



## The *Vogue Business* sustainable summer reading list

The books to challenge status quo thinking and inspire action, as recommended by sustainable fashion leaders.

By Bella Webb



Sustainable fashion has undergone seismic shifts this year, from the anti-ESG backlash and subsequent regulatory rollback to the constant renegotiation of global supply chains. So what are industry leaders reading to help them make sense of everything and navigate the challenges ahead?

This year's *Vogue Business* sustainable summer reading list is a refreshingly mixed bag. There are books that deal with sustainable fashion directly, but there are also fashion-adjacent recommendations that encourage the kind of values fashion will need to transform into something better and more hopeful. Across the board, the books that spoke to people most were those that appealed to people's humanity — the books that made people *feel* something beyond the cold, hard facts of sustainability.

What better time than the summer holidays to make space for that? After all, there's nothing like downtime to spark new ideas, so keep this list in your back pocket as the industry winds down for summer. Hopefully it delivers some much-needed inspiration for the work ahead.

### Marie-Claire Daveu, chief sustainability and institutional affairs officer at Kering

*Sub-Human: A 21st-Century Ethic; on Animals, Collective Liberation, and Us All*, by Emma Hakansson

"Emma Hakansson explores the interconnection between animal rights, social justice and theories of oppression more widely. She connects the dots to highlight how creating hierarchies based on difference is driven by the desire for domination and the false idea of inferiority. She stresses that animals, while different from humans, should not be considered as 'sub-human' and their differences should be more respected. Hakansson looks at the history of society's othering and commodification of animals, while helping readers see the similarities with other forms of discrimination. I recommend this book for its critical thinking and solutions for much-needed change — even if I don't personally agree with all of the author's analyses and proposals."

### Lakshmi Poti, head of fashion at Laudes Foundation

*Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer

"Reading *Braiding Sweetgrass* invited me into a slower, more attentive way of seeing the world. I found myself pausing after nearly every chapter — not because I was done, but because I needed time to savour





what I had just read, to absorb the sweetness and depth of her writing. Kimmerer — both a botanist and member of the Potawatomi Nation — makes you reflect on how sustainability is about a relationship grounded in humility, gratitude, and responsibility. The fashion industry has much to learn from this book as well — to move beyond extractive systems towards practices rooted in reciprocity, where regeneration and justice are not afterthoughts but foundational. This book profoundly shaped my understanding of nature as a teacher, offering a way to think about how we care for the planet in a way that connects caring for the Earth with caring for people.”

## **Lewis Akenji, executive director of Hot or Cool Institute**

*The Care Economy*, by Tim Jackson

“I get uneasy when we write about prosperous futures and the language tends to be couched in the jargon of markets, technology and academic disciplines, as if the future belongs only to the rich and experts. But how do we bring our values into the disembodied language of research and policy? Tim Jackson shows how in his new book. *The Care Economy* draws from his personal experience to inspire our collective health; from the individual to rethink the whole economic system.

Jackson lays out his core message thus: ‘...human prosperity, properly considered, is primarily about health rather than wealth... in consequence, the economy should concern itself first and foremost with care, in all its forms, rather than with relentless growth, as it does at the moment’. The qualifier ‘in all its forms’ is important to the scope of the book and how the author unbinds care. Care for self, care for humanity, care for the environment.”

## **Faith Robinson, director of content at Global Fashion Agenda**

*The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, by Amitav Ghosh

“This book explores the dynamics of global inequality by sharing the history of how the nutmeg spice was commodified. Amitav Ghosh is widely recognised as a leading voice from the Global South: the way he captures the overwhelming scale of climate change within the tiny nutmeg seed is a literary triumph. It’s a mind-blowingly visual and textural read that also reminds us of fashion’s dependency on commodified natural fibres within its global value chain.”

## **Tina Wetshi, co-founder of Colèchi**

*The World We Once Lived In*, by Wangari Maathai

“I come from the Democratic Republic of Congo, so I was immediately drawn to this book because it discusses the Congo Basin. The book is about the sacred power of trees. It unpacks how a tree can uphold a community, how it plays a central role in different faiths and so much more. It shows that nature isn’t just something that will make us gain simplicity and perspective away from our corrupt world, it’s ingrained in us. It made me think: what does nature mean to us? When we speak about nature in the realm of sustainable fashion, what are we trying to achieve?”

## **Whitney McGuire, founder and managing partner of The McGuire Consulting Group**

*Sky Full of Elephants*, by Cebo Campbell

“When I first read *Sky Full of Elephants*, I wasn’t expecting it to so thoroughly rupture and reframe my understanding of sustainability — not as a technical fix, but as an emotional, ancestral, and spiritual practice. This book reminded me that sustainability is not just about saving the planet, it’s about healing ourselves, our communities, and the broken systems we’ve inherited.





As someone who operates at the intersection of policy, cultural strategy and community care, this book challenged me to confront the dissonance between dominant sustainability frameworks and the deeply embodied, generational knowledge of strategically undervalued communities. It affirmed my commitment to lead from a place of empathy, justice, and truth-telling. And it helped me envision what is possible when we centre care and deep healing in this work.

*Sky Full of Elephants* doesn't offer easy answers. It invites the reader to grapple with complexity. I think that's exactly what today's sustainability movement needs more of."

*Read previous editions of the Vogue Business sustainable summer reading list [here](#) (2024), [here](#) (2023) and [here](#) (2022).*

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