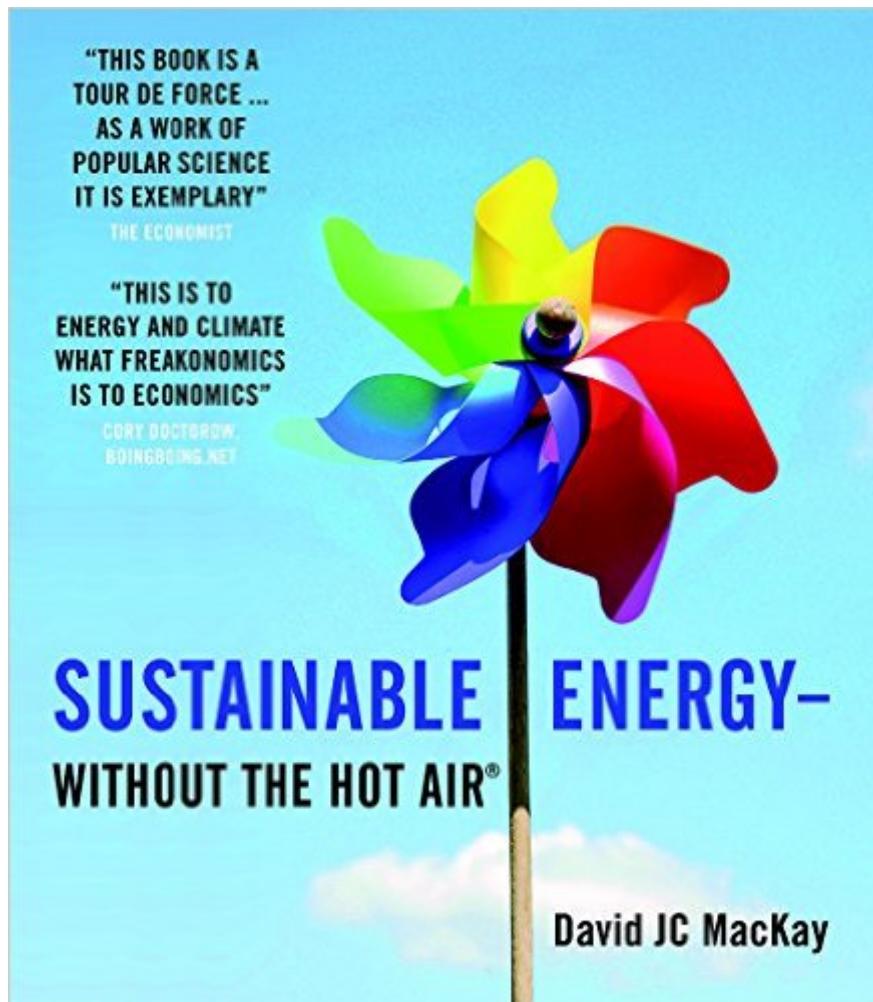


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Sustainable Energy - Without The Hot Air



Synopsis

Addressing the sustainable energy crisis in an objective manner, this enlightening book analyzes the relevant numbers and organizes a plan for change on both a personal level and an international scale for Europe, the United States, and the world. In case study format, this informative reference answers questions surrounding nuclear energy, the potential of sustainable fossil fuels, and the possibilities of sharing renewable power with foreign countries. While underlining the difficulty of minimizing consumption, the tone remains positive as it debunks misinformation and clearly explains the calculations of expenditure per person to encourage people to make individual changes that will benefit the world at large.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Prof MacKay's starting point is that there is a great deal of vague flummery talked about energy production and consumption. It is easy to make vague claims of "huge" potential green sources or to obsess over what turn out to be very minor energy savings. His goal in this book is to have a hard-nosed discussion of real numbers, so that there can be a more sensible discussion of options. He avoids making explicit recommendations, but his one continual plea is that we create a plan that "adds up" rather than merely reflecting wishful thinking. The world currently consumes enormous quantities of fossil fuel, so any viable alternative plan also has to deal with very large numbers, either as savings or as alternate sources. MacKay writes in a very readable and entertaining style.

But he is also very careful to explain his numbers and to build his scenarios from the ground up. I found his analyses convincing and stimulating. Sometimes more detailed or more mathematical analysis is pushed off to supplementary appendices, but those are also well worth reading. I learned many things. One key factor I hadn't appreciated was the enormous land areas required for renewable sources, such as wind, solar, biofuel, or geothermal to make a substantial difference. For example, MacKay calculates that it would probably require 10% of the UK's surface to be dedicated to wind farms in order to make a significant contribution to the UK's current energy needs. Even larger areas are required to generate meaningful quantities of biofuel. If an area the size of Africa were dedicated to growing biofuel, that might only replace a third of current world oil needs. But MacKay also points out there may be places where building vast energy farms makes sense.

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