

Heller, Michael. The gridlock economy: how too much ownership wrecks markets, stops innovation, and costs lives. Basic Books, 2008. 259p index afp ISBN 9780465029167, \$26.00 "Private ownership usually creates wealth. But too much ownership has the opposite effect--it creates gridlock," writes Heller (law, Columbia Univ.) in this compelling yet disappointing book. Popular and well received, *The Gridlock Economy* makes the case that in many areas of the US economy, and important 21st-century ones such as biomedical research, transportation, and the broadcast spectrum, fragmented ownership of property rights can create stalemate (or gridlock), produce inefficiencies, and stifle advancement. Heller proposes a two-step program: spot the gridlock, and find ways to unlock it. Well documented--the bread and butter of legal scholarship, here with more than 500 footnotes in less than 200 pages of text--with historical and contemporary examples, the book takes its audience on a fascinating journey. Then why the "disappointing" comment noted above? Simplified "cherry-picking" cases, the lack of more scholarly give-and-take that the author is certainly capable of, and sensationalism in the prose (including the 50 figures that are akin to PowerPoint slides created for a get-rich seminar at the local Holiday Inn) detract from Heller's contribution to these very important conversations that public policy officials could certainly benefit from and intelligent lay readers would enjoy. But recommended nevertheless. Summing Up: Recommended. All levels/collections. -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago