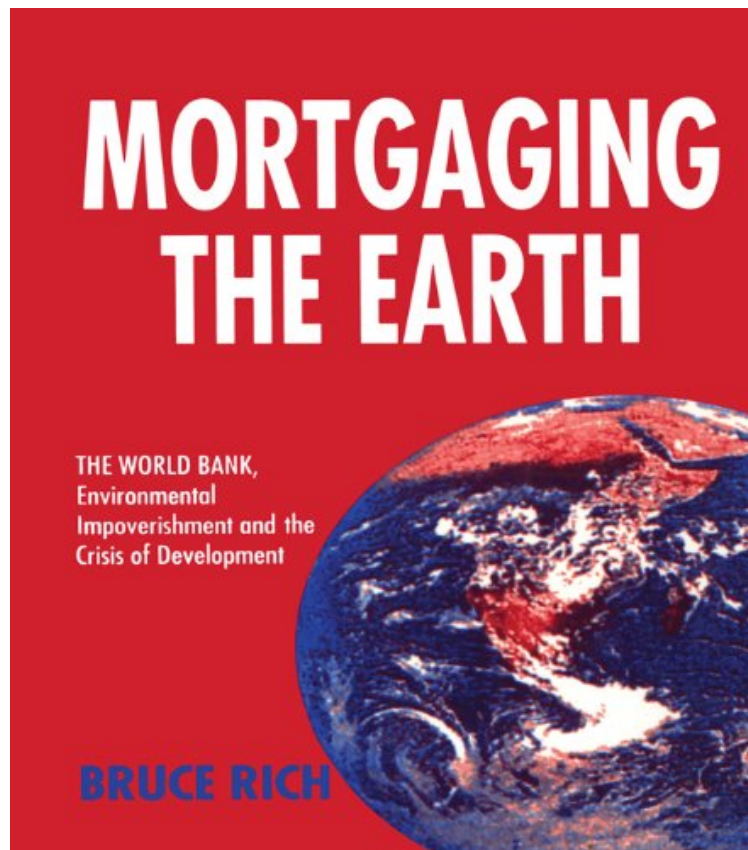


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Mortgaging the Earth: World Bank, Environmental Impoverishment and the Crisis of Development

Bruce Rich

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Bruce Rich : Mortgaging the Earth: World Bank, Environmental Impoverishment and the Crisis of Development before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mortgaging the Earth: World Bank, Environmental Impoverishment and the Crisis of Development:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Dismal news from the dismal scienceBy Cecil BothwellEven if you are somewhat aware of the scourge known as the World Bank you would probably be aghast at the carefully documented disasters covered in MORTGAGING THE EARTH. Bruce Rich, senior attorney and director of the International Program at the Environmental Defense Fund, spent more than a year cataloging the material in this comprehensive investigative report. World Bank projects have dislocated millions of people, impoverished the poor, facilitated wide transmission of disease, deforested ia, and set up a system of debtor nations who pay tribute in the form of labor and resources. As economies collapse under the strain of foriegn debt, the International Monetary Fund steps in and forces "restructuring" or "adjustments" which almost universally cuts social and health services, forces more people off of their land and diverts more of a nation's wealth to repayment of loans. All of this damage has been wrought in the name of development and with the pretense of helping bring the third world into modern times. Instead,

it has created a fourth world of environmental and developmental refugees. A dismal tale indeed. 14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent Critique of Macro-Development By James O. Schlicht Bruce Rich has given those of us interested in the politics of development much to think about. His well-researched, thought-provoking analysis of the World Bank, while scrupulously fair, is scathing. From EGAT in Thailand, through Polonoroeste in Brazil, to the Narmada Dams in India, he paints a picture of an institution that is out of control and which bears at least partial responsibility for much human suffering and environmental devastation. While the World Bank would have us believe that it is on the cutting edge of responsible development and is assisting the entire Third World in its struggle to develop, Rich shows us some of the consequences of the philosophy that development is good, no matter what its human and environmental costs. I use this book as a primary text in a college-level introductory comparative politics course dealing with the Third World. My students have been shocked by this book into some original thought about the conceptions underlying development strategies, and, I think, have emerged from this course with minds that are more open to challenging the conventional wisdom regarding the politics of development. For that, if nothing else, Rich deserves a vote of thanks.

This critique of World Bank operations examines the effects of this organization on the societies in which it operates. Highly critical of the Bank's practices in its 50 years of operation, the author demonstrates how the Bank has become virtually unaccountable and a law unto itself. He describes how the Bank has supported oppressive regimes and loaned money to support large projects which have displaced local populations. He argues further that the Bank's current policies of structural adjustment are arresting the development of Third World countries.

From Publishers Weekly The World Bank, the largest single source of financial and economic assistance in the world, was founded in 1946 to alleviate poverty and promote development. Rich, senior attorney at the Environmental Defense Fund, charges that today's Bank is institutionally debased and intellectually corrupt. His well-documented indictment focuses on the Bank's record in regard to the environment, citing Bank-supported projects that ignore end-use efficiency, conservation and local social organizations. Rich examines projects in the largest borrowing countries: transmigration in Indonesia; dams in India; deforestation, dams and roads in Brazil. These projects force the displacement of millions of impoverished people. Rich argues that the story is repeated in Africa, Malaysia and Thailand. He argues that global environmental management fails because there are no global solutions, only local ones. Rich points to such agencies as Inter-American, the African Development Foundation, Appropriate Technology International and Oxfam as organizations that take a more sensible, effective local approach to development than does the World Bank. This expose deserves a wide readership. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal The degradation of the environment and the deepening of poverty in the Third World have been intertwined over the past 30 years. Rich argues that the top-down development approach pursued by the World Bank (and most other international lenders) has much to do with these outcomes. A lawyer with the Environmental Defense Fund, Rich has for over a decade worked within a vibrant international network of grass-roots activists to mitigate and change the lending policies of the World Bank--with some success. His book is one of the most insightful and detailed accounts of the World Bank's planning processes and their negative environmental impacts across the Third World. Recommended for academic and larger public libraries.- Bill Rau, Takoma Park, Md. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Even though the World Bank is nearing its fiftieth anniversary, few are aware of its structure, its sources of capital, or its purpose. As explained in The Statesman's Year-Book, the bank, known formally as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, "provide(s) funds and technical assistance to facilitate economic development in its poorer member countries." Although that mission might sound noble, Rich, senior attorney at the Environmental Defense Fund, charges that, fostered by the bank's policies, the human and natural resources of nonindustrialized countries have been plundered in the name of development and a misguided notion of progress. Rich has previously served as a World Bank consultant, but he salvages the leadership of the bank under former secretary of defense Robert McNamara, resuscitating old antagonisms with his charge that the same insensitivity, arrogance, and mismanagement that led to the Vietnam debacle have created a worldwide environmental crisis. In spite of--or because of--Rich's vested interest, this is an important book that vividly and disturbingly documents policies gone awry. David Rouse