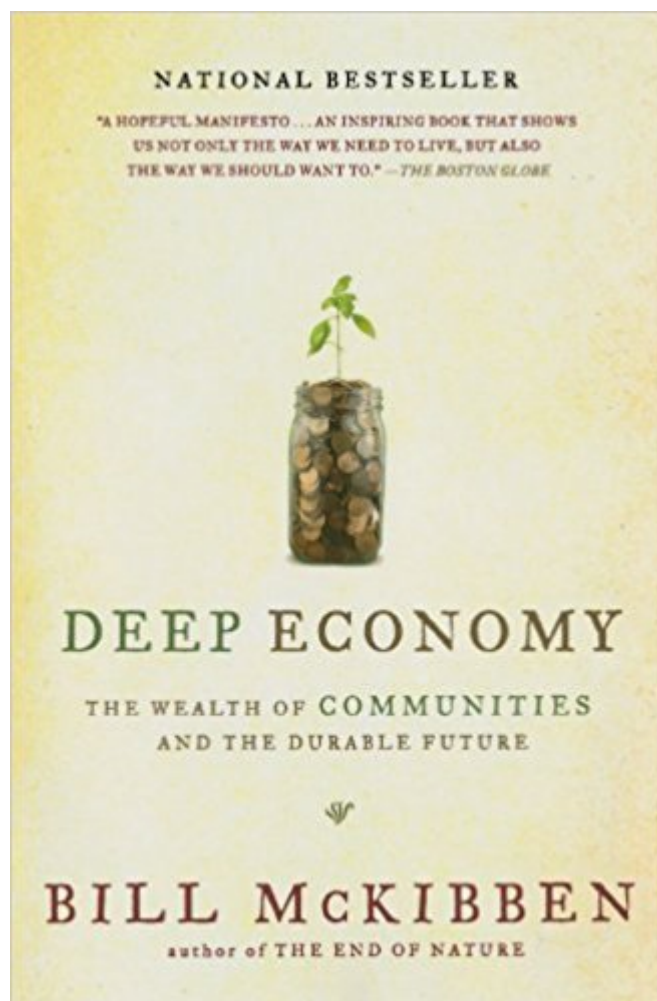




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# Deep Economy: The Wealth Of Communities And The Durable Future



## Synopsis

The bestselling author of *The End of Nature* issues an impassioned call to arms for an economy that creates community and ennobles our lives. In this powerful and provocative manifesto, Bill McKibben offers the biggest challenge in a generation to the prevailing view of our economy. For the first time in human history, he observes, "more" is no longer synonymous with "better." —*indeed*, for many of us, they have become almost opposites. McKibben puts forward a new way to think about the things we buy, the food we eat, the energy we use, and the money that pays for it all. Our purchases, he says, need not be at odds with the things we truly value. McKibben's animating idea is that we need to move beyond "growth" as the paramount economic ideal and pursue prosperity in a more local direction, with cities, suburbs, and regions producing more of their own food, generating more of their own energy, and even creating more of their own culture and entertainment. He shows this concept blossoming around the world with striking results, from the burgeoning economies of India and China to the more mature societies of Europe and New England. For those who worry about environmental threats, he offers a route out of the worst of those problems; for those who wonder if there isn't something more to life than buying, he provides the insight to think about one's life as an individual and as a member of a larger community. McKibben offers a realistic, if challenging, scenario for a hopeful future. *Deep Economy* makes the compelling case that the more we nurture the essential humanity of our economy, the more we will recapture our own.

## Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin (March 4, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0805087222

ISBN-13: 978-0805087222

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 17.4 x 204.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 109 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #80,584 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #62 in *Books > Business & Money > Economics > Sustainable Development* #99 in *Books > Business & Money > Economics > Development & Growth* #160 in *Books > Business & Money > Economics > Environmental Economics*

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Challenging the prevailing wisdom that the goal of economies should be unlimited growth, McKibben (*The End of Nature*) argues that the world doesn't have enough natural resources to sustain endless economic expansion. For example, if the Chinese owned cars in the same numbers as Americans, there would be 1.1 billion more vehicles on the road—untenable in a world that is rapidly running out of oil and clean air. Drawing the phrase "deep economy" from the expression "deep ecology," a term environmentalists use to signify new ways of thinking about the environment, he suggests we need to explore new economic ideas. Rather than promoting accelerated cycles of economic expansion—a mindset that has brought the world to the brink of environmental disaster—we should concentrate on creating localized economies: community-scale power systems instead of huge centralized power plants; cohousing communities instead of sprawling suburbs. He gives examples of promising ventures of this type, such as a community-supported farm in Vermont and a community biosphere reserve, or large national park—like area, in Himalayan India, but some of the ideas—local currencies as supplements to national money, for example—seem overly optimistic. Nevertheless, McKibben's proposals for new, less growth-centered ways of thinking about economics are intriguing, and offer hope that change is possible. (Mar. 20) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In offering straightforward solutions to the looming environmental crisis, Bill McKibben has marched directly into the middle of a heated debate. Critics' personal beliefs and politics shaped their reviews, which described *Deep Economy* as, alternately, a "masterfully crafted, deeply thoughtful and mind-expanding treatise" (*Los Angeles Times*) and a "book-length sermon on what is wrong with the way we live" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). Some reviewers found McKibben's solutions practical and the author refreshingly unpretentious, while others considered his vision utopian and his attitude self-righteous. However, they did agree that McKibben writes compellingly; with warmth, sincerity, and a sharp sense of humor. His resolute hope for the future will resound with readers no matter where their loyalties lie. But will it change any minds? Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

*Deep Economy* I think is a very important book that presents ideas that we ought to be bringing into the mainstream political discussion. While traditionally, there have been clashes between the

environmental movement and the labor movement, this book brings to light how a truly environmentally sustainable lifestyle can coexist with economic fairness and social justice. Prior solutions to the blue/green problem include an emphasis on green jobs, as Van Jones proposes. But *Deep Economy* takes things a step further, recognizing that a life closer to nature and the environment - a simpler life, driven by community rather than consumption - will result not only in a better economy, but happier people as well. It confronts the imprudent neoliberal idea that the economy, and the resource extraction required to spur it, can continue on infinitely, insisting that we need to have local, slow/no-growth economies. This book isn't the most in-depth, and so it will not offer the most detailed theories and perspectives of the current system and the means to bring about change. But it is an enjoyable read, and because of that, something worth sharing with others. It's important that people be exposed to these kinds of ideas. And Bill McKibben seems to have some idea of what he's doing, given the actions of 350.org. When I read this book, I sighed with relief to know that finally, someone is talking about this stuff. Bill McKibben's ideas need to become the focus of the next big movements in America. They need to replace the pale-green, pseudo-environmentalism driven by consumption in America.

Bill McKibben is a master story teller of the greatest crisis of our time. In *Deep Economy*, he presents a convincing argument that local economies are much more sustainable than global ones, not only because it uses less resources, but also because it makes us happier. He summarizes research on the benefits of communities, and tells personal stories of eating and living locally. I greatly enjoyed his observations of his trips to Cuba and China, one which has created a sustainable local agriculture, and one that is growing so fast it can hardly keep up. He illuminates both the benefits and drawbacks of economic growth in the developing world. He shows clearly that more isn't better, but that local economies produce the most wealth by using resources most efficiently and by providing a sense of place.

For most of human history, "more" and "better" have been pretty much the same when it comes to the things we want. Even today, a very large number of people live in poverty, and their main priority is more -- more food, more clothing, more medical care, more things. For them, "more" would still be "better." But, for many of us, we have long ago passed the point where "more" is the same as "better." Every study that has looked at the correlation between wealth and happiness finds the same thing. Up to a certain point, more money make people happier. After a certain point, however, more money stops making us happier. Many of us are long past that point. McKibben starts with this

observation, but then he moves further. According to McKibben, our wealthy modern lifestyle is actually starting to make us less happy. We are social creatures, and living alone in massive houses, traveling in separate cars and the other things money tends to buy these days tend to isolate us from other people. This makes us less happy, in the end, not more. And, finally, our lifestyle is less and less sustainable. Our food supply, for example, is highly dependent on cheap oil. While this has worked for a while, it cannot work forever. The demand for oil -- and other limited resources -- will grow spectacularly as some of those in poverty start to adopt some of our way of life. And that is so, even if population stops growing. I found this book deeply disturbing, but I think McKibben is right about the problems he identifies. McKibben, however, is not so pessimistic. He thinks there are solutions that will allow us to live even happier lives by consuming less, not more. I sincerely hope that he is right, and that more people at least listen to what he has to say.

This book is worth rereading until it is fully understood. McKibben tackles the issue of building an economy that works for the benefit of all. This critical point in time requires full engagement in discerning the difference between MORE and BETTER. He points out that for most people on earth, 'more' truly is 'better'. . . but some of us have reached the point that 'more' no longer improves our well being. This book does not offer a traditional 'conservative' or 'liberal' approach. Both camps can draw support from his ideas. Well worth pondering.

The author did an outstanding job referencing examples of how various communities and individuals have found better ways to create local economies that are more sustainable and treat the resources with respect while remaining successful, albeit with an altered definition of success. I would like to have seen him spend even more time helping us understand how to influence our friends, family, and policy makers to recognize this new perspective.

Very well written and concise without being overly technical. Provides a great overview of the current state of the "green" culture and gives an easy to absorb blueprint for how communities can move towards a more sustainable future.

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