leaders from around the world. In addition to profiles of all 50 titles, many of the authors share their most recent reflections on the state of the world and the ongoing attempts by business, government and civil society to create a more sustainable future.

This unique title draws together in one volume some of the best thinking to date on the pressing social and environmental challenges we face as a society. These are the *Top 50 Sustainability Books* as voted for by the University of Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership's alumni network of over 3,000 senior leaders from around the world. In addition to profiles of all 50 titles, many of the authors share their most recent reflections on the state of the world and the ongoing attempts by business, government and civil society to create a more sustainable future.

Many of these authors have become household names in the environmental, social and economic justice movements - from Rachel Carson, Ralph Nader and E.F. Schumacher to Vandana Shiva, Muhammad Yunus and Al Gore. Others, such as Aldo Leopold, Thomas Berry and Manfred Max-Neef, are relatively undiscovered gems, whose work should be much more widely known.

The profiled books tackle our most vexing global challenges, including globalisation (*Globalization and Its Discontents, No Logo*), climate change (*Heat, The Economics of Climate Change*) and poverty (*The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid, Development as Freedom*). Some of these featured thought-leaders are highly critical of the status quo (e.g. David Korten, Eric Schlosser and Joel Bakan), while others suggest evolutionary ways forward (e.g. Amory Lovins, Hunter Lovins, Paul Hawken and Jonathon Porritt). Some place their faith in technological solutions (e.g. Janine Benyus, Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker), while others are upbeat about the potential of business to be a force for good (e.g. John Elkington, Ricardo Semler, William McDonough and Michael Braungart).

By featuring these and other seminal thinkers, *The Top 50 Sustainability Books* distils a remarkable collective intelligence - one that provides devastating evidence of the problems we face as a global society, yet also inspiring examples of innovative solutions; it explores our deepest fears and our highest hopes for the future. It is a must-read for anyone who wants to tap into the wisdom of our age.

The Top 50 Books List

(Alphabetical by Book Title)

- Banker to the Poor:** Micro-Lending and the battle Against World Poverty, by [Muhammad Yunus](#), 1999
- Biomimicry:** Innovation Inspired by Nature, by [Janine Benyus](#), 2003
- Blueprint for a Green Economy:** by [David Pearce](#), [Anil Markandya](#) and [Edward B. Barbier](#), 1989
- Business as Unusual:** My Entrepreneurial Journey, Profits and Principles, by [Anita Roddick](#), 2005
- Cannibals with Forks:** The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business, by [John Elkington](#), 1999
- Capitalism as if the World Matters**, by [Jonathon Porritt](#), 2005
- Capitalism at the Crossroads:** Aligning Business, Earth, and Humanity, by [Stuart Hart](#), 2005
- Changing Course:** A Global Business Perspective on Development and the Environment, by [Stephan Schmidheiny](#) and [WBCSD](#), 1992
- The Chaos Point:** The World at the Crossroads, by [Ervin Laszlo](#), 2006
- The Civil Corporation:** The New Economy of Corporate Citizenship, by [Simon Zadek](#), 2001
- Collapse:** How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive, by [Jared Diamond](#), 2005
- The Corporation:** The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power, by [Joel Bakan](#), 2005
- Cradle to Cradle:** Remaking the Way We Make Things by [William McDonough](#) and [Michael Braungart](#), 2002
- The Dream of Earth**, by [Thomas Berry](#), 1990
- Development as Freedom**, by [Amartya Sen](#), 2000
- The Ecology of Commerce:** A Declaration of Sustainability, by [Paul Hawken](#), 1994
- The Economics of Climate Change:** The Stern Review, by [Nicholas Stern](#), 2007
- The End of Poverty:** Economic Possibilities for Our Time, by [Jeffrey Sachs](#), 2005.
- Factor Four:** Doubling Wealth, Halving Resources Use-A Report to the Club of Rome, by [Ernst Von Weizsäcker](#), [Amory B. Lovins](#) and [L. Hunter Lovins](#), 1998.
- False Dawn:** The Delusions of Global Capitalism, by [John Gray](#), 2002
- Fast Food Nation:** The Dark Side on the All-American Meal, by [Eric Schlosser](#), 2005
- A Fate Worse than Debt:** The World Financial Crisis and the Poor, by [Susan George](#), 1990
- For The Common Good:** Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment and a Sustainable Future, by [Herman Daly](#) and [John Cobb](#), 1989
- Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid:** Eradicating Poverty through Profits, by [C.K. Prahalad](#), 2004
- Gaia:** A New Look at Life on Earth, by [James Lovelock](#), 1979.
- Globalization and its Discontents**, by [Joseph Stiglitz](#), 2002

Heat: How to Stop the Planet from Burning, by [George Monbiot](#), 2006

Human-Scale Development: Conception, Application and Further Reflections, by [Manfred Max-Neef](#), 1991

The Hungry Spirit: Beyond Capitalism: The Quest for Purpose in the Modern World, by [Charles Handy](#), 1999

An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It, by [Al Gore](#), 2006

The Limits to Growth, by [Donella H. Meadows](#), [Dennis L. Meadows](#) and [Jorgen Randers](#), 1972

Maverick: The Success Story Behind the World's Most Unusual Workplace, by [Ricardo Semler](#), 1993

The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else, by [Hernando De Soto](#), 2000

Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution, by [Paul Hawken](#), [Amory Lovins](#) and [L. Hunter Lovins](#), 2000

No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs, by [Naomi Klein](#), 2002

Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism, by [George Soros](#), 2000

Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth, by [Buckminster Fuller](#), 1969

Our Common Future, by [The World Commission on Environment and Development](#), 1987

The Population Bomb, by [Paul Ehrlich](#), 1968

Presence: An Explanation of Profound Change in People, Organizations and Society, by [Peter Senge](#), [C. Otto Scharmer](#), [Joseph Jaworski](#) and [Betty Sue Flowers](#), 2005

The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future, by [Elizabeth C. Economy](#), 2004

Sand County Almanac, by [Aldo Leopold](#), 1949

Silent Spring, by [Rachel Carson](#), 1962

The Skeptical Environmentalist, by [Bjorn Lomborg](#), 2001

Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered, by [E.F. Schumacher](#), 1973

Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development, by [Vandana Shiva](#), 1989

The Turning Point: Science Society and the Rising Culture, by [Fritjof Capra](#), 1984

Unsafe At Any Speed: The Designed-in Dangers of the American Automobile, by [Ralph Nader](#), 1965

When Corporations Rule the World, by [David Korten](#), 2001

When the Rivers Run Dry: What Happens When Our Water Runs Out? by [Fred Pearce](#), 2006