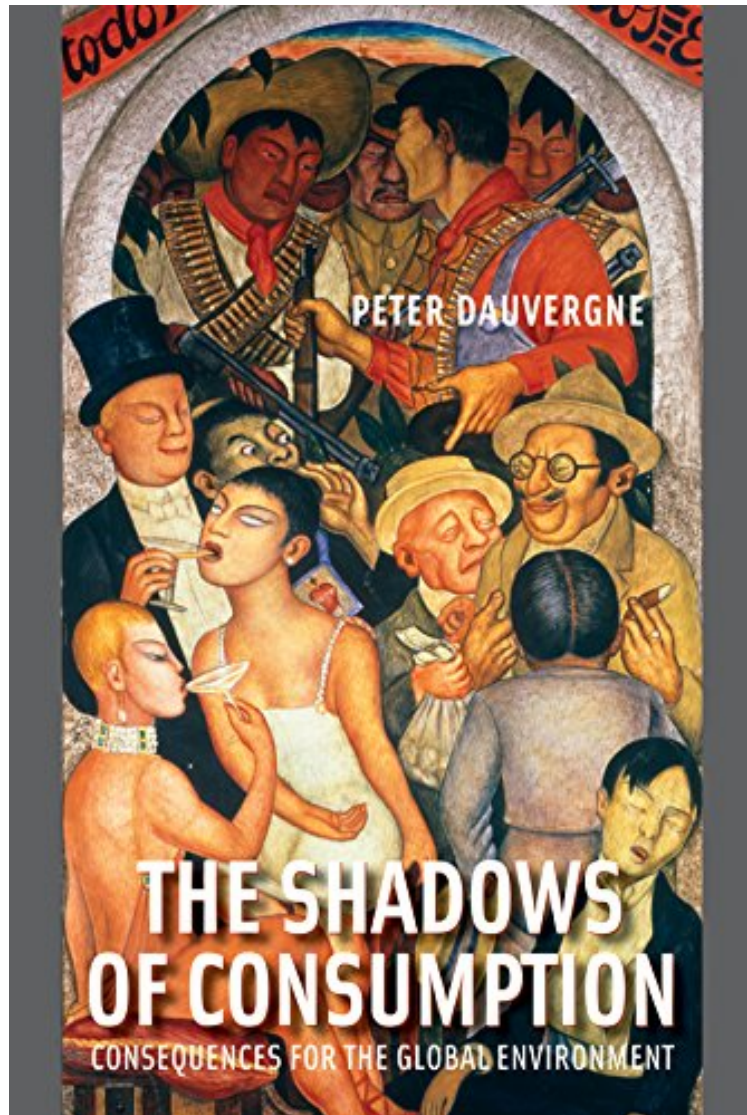


[Mobile pdf] The Shadows of Consumption: Consequences for the Global Environment (MIT Press)

The Shadows of Consumption: Consequences for the Global Environment (MIT Press)

Peter Dauvergne

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Peter Dauvergne : The Shadows of Consumption: Consequences for the Global Environment (MIT Press) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Shadows of Consumption: Consequences for the Global Environment (MIT Press):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Towards an ethos of sustainable consumption By Malvin "The Shadows of Consumption" by Peter Dauvergne is a penetrating and far-reaching analysis of consumerism and the environment. Written in a highly accessible manner, the author presents a sobering assessment of our relationship with

the planet, supporting his research with an impressive amount of references, data and statistics. The end result is a cogently argued and persuasive book that will prove useful to anyone seeking to transcend the limitations of environmentalism as it is currently understood; significantly, the book can also provide guidance as humanity seeks to achieve a brighter world that is characterized by an ethos of balanced, sustainable consumption. Mr. Dauvergne studies five consumer products to help us understand their "shadow effects" on the environment, meaning how commodity extraction, production and consumption can result in damage to ecosystems that may be located far away from their actual points of consumption. The products include automobiles, leaded gasoline, refrigerators, beef and harp seals. Through a series of fascinating case studies, the reader gains familiarity with the controversies associated with these products. The stories are sometimes precautionary, where the consequences of introducing new technologies were later found to cause severe damage to the environment. Importantly, we also gain hope by learning how sustained social struggles have sometimes persuaded governments to rectify severe environmental problems, such as the international ban of CFCs which has proven effective in helping to protect the earth's ozone layer from further harm. Of course, Mr. Dauvergne demonstrates that when profits are at stake, business often finds a way around its opposition - if only for a while. Corporations have become much more adept at public relations, using the media to blunt or counter criticism from environmental groups. For example, the Canadian government was urged by the business community to reinstate the seal hunt on the dubious assertion that fewer seals might help the cod population to rebuild. In another case, Mr. Dauvergne explains how industry delayed the phaseout of leaded gasoline by first challenging the scientific evidence and then relocating production and sale to the developing world. Mr. Dauvergne credits the environmental movement for its victories in raising consumer awareness about the relationship between consumption and distant ecosystems, such as the Forest Stewardship Council's seal assuring that lumber sold by retailers has been harvested sustainably in the source country. However, Mr. Dauvergne stresses that these gains are being overwhelmed by growing demand of a global marketplace. For example, automobiles may be safer to drive and have better mileage than ever before, but an expected increase from 800 million to two billion automobiles by mid century will mean more hazard for humans due to accidents and pollution and will exert enormous pressure on the environment. Clearly, the evidence presented by Mr. Dauvergne proves that the actions of individual consumers and single-issue environmental campaigns, while helpful, are inadequate to the task of solving the problem of inexorably rising consumption on a global scale. To that end, Mr. Dauvergne asserts that a systemic challenge to the status quo is necessary. The author makes a number of sound policy recommendations, including a commitment to the precautionary principle with respect to scientific discovery, restrictions on waste dumping, an end to corporate risk-shifting, and so on. Through Mr. Dauvergne's skillful framing and discussion of the issues, the reader is thoroughly persuaded and inspired to support the author's commonsense solutions.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Do you really know what you're buying? By Cranny This is a very interesting read. I consider myself a very considerate consumer, but this book still offers some more interesting insights to what goes into the current age of consumption. 9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Quo Vadis Consumerism? By Saleem Ali Consumerism inflicts a tyranny of small decisions which are incrementally undermining the life support systems of the planet. This is the central message of *Shadows of Consumption*, authored by distinguished Canadian political scientist Peter Dauvergne. The book is deeply anchored in the dominant environmentalist narrative about excessive materialism and consumerism that appears to have trumped the Malthusian narrative of the sixties and seventies. Rather than berating the growth of population in developing countries, most environmentalists have shifted their ire to consumerism in affluent societies which they see as a more cogent and plausible policy target. No doubt consumerism is indeed linked closely to environmental degradation, quite often in developing countries. Yet, compelling as the appeal of anti-consumerism rhetoric may be, one is still left with a lingering question of how best to address global poverty and growing inequality? The cover of the book is graced with Mexican artist Diego Rivera's painting *La Orgia - La Noche de los ricos* (Orgy - Night of the Rich). However, the author does not directly address the challenge of achieving development in places such as Mexico. What are the means by which wealth transfer might occur to reduce human suffering beyond the simplistic recommendation of reverting back to subsistence lifestyles which most of the world wants to escape or lavishing foreign aid which skews performance incentives? Furthermore, how do we also reconcile pluralism of human tastes for goods and services with the imperative to reduce consumption? Providing more efficient means of procuring and producing goods and services might be a win-win but the author dismisses that prospect since it may still spur latent demand (though he doesn't state it directly, this is the argument of the nineteenth century Jevons' paradox on efficiency). Furthermore, it is tempting to berate stigmatized corporate sectors such as tobacco but what about the other "finer" indulgences such as wine and the whole spectrum of alcoholic beverage manufacturers. The health burden that Dauvergne ascribes to car manufacturers in terms of accidental deaths should rather be blamed on this consumer sector instead. There is some cultural selectivity in all critiques of consumerism which comes through in this work as well. The author provides case analyses of five products and their cascading impact on the environment: cars, leaded gasoline, refrigerators, beef and harp seals. This assortment may be a bit dizzying to doctoral students trying to ascertain the best comparative matrix for this choice but the goal of the selection is to be panoramic from the "core to the periphery" of consumerism. Out of these choices, the case for mechanized beef production as a highly damaging industry is most compelling. The overall

impact of the beef industry in terms of bioethics, deforestation, and in reducing the amount of land for lower-impact food production deserves strong consideration by educators and policy-makers alike. Without stifling choice, it is possible to send market signals regarding the impact of beef production worldwide by appropriate fiscal policies. At the end Dauvergne also criticizes modern environmentalism for being too "incremental" and being co-opted by business interests. Yet environmentalists started off from much more uncompromising positions on societal norms which Dauvergne is championing and there is a historical trajectory which needs to be appreciated regarding why they have moved towards pragmatic partnerships. They have perhaps come to the realization that societal choice and the yearning for some measure of material well-being cannot be stifled. Furthermore, incentive-drive development paths necessitate some measure of consumerism around luxury goods in developed countries. No doubt the outcome of such a path will be suboptimal from the perspective of purely environmental conservation. In a society that values some norms of human choice regarding well-being we will always contend with some win-lose propositions: what Amartya Sen admirably called "the impossibility of a Paretian Liberal." We can educate and regulate but must always be cautious about totalitarianism for that may stifle our ultimate salvation out of the environmental crisis - the capacity to innovate. While *Shadows of Consumption* bypasses these tough questions, there are some useful policy suggestions towards the end about "balance," in various domains of human endeavor from trade and financial flows to corporate engagement. The author is clearly a concerned citizen just as much as he is a credible academic and the book is certainly valuable as a study of how scholars are grappling with their own struggles around the conundrum of global consumption patterns.

The Shadows of Consumption gives a hard-hitting diagnosis: many of the earth's ecosystems and billions of its people are at risk from the consequences of rising consumption. Products ranging from cars to hamburgers offer conveniences and pleasures; but, as Peter Dauvergne makes clear, global political and economic processes displace the real costs of consumer goods into distant ecosystems, communities, and timelines, tipping into crisis people and places without the power to resist. In *The Shadows of Consumption*, Peter Dauvergne maps the costs of consumption that remain hidden in the shadows cast by globalized corporations, trade, and finance. Dauvergne traces the environmental consequences of five commodities: automobiles, gasoline, refrigerators, beef, and harp seals. In these fascinating histories we learn, for example, that American officials ignored warnings about the dangers of lead in gasoline in the 1920s; why China is now a leading producer of CFC-free refrigerators; and how activists were able to stop Canada's commercial seal hunt in the 1980s (but are unable to do so now). Dauvergne's innovative analysis allows us to see why so many efforts to manage the global environment are failing even as environmentalism is slowly strengthening. He proposes a guiding principle of "balanced consumption" for both consumers and corporations. We know that we can make things better by driving a high-mileage car, eating locally grown food, and buying energy-efficient appliances; but these improvements are incremental, local, and insufficient. More crucial than our individual efforts to reuse and recycle will be reforms in the global political economy to reduce the inequalities of consumption and correct the imbalance between growing economies and environmental sustainability.

From Publishers Weekly Dauvergne (*Paths to the Green World*) takes a look at five industries to see what consequences they have on local and global environments, showing the environmental spillovers from the corporate, trade, and financing chains that supply and replace consumer goods. He points out that cumulative progress is not keeping pace with the impact of rising consumption in a globalizing economy and higher environmental standards in first world countries often means transferring ecological degradation to poorer regions. The author's examinations of the ecological effects of automobiles, leaded gasoline and CFCs reveal that industries usually undermine efforts toward safety and sustainability until they find a salable substitute, thus ensuring more profits. An analysis of the harp seal hunt demonstrates that although activists saved seals from near extinction in the 1970s-1980s, their publicity campaigns will be unlikely to make an impact in markets like Russia and China. Dauvergne proposes balanced consumption, but his solutions range from the unlikely- that international donors... serve the interests of people and ecosystems in developing states more than the financial interests at home- to the fanciful- that the World Trade Organization... guide global trade with anticipatory strategies to prevent ecological shadows. (Oct.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Dauvergne's brilliant investigation will show you the 'other side' of the coin and that we must all incorporate a deeper awareness and take the 'long view' into our efforts to make a positive difference for human well-being near and far - immediately in your neighborhood and incrementally on the other side of the planet." - Scott D. Wright, *Human Ecology* "In *The Shadows of Consumption*, Peter Dauvergne tackles the often hidden consequences of globalization and consumption for the environment and for human health and well-being. He demonstrates how the worst of these consequences are displaced, often to the most marginalized sectors of global society, and discusses ways to cast light into the shadows of global economic development. This book will be essential reading for students and scholars, indeed anyone interested in understanding more about globalization and its impacts." - Kate O'Neill, Department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management, University of California, Berkeley "The ecological and social

consequences of modern patterns of consumption are often overlooked, underestimated, and poorly theorized. Engaging, convincing, and nuanced, Peter Dauvergne's book masterfully excavates and politicizes the shadows of consumption that modern life casts, from the consumption of beef to the use of cars and fridges. Wide-ranging and superbly written, this book is sure to be widely read." —Peter Newell, Professor of Development Studies, University of East Anglia"With *The Shadows of Consumption*, we have at last an elegant elucidation of the often hidden environmental and social costs of today's consumption. Dauvergne has described the problem brilliantly and provided an analysis that should spur far-reaching change, including change in contemporary environmentalism. I hope this book finds a wide audience—soon." —James Gustave Speth, Dean, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University, author of *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*About the AuthorPeter Dauvergne is Professor of Political Science and Canada Research Chair in Global Environmental Politics at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of the award-winning *Shadows in the Forest: Japan and the Politics of Timber in Southeast Asia* (MIT Press, 1997), and the coauthor (with Jennifer Clapp) of *Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment* (MIT Press, 2005).