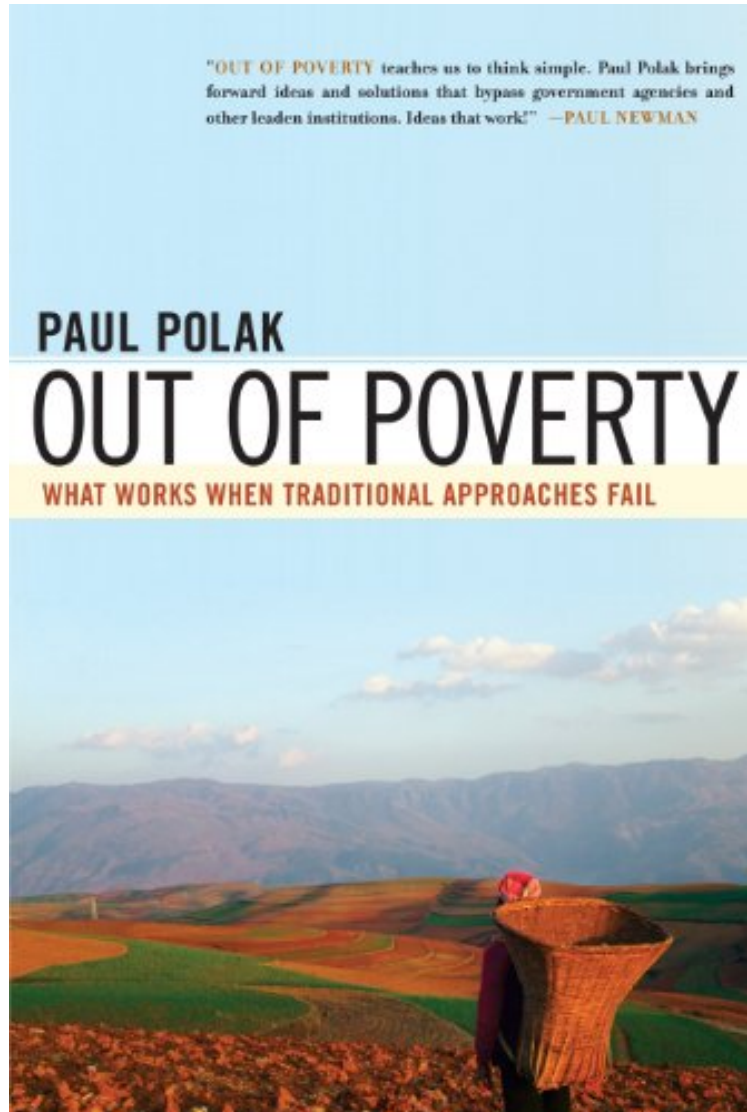


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Out of Poverty: What Works When Traditional Approaches Fail

Paul Polak

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Paul Polak : Out of Poverty: What Works When Traditional Approaches Fail before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Out of Poverty: What Works When Traditional Approaches Fail:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Inspiring Despite Repetition and Shaky ClaimsBy Malcolm WareMr Polak presents us with some strategies to fight poverty as well as proof in the form of one story in particular of a poor Nepalese family who uses low-cost irrigation to increase their income by farming in the dry winter season. This book could be distilled down to a good TED talk, however, as Mr Polak repeats himself frequently, often without expounding his ideas in any meaningful way. The points made are sound, however, and as such this book outlines a

good ideological platform for those interested in developing world enterprise and design. To those who argue that Polak is anti-charity, or that he believes the free market will solve anything: you didn't read the book carefully as there no fewer than three places where the author admits that government and charity are necessary in the fight against poverty. This book is titled "when traditional approaches fail" - not " traditional approaches should be completely abandoned." Sure, Polak can get pretty cavalier when characterizing his opponents, and it's a weakness of the book, but it doesn't detract from the validity of his argument, nor does he spend the book trashing NGOs and the like. Read this if you have the time and are genuinely interested in design for the developing world. Reading about treadle pumps and drip irrigation is really boring if you're not concerned with the repercussions. One of the big unanswered questions - how to achieve the scalability needed to eradicate poverty - is only touched on briefly in the final pages when Polak dismisses detractors that say off-season growing by larger numbers will bring down prices by countering that the demand will increase as income increases among the poor. But if the only new people who have money to create the demand are growing the vegetables, why would they buy them? I would love to read an economist's critique of Polak's ideas. Regardless of whether the book is amazing or not, everyone should at least go and find out about Paul Polak, his ideas, his work, and his detractors.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. the flow would have been much better. Despite this problem it's a book worth reading.

By V. Pirila The problem the author has spent his life trying to tackle is extremely important. The ideas in the book are fresh and sound realistic. There are concrete ideas that someone with enough drive should try out, they may work very well. The author's passion towards the subject shows and he creates a pleasant narrative. The problem with the book is that it is very repetitive. Nearly same sentences repeat various times throughout the book, sometimes separated only by a couple of pages. If the editor had simply removed the repetition and released a slimmer book, the flow would have been much better. Despite this problem it's a book worth reading.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Best book out there showing how good humanitarian design solves problems.

By Nathan Wilson This book is fantastic! I agree that Polak could have been less repetitive at times and still gotten the same impact out of his intended message, but you will not find a better book out there that clearly explains the challenges of people living on a few dollars a day (much of the world's population) to less than 1 dollar a day. After reading this book, I whole-heartedly believe that the argument for giving-based aid programs is dead and the only effective way forward for economic/community development is through entrepreneurial profit-oriented business models. The bottom-line of Paul Polak's argument is that we cannot approach aid/development work through Western-institutionalized perspectives or simply give things away because these approaches have not worked in the past and they are certainly not working now! We need to be pragmatists. We need to do anything and everything that produces positive, measurable impacts and is sustainable. If you haven't already read E.F. Schumacher's "Small is Beautiful" get that as well. Simple yet groundbreaking ideas and wisdom from Polak and Schumacher.

Based on his 25 years of experience, Polak explodes what he calls the "Three Great Poverty Eradication Myths": that we can donate people out of poverty, that national economic growth will end poverty, and that Big Business, operating as it does now, will end poverty. Polak shows that programs based on these ideas have utterly failed--in fact, in sub-Saharan Africa poverty rates have actually gone up. These failed top-down efforts contrast sharply with the grassroots approach Polak and IDE have championed: helping the dollar-a-day poor earn more money through their own efforts. Amazingly enough, unexploited market opportunities do exist for the desperately poor. Polak describes how he and others have identified these opportunities and have developed innovative, low-cost tools that have helped in lifting 17 million people out of poverty.