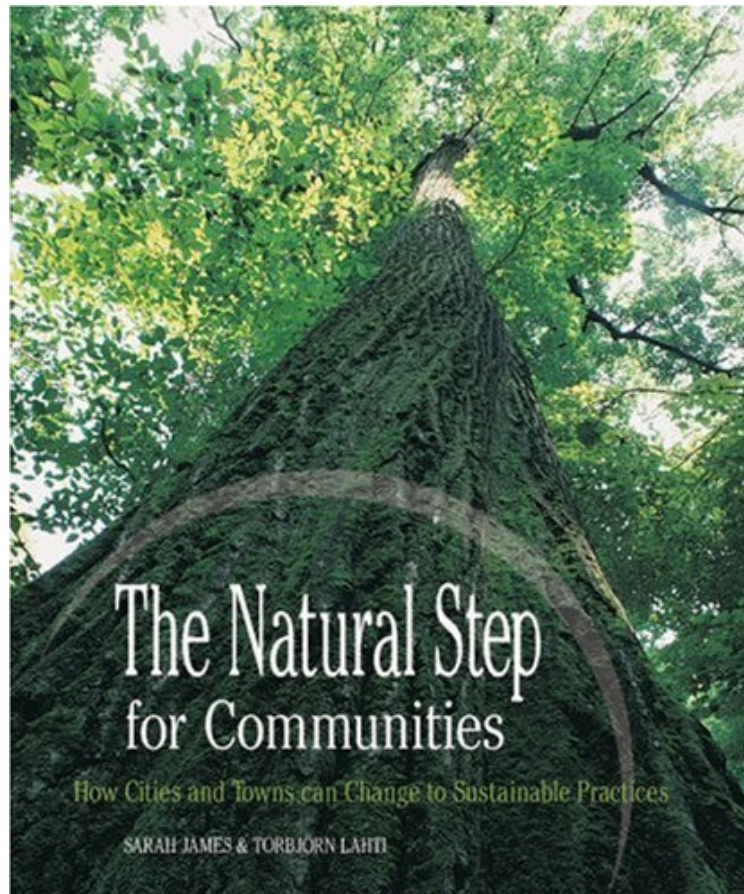


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The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices

Torbjourn Lahti

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Communities. Fantastic class, and fantastic book. Whether you're new or advanced in sustainability practices, this is a book that keeps on giving. There's a plethora of great examples from communities (mostly in Sweden) that exhibit sustainable practices and used the tools of the Natural Step Framework to bail themselves out of some pretty bad situations. I also purchased *The Natural Step for Business* (for another class) and it was also good, but I feel *The Natural Step for Communities* gives you an even better systems perspective of this method and how best to apply it in the real world. My one criticism is that I wish there were a greater geographical variety of communities discussed in this book. Since *The Natural Step* was created in Sweden, it makes sense that it has had the most prevalent impact there. As such, many of the communities discussed are Swedish and at the end of each chapter examples from around the world are given in a concluding paragraph. I think an updated version using fleshed-out international examples would benefit the readers of this book, but honestly you can't go wrong with the version as is. As with anything in sustainability, there is no one size fits all solution. When reading this, use your abstract thinking skills to apply these concepts and methods to communities of different population sizes, geographical expanse, diversity, affluence, and so on. Particularly here in the US, people would do well to give this book a read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Book review By Chuck @ ASU Although I have only begun to read this book, I like the direction that it is going. Anyone that is a municipal manager or worker at any level, as well as all that consider themselves 'green' should read this book. It's a small investment for a better world.

Sustainability may seem like one more buzzword and cities and towns like the last places to change, but *The Natural Step for Communities* provides inspiring examples of communities that have made dramatic changes toward sustainability and explains how others can emulate their success. Chronicled in the book are towns like Ouml;vertornearing;, whose government operations recently became 100 percent fossil fuel-free, demonstrating that unsustainable municipal practices really can be overhauled. Arguing that the process of introducing change-whether converting to renewable energy or designing compact development-is critical to success, the authors outline why well-intentioned proposals often fail to win community approval and why an integrated approach-not "single-issue" initiatives-can surmount challenges of conflicting priorities, scarce resources and turf battles. The book first clarifies the concept of sustainability, offering guiding principles-the Natural Step framework-that help identify sustainable action in any area. It then introduces the 60+ eco-municipalities of Sweden that have adopted changes to sustainable practices throughout municipal policies and operations. The third section explains how they did it and outlines how other communities in North America and elsewhere can do the same. Key to success is a democratic, "bottom-up" change process and clear guiding sustainability principles, such as the Natural Step framework. The book will appeal to both general readers wishing to understand better what sustainability means and practitioners interested in introducing or expanding sustainable development in their communities. Sarah James is the principal of a community planning consulting firm. She co-authored the American Planning Association's *Planning for Sustainability Policy Guide* and has published articles throughout the U.S. on this subject. Torbjoum;rn Lahti was the planner for Sweden's first eco-municipality and is directing a five-year sustainable community demonstration project. He was instrumental in forming the Swedish National Association of Eco-municipalities.