

his work” (p. 163). Nonetheless, McAllister suggests that prosecutors can promote more stringent enforcement of laws through oversight of environmental regulatory bodies, which might support the enforcement of environmental legislation for more pressing problems.

Countering the assertion that developing countries are not ready for rigorous environmental law, McAllister presents this study as a model for the establishment of meaningful environmental regulation and law. Brazil’s experiences show that legal enforcement can enhance regulatory effectiveness in a context where regulatory authority is historically weak. Although legalistic mechanisms have drawbacks, which McAllister carefully assesses, she suggests that prosecutorial institutions are a way to make justice accessible to citizens and, more importantly, for the law to be meaningful to them. A persuasive and highly original contribution to the field, *Making Law Matter* has analytic value for understanding a surprising case of legal effectiveness and institutional reform, and offers an optimistic perspective on the possibility for strengthening environmental protection through national law.

Speth, James Gustave. 2008. *The Bridge at the End of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

*Reviewed by Steve Vanderheiden*  
*University of Colorado*

Speth is no stranger to the American environmental movement, and his 2004 *Red Sky at Morning* directed trenchant criticism at the recent inefficacy of that movement, reserving its harshest judgment for the United States’ abject failure to lead in developing policy responses to global issues like climate change and biodiversity protection. In this book he promises to “go beyond” the state-centric and institutional capacity-building focus of *Red Sky* and “take a deeper and harder look at underlying forces and needed corrections” (p. xvi). Recognizing that law and institutions are often the servants of the norms that shape environmental values and behavior rather than being their masters, Speth delivers on that promise in a work that embodies his wide-ranging knowledge and experience as a leading insider, critic, and scholar of contemporary environmentalism. Perhaps no one is better equipped to diagnose the ills plaguing the movement. And no book in recent memory better synthesizes critical assessments of the political and economic obstacles to a sustainable society. Speth provides a normative vision of a better world and blends the policy realism of a frustrated activist with the optimism of a utopian whose faith in the transformative potential of good ideas remains unshaken.

In contrast with his earlier book, the problem here is not so much the United States as it is *us*—those educated and well-meaning readers who are often uncomfortably cognizant of our environmental impacts and want to do better, but who remain stuck in an economic system that stymies these ambi-

tions and repels efforts at reform. Thankfully, we are also at least potentially part of the solution, if only that system can be demystified and access to its inner workings can be granted to those seeking to redirect its tendencies toward more defensible ends. As Speth writes, in reference to the renewed confidence in government and public service that characterized the Obama campaign (and echoes one of its slogans), “Yes, we can save what is left. Yes, we can repair and make amends” (p. 13). At a time when hope and change have reemerged as the mobilizing rhetoric of progress rather than hallmarks of naïveté, the book closes with a forward-looking call to action. He writes, addressing the guarded optimism of those emerging from challenging times, “we are carried forward by hope, a radical hope, that a better world is possible and that we can build it” (p. 237).

So how can we build that better world? If the “pragmatic, compromising, deal-with-the-effects approach of modern environmentalism” (p. 85) is inadequate to the task of addressing the complex and far-reaching problems caused by the rampaging forces of global capitalism, in what does Speth vest this radical hope? Readers will recognize most of his proposed remedies: pricing schemes that internalize costs and incorporate social and environmental values, regulations that encourage the adoption of best practices and technological innovation, cultivation of post-materialist values appropriate for a post-growth society, legal and political reforms designed to make corporations serve rather than oppose the public interest, and a consciousness shift toward the widespread adoption of an ethic of global equity and sustainability. None of these proposals or the analyses from which they emerge are by themselves particularly remarkable. Speth documents their origins in recent works by environmental economists, green political theorists, scholars of globalization and development, environmental philosophers, historians, cultural theorists, business analysts, and other scholars and critics that have contributed to the intellectual and practical dialogue about environmental crisis and recovery to which this book and Speth’s career have been devoted. What is remarkable about this book is the wide range of intellectual landscape that it surveys and the compelling narrative that gives urgency to the need for a solution and sophistication to the multifaceted array of remedies that are presented in response.

Throughout, Speth calls for a new kind of environmental movement that is able to capture the fickle imagination of a jaded public and respond to the increasingly complex, systemic, and globalized challenges of contemporary environmental politics. The old movement’s organizational structure, timid incrementalism, and limited vision are held responsible for its collective failure to deliver on the promises that were once its primary appeal but have since become its albatross. Others have decried the current state of the US environmental movement, but none offers either the scholarly range or the incessant but well-grounded commitment to progress of this sweeping work. It may be the flattery of his proposal to build a new social movement around scholarly ideas, the book’s grandiose ambitions of transformation, or (invoking Shaw) the sheer

unreasonableness of its demands, but Speth's work reads as equal parts professional memoir by a leading environmental scholar and activist, multidisciplinary report on the state of several fields, and motivational speech. Readers looking for original research or new data will not find it here. Those conditioned to respond to the Introduction's registry of alarming environmental trends with a mix of apocalyptic resignation and righteous indignation may be put off by the author's heady optimism and preference for action over blame. And those mired in the labyrinths of particular scholarly disciplines may find his eclecticism to be intellectually promiscuous. But anyone with an interest in and concern for current environmental politics—indeed, as Speth aptly claims, for the very future of the world and its various inhabitants—can benefit by its collected insights, synthesized diagnoses, and catalogued scholarship.