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## Book Review

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### **Environment and Sustainable Development**

**by: Maris Klavins, Walter Leal Filho and Janis Zaloksnis**

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**Baznicas 5, Riga, LV-1010, Latvia, 300p**

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For the development and growth of the country and society to happen, action is necessary; in order to act, we need knowledge. This book gives broad knowledge from an interdisciplinary perspective and in the context of societal process. Understanding the process in nature and society, we can attempt to solve the problems of today and to create a better future.

Professor Maris Klavins, University of Latvia

*Environment and Sustainable Development* edited by Maris Klavins, Walter Leal Filho and Janis Zaloksnis is a book which coherently analyses the full spectrum of the environmental pillar of sustainable development. This analysis begins with the introduction of the concept of development and the main environmental issues which the world faces. In the following two chapters, the concepts of ecosystems and resources are presented. The reader is then introduced to the basics of environmental sciences which help the reader to understand how everything is processed on the planet, what the earth consists of and how different life forms on the earth are interrelated. This helps non-environmental specialists to understand why we should care about the environment.

The subsequent chapter presents issues of environmental pollution and then analyses its forms, problems which arise from it and its effects. Subsequently the effect of pollution on human beings and their health is also described. Once the main concepts and the relationship between humans and nature have been presented, the book then introduces a chapter particularly relevant to economists, and explains economics' relationship to the environment in the context of sustainable development. This chapter reads like the high point in the telling of this story. The later chapters analyse the solutions for the environmental and development problems presented in the previous chapters. Such solutions as nature (resources, biodiversity, and environment) protection, international cooperation and agreements, technologies, management (role of legislation, policies and institutions) are all analysed. The final chapters conclude all the information introduced in the book. The entire book is divided into four clusters: introduction of main concepts, processes and problems; the peak of the book – the relation between environment and economics; solutions for previously introduced problems; conclusion and final points on sustainable development and environment.

The book is a scientific monograph which consists of a collection of papers and has been prepared by the University of Latvia, in cooperation with Uppsala University. The project was supported and published with the help of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism Project 'Development of environmental science study content and study materials' as an educational tool for Baltic States' students and society. Although this book has been written in Latvian and translated into English, it is not especially focused or adapted to the Latvian context but has a general appeal and analyses the general aspects of sustainable development.

Christine Jakobsson, the director of the Baltic University Programme claimed in the preface of this book that this volume forms an important tool for the implementation of the education of the Latvian population in the area of environmental education and sustainable development, because in 2006 the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia made this subject compulsory for all university students.

The education of the population of the Baltic States is a highly important task as three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania gained their independence just over two decades ago. Prior to that time, these countries belonged to the Soviet Union and based their economies on socialist principles. Under socialism, the population used to be controlled in a top down government style, the main concern of which was not for the sustainability of economics but with the incomes and needs and satisfaction of the population: for shelter, food, clothing, etc. Society did not even think about the issues caused by economic growth which was unsustainable and the impact it was having on nature, climate, and that very society itself. Due to these factors, the post-soviet countries, (including the Baltic States) moved away from socialism towards the free market with its positive and negative points. People became free and were able to make decisions on their own. This also meant that they had to understand and admit that they are responsible not just for themselves but also for sustainability.

Currently, the post-Soviet Baltic States are still moving towards making their economies more and more sustainable and greener, though they still have some way to go compared to West European and Scandinavian countries in such areas as recycling, renewable energy, etc. Further specific information about sustainable development as it applies explicitly to Latvia could be found in Atstaja and Dimante (2010), which is a paper published in the *International Journal of Green Economics*. So, at this stage such a book as this one is a significant step on the path towards a sustainable society and economy. It is particularly important to educate people about the concept of sustainable development and the associated issues and processes. As noted by Kennet and Heinemann (2006), the focus on education and the value of all people everywhere, is one of tools to solve ecological/economic problems and issues.

It is noted that "an important distinction is the difference between education about sustainable development and education for sustainable development. The former concept is an awareness lesson or theoretical discussion. The latter is the use of education as a tool to achieve sustainability" (McKeown, 2002). This book encompasses both of these aims and thus has it has real value for a society which has not yet been completely educated on sustainability and environmental issues.

Considering that one of this book's main targets is to educate Latvian society and students about sustainable development and the environment, the structure and the content of the book provides the broad fundamentals of one angle of sustainable development – that of the environment. This book adjusts theory with practical details,

and is sprinkled with extremely attractive data, graphs, and pictures, making it therefore rather instructive, highly compelling to read and accessible.

Approaching from a green economics perspective, the book analyses one angle of economics – that of environmental justice, and an individuals' relationship with the environment. It explores how this relationship appears now and how it differs from the kind of relation which it aspires to.

The book starts with a preface and continues with short comments from Connie Hedegaard (European Commissioner for Climate Action) about *Time for a New Vision*, Janez Potocnik (European Commissioner for the Environment) about *What is Best for the Environment* and Andris Piebalgs (European Commissioner for Development) about *Future Development*. Half of the book consists of a collection of articles and the whole book is divided into 14 chapters. Every chapter consists of theoretical articles with case studies being provided at the end of each chapter.

The first introductory book chapter begins by comparing the story of Alice in Wonderland with our lives and our societies, which it describes as a lot of “dark corridors (difficulties); where there is not much time; there are many doors (possibilities to continue); one can be opened with the golden key; and it leads to a beautiful garden”. Alice's situation is compared with our development dilemma. This chapter introduces the reader to the energy dilemma, climate change, planetary boundaries, environmental impacts and ecosystem services, and also proposes some solutions for this energy dilemma and ways to live more sustainably. The book also emphasises the planet's limits (in the sense of the resources it provides). It also notes the necessity of enhancing the consciousness of society and the requirement for every individual to start to act consciously.

The following chapter talks about ecosystem services, and suggests that when humans receive those services free of charge they do not usually appreciate them! It concludes that people should act with extreme circumspection when altering ecosystems and the biosphere. The following book chapters cover such topics as resources; humans and the environment; environmental pollution; environmental health; economics – the environment – growth; the protection of nature; international cooperation for environmental protection and sustainable development; environmental technologies; environmental management: legislation, policies, institutions; cultural environment; sustainable development; a students' perspective on sustainable development: it is our task to create an attractive and sustainable future!

The book emphasises that human activity is in fact responsible for the major part of environmentally related problems. Humans seek development in order to have shelter, and a good and well-paid job, education, and to satisfy other essential and also luxury needs. However we should find ways of development which do not burden the natural system and do not deplete our natural resources. The main way to achieve this – is to integrate social, economical and environmental targets, when success in one of these areas provides benefit for the rest of areas as they are all interconnected. Good social conditions require strong economies, and strong economies are based on natural resources and environmental conditions which are not distinguishable from our quality of life (Asthana et al., 2009). The 14 chapters provide a detailed analysis and theoretical pathway about the environment, resources, ecosystem, pollution, and the negative impacts on the environment caused by human activities and it suggests possible tools to solve existing problems and dilemmas. It explains economics and environmental relations in the context of sustainable development which helps us to understand that economics

and the environment are closely related disciplines so “...sustainable development cannot be imagined without considering joining together economics and environmental objectives”. The environment has an economical value which is very relevant to the whole economy, to producers and also to consumers. Through “human-society-nature: in the course of time, this trinity has caused many problems which are especially topical nowadays”. Whilst analysing economics and environmental relations, the book proposes that ecological taxes would be a solution to environmental pollution. Nature, natural resources and its quality are treated as public goods. The authors propose eco-taxes to avoid or reduce the negative impacts for the public good – nature, resources and its quality. There is also a proposal to use cost-benefit analysis in order to ensure welfare improvements.

The book is easy to read as its style is well designed and it is supplemented by graphs, tables, models and pictures. The book is quite instructive and the last chapter encourages young people to take action, and to undertake real work, with the aim of making an impact for their countries as they move towards sustainable development.

A possible further development for the book could be to include a chapter on the philosophy of sustainable development, as it is important to understand and position oneself about the relationship humans should have with the environment. A deeper analysis should be undertaken to understand sustainable development ethics, its values and philosophy, which it could help to answer. What values and ethics policy could there be? Why exactly take x approach to the environment and economics and which way human relations are leading. In this way, the reader would be introduced to and taught about the philosophical basis, and the real and deep foundations behind certain decisions, approaches and actions of sustainable development. It might also ensure improved understanding, better communication and a united approach to solving problems between humans and their impact on the natural world.

As there is often misunderstanding and a loss in different approaches to nature and human relations (anthropocentric, non-anthropocentric, sustainable development) which could possibly be claimed as the reasons for some current environment and economical problems. According to van der Berg et al. (1997) sustainability requires us to live in harmony with nature and not dominate it. Sustainability is a process and is targeted and based on values.

The second point where the book could be developed is to include the gender role in sustainable development and the environment. This would be the green economics point for this book, as green economics argues, gender inequality is one of the current reasons of unsustainability. As the United Nations notes, men and women are likely to have different personal priorities, strategies and knowledge about environmental protection, and they also have a kind of different interaction with the environment ([http://www.unep.org/civil\\_society/GCSF8/pdfs/gender\\_susdev.pdf](http://www.unep.org/civil_society/GCSF8/pdfs/gender_susdev.pdf))

In conclusion, I would like to quote Janis’ Zaloksnis’ (associate professor, University of Latvia) message left on the back of the book: “You who are students today will soon take over the responsibility for the fate of humankind and our planet. My wish is that you have more success than the previous generations had”. This quote perfectly represents the fact about current situation the environment faces: pollution, biodiversity loss, fast depletion of natural resources, climate change and all the impact they have for economies and society. Such a situation is a result of the economics and growth management by previous generations. Professor J. Zaloksnis is sure that the fate of humans and the planet depends on the current generation, it depends on how fast the current generation responds to the importance of sustainable development and how quickly they can turn the economy

round to achieve the goal of sustainability. This book is the perfect resource for students to assimilate the essence, the importance and the processes of sustainable development.

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## Book Review

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**Developing a Plan for the Planet; A Business Plan for Sustainable Living**  
**by: Ian Chambers and John Humble**  
**Gower Green Economics and Sustainable Growth Series**  
**edited by Miriam Kennet**  
**Published 2011**  
**by Gower**  
**Wey Court East, Union Road, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7PT, UK, 352pp**  
**ISBN: 978-0-566-08911-4 (hbk)**  
**ISBN: 978-1-4094-0682-2 (ebk)**

The premise of this book is that the world is facing many challenging issues, but no overall coordinated global plan exists to solve them. By using global business planning principles, they suggest that it should be possible to create a plan that can be implemented at every level – government, business, community and as an individual. They propose *a business plan for sustainable living and examines humanity's impact on our planet, from the flint chip to the silicon chip*. Humble sought throughout his career, to define the role of the visionary manager and this his last book aims to illuminate how this approach can be adapted to an entire solution to solve some of today's pressing problems. What better epitaph for him than a book which uses this considerable and eminent expertise and puts it towards solving these global challenges? These authors show that none of the challenges faced by the world are insurmountable, but they do need to be addressed and the longer that they are ignored, the bigger the problems will become.

The authors have both worked in industry for over twenty years. Chambers is a Director of Orange UK in the global telecommunications industry and John was a major management guru and inventor of the concept of *management by objectives* (Humble, 1967). He later wrote with Peter Drucker. They have used this experience to write a very engaging book about how to save the planet. The future of the planet this book describes is one that they claim is full of challenges, but it is also one that people can, by planning and using their ingenuity, survive and prosper.

In the introduction, the demise of the inhabitants of Easter Island is discussed. When European explorers reached the island in 1722 they found a population in rapid decline, but evidence suggests that the population had once been as many as 15,000 people with a flourishing civilisation, strong enough and organised enough to transport, erect and carve a series of huge statues standing 20 feet high. According to Diamond (2005), in his book *Collapse*, the inhabitants of the island ultimately destroyed their own environment by cutting down all the trees to either help transport the huge stones, or make canoes so that they could go fishing, their main source of food. At which point the inhabitants realised that cutting down their last tree was not a good idea, no one really knows. Lipo and Hunt

(2006) in an article in *Science*, suggest that the collapse of this island society was due to the introduction of Polynesian Rats that arrived in the boats of the early settlers. They hypothesise that the rat population spiked at around 20 million individuals, and that these rats quickly consumed all the seeds of the native palms, leading to the collapse of the island's food supply. Either way, the story should be a warning to us all.

Humble and Chambers argue that there are ten key global challenges that need to be understood: population growth, climate change, sustainable energy supplies, water and food supplies, a sustainable planet, extreme poverty, global health, universal education, managing conflict and peace and financing a sustainable world. Unless we address these issues quickly enough then they may combine together globally, into what some are already terming, the 'perfect storm' with similar results to those on Easter Island. The purpose of the book then is to "outline an approach to achieving this step change acceleration which can be implemented at every level – government, business, community and as individuals" and aim "to provide a business plan framework to the global challenges we face, and the coordination of the solutions which will enable us build a sustainable world".

The book is clearly laid out. Part I describes our present situation. Part II goes into detail about the key global challenges. In the chapter on water and food supplies, Chambers and Humble summarise the problems of water and food supplies and state that there is currently no overall shortage of fresh water, but the challenge is to ensure its availability where required. The UN predicts that by 2030 40% of the world's population will be living in 'water scarcity' regions. As the population increases the impact that this will have on demand is significant and underground aquifers in many parts of the world from China to the USA, which have been used to supplement above-ground water supplies, are already running low, which is indicative that there may be troubles ahead.

However, Humble and Chambers argue that these problems present *opportunities* (the next part of each chapter) for humankind. The role of governments is outlined, for example cooperation is taking place between India and China to monitor the Himalayan glaciers melt, as these glaciers feed seven of the world's greatest rivers and provide water for about 40% of the world's population. At a business level, countries such as Israel, Jordan and Cyprus are achieving water efficiency levels of between 50% to 60%. It is possible to extract fresh water from sea, water although a lot of energy is consumed in the process. Water companies need to ensure all their systems are water tight. Using different farming techniques can also increase water efficiency levels by over 50%. People can help on an individual level to reduce their consumption of water by using efficient showers and toilets and not watering their lawns.

The idea of interconnectivity goes right through the book and Part III is about building a global vision for the planet, identifying global objectives and strategies and then translating understanding into action. Everything is clearly set out in tables and spaces are provided for you to fill in with your own suggestions of what could be done at a government, business and personal level.

The book by virtue of identifying what could be done, and has been achieved, makes this process upbeat. Part IV looks at managing a plan for the planet and considers the ten best practices of global management and how effective business planning can achieve change: have a vision, gather evidence, develop a strategy, identify objectives, launch the plan, action and review. The business plan looks very clear and do able, which then begs the question, why are we not all doing it? In fact, some people already are and the success of the 'the Body Shop International' is highlighted as a force for positive social and

environmental change through the lobbying and campaigning programmes around their five core values: support community trade, defend human rights, against animal testing, activate self-esteem and protect our planet.

Part V looks at delivering a plan for the planet and translating understanding into action, the all important what, when and how? It concentrates on the leverage created by the 'triangle of change', which is the triangle involving government, businesses and people. Small changes at the local level, such as putting your washing out to dry on the line, to water companies fixing leaky pipes and government's ensuring everyone, especially girls, gets an education, can make a difference. Will it be enough for us to avoid the 'perfect storm'?

The role of international organisations is discussed. The United Nations has been criticised for being too bureaucratic and inefficient and so major reforms of its structure have now been started. Until recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been facing its own financial crises, and the G20 meeting in 2009 transformed the role of the IMF. Its policies and management need to improve. Larger shares of votes for major emerging countries will reflect the changing global balancing of economic power. Corruption at the World Bank is also seen as a major issue. Some of its infrastructure projects have had adverse environmental and social effects, such as providing money for building big hydro-electricity dams on rivers. The Bank's primary focus on economic dimensions now has to be questioned as the inter connectivity of global challenges means that this approach is no longer appropriate. The validity of aid programmes is also debated.

But there are examples of how businesses working in partnerships with the local community can achieve significant improvements. In 1985, the PolioPlus Programme was established by The Rotary Foundation to buy and help deliver polio vaccines in developing countries. Rotary members were used as foot soldiers to deliver vaccines to more than 100 million children born each year with polio in developing countries. The polio virus was live in 125 countries, paralysing or killing 1,000 people a day, most of whom were children. Money for the programme has come from corporate, philanthropic and individual contributions. In 2008, British and German Governments, Rotary International and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation committed more than \$630 million with the aim of eliminating polio from the world. Work still needs to be done in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Nigeria.

The importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) of businesses is discussed by Chambers and Humble. The theory was first put forward by Bowen (1953) and its goal is for companies to embrace responsibility for their actions and to encourage a positive impact through their activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all the other members of the public sphere. One could argue that the Victorian Quaker industrialists such as Rowntree, Bourneville and Salt were the first business men to understand the importance of CSR. Some companies still see CSR as an add on, part of their public relations activities, or as window-dressing, rather than as essential to the survival of their business. EU policy makers recognise the importance of CSR as part of their commitment to making the EU the world's most competitive and knowledge-based economy. Fair trade companies incorporate CSR strategies directly into their business standards.

The issue of fair trade companies raises the issue of ethical behaviour and whether or not this is good or bad for business. As with all issues in business studies, there are two sides to every argument. The advantages of ethical behaviour include higher revenues



(demand from positive consumer support), improved brand and business awareness and recognition, with better employment motivation and recruitment, new sources of finance from ethical investors. The disadvantages include higher costs, (sourcing from fair trade suppliers, rather than the lowest price), higher overheads and the danger of building up false expectations. In these days of a severe recession it is easier to see the disadvantages.

This book is very much in the management guru genre and does not aim to critique the role of companies even those which one would suspect have an extremely mixed record on social and environmental justice. The book is therefore challenging to green economists as it does make the point that companies have been very effective in certain types of corporate social responsibility and in getting their own way and their message across. In fact some would argue that only business is powerful enough to save the planet, a view expressed by the World Council of Business and Sustainable Development and many others, and this book comes from this philosophy. Others in the green stable of writers regard big corporations as the cause of all society's social and environmental injustices. This book provides the green economist with the very tool box used by companies themselves and thus presents a fascinating philosophical and moral dilemma and a choice of instruments which at the very least are worth pausing to consider.

Just like green economics which "takes an inclusive approach, promoting fairness, equity, participation, freedom, democracy with social and environmental freedom at its core", this book has a similar philosophy but one that is explored through the business framework. The book facilitates debate and provides a useful and alternative perspective to existing and predicted problems. It argues for a holistic approach with a global perspective using ideas from the business world to achieve what the UN Brundtland (1987) Commission report defined as *Our Common Future* and 'sustainable development: as "development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This is an extremely important objective.

This book is charming and an enjoyable read. It is also a book that is easy to dip in and out of. Throughout its pages can be found some very pertinent cartoons drawn by Louise Kemp. She has been superb in converting concepts into illustrations. The images they sum up are very thought provoking and add greatly to the book. The chapter headings and layout make the book very easy to follow and the facts and figures are clearly laid out.

The advantages of this book are that "according to one reader: by using well proven management principles they have not only built a global plan for the planet – but also outlined how this can actually be delivered – both bottom up and top down, globally and locally. It's so often this 'how' that is omitted in such books – but not here" (Amazon, 2011). It is very relevant for green economists.

As Gore (2007) said in his *Nobel Lecture*, "in the Kanji characters used in both Chinese and Japanese, 'crisis' is written with two symbols, the first meaning 'danger', the second 'opportunity'". It is to be hoped we respond appropriately for the future of the planet. This book gives us a plan to do so.

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