Sustainability Leadership



Class 9:

Part 1: Ethics and Morality of Conservation - or not to Conserve

Conserve or not to conserve

Future of Conservation

Towards a Moral Economy









For Immediate Release

Monday, June 19, 2017 - 12:45pm

Organization Profile:

Center for Biological Diversity

Contact:

Brett Hartl, (202) 817-8121, bhartl@biologicaldiversity.org

Wyoming Governor Attacks Endangered Species Act

WASHINGTON - Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead has attacked the Endangered Species Act, saying, "It's not good industry, it's not good for business and, quite frankly, it's not good for the species." He added that Wyoming "can't be a zoo for endangered species" and that the Act is not just bad for Wyoming, but for the country.

Mead's remarks came during a speech to the Wyoming Mining Association on Friday, June 16th in Sheridan, Wyo.

"Governor Mead can't be more wrong. From wolves to grizzly bears to the tiny Wyoming toad, the Endangered Species Act has been a resounding success at preventing the extinction of our country's wildlife," said Brett Hartl, government affairs director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Governor Mead's statements show that rather than seeking to 'modernize' the Endangered Species Act as he claims, the goal is to repeal or





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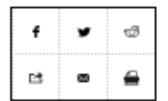
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CONSERVATION

How a Math Formula Could Decide the Fate of Endangered U.S. Species

Feds consider "conservation triage" that would let some animals go extinct to save funds for protecting others





Credit: USFWS Endangered Species Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

By Sharon Bernstein

(Reuters) - The Trump administration is considering a proposal that could effectively let some plants and animals become extinct so cash-strapped agencies can use more of their funds to save others.

At a closed-door meeting last month, Arizona State University ecologist Leah Gerber presented a plan to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials that would use a mathematical formula to direct government money away from endangered and threatened species she calls "over-funded failures"



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Scientists Launch Worldwide Search for Lost Species [Slide Show]

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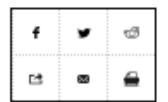
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University ecologist Leah Gerber presented a plan to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials that would use a mathematical formula to direct government money away from endangered and threatened species she calls "over-funded failures" and toward plants and animals that can more easily be saved.

Gavin Shire, a spokesman for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said in an email to Reuters that the

At a closed-door meeting last month, Arizona State

"We have worked closely with this group of scientists as they developed this new conservation tool, and while we have not made any determinations yet, are impressed with its potential," Shire said. "We will be exploring further if and how we may best use it to improve the effectiveness of our recovery efforts."

agency is examining the controversial proposal.



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Scientists Launch Worldwide Search for Lost Species [Slide Show]

Which Species Will

The Endangered Species Act bars the government from deciding which animals and plants become extinct. But funding one species over another could let some decline or die out.

"I just don't think it's possible to save all species even though I would like to," said Gerber, a self-described Democrat and environmentalist. "That's an uncomfortable thing to say and I don't like it but that's the reality."



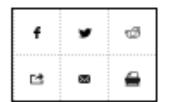
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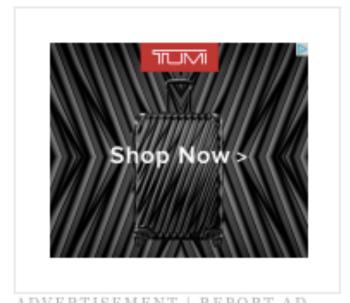


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Lost Species [Slide

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To opponents, conservation triage is an impractical and immoral policy that effectively allows bureaucrats to play God.

"If we let species go extinct, there is no bringing them back," said Rebecca Riley, an attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council. Increased funding would allow more species to be saved without sacrificing those that are costly to help, she said.



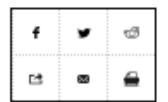
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Supporters of the triage idea prefer the term "strategic prioritization," saying there is a difference between actively deciding to let a species decline and choosing to spend more on those with better chances of recovery. One proponent is Hugh Possingham, an Australian scientist and an architect of the policy in that country. Now the chief scientist for U.S. environmental group The Nature Conservancy, Possingham wants to see similar policies adopted in the United States.

"I'm always amazed that this is a contentious issue. I've had people discuss it with me and end up with a fit," he said. "But the mathematics and the economics of doing the best you can with the resources you have - I don't know why that's contentious at all."



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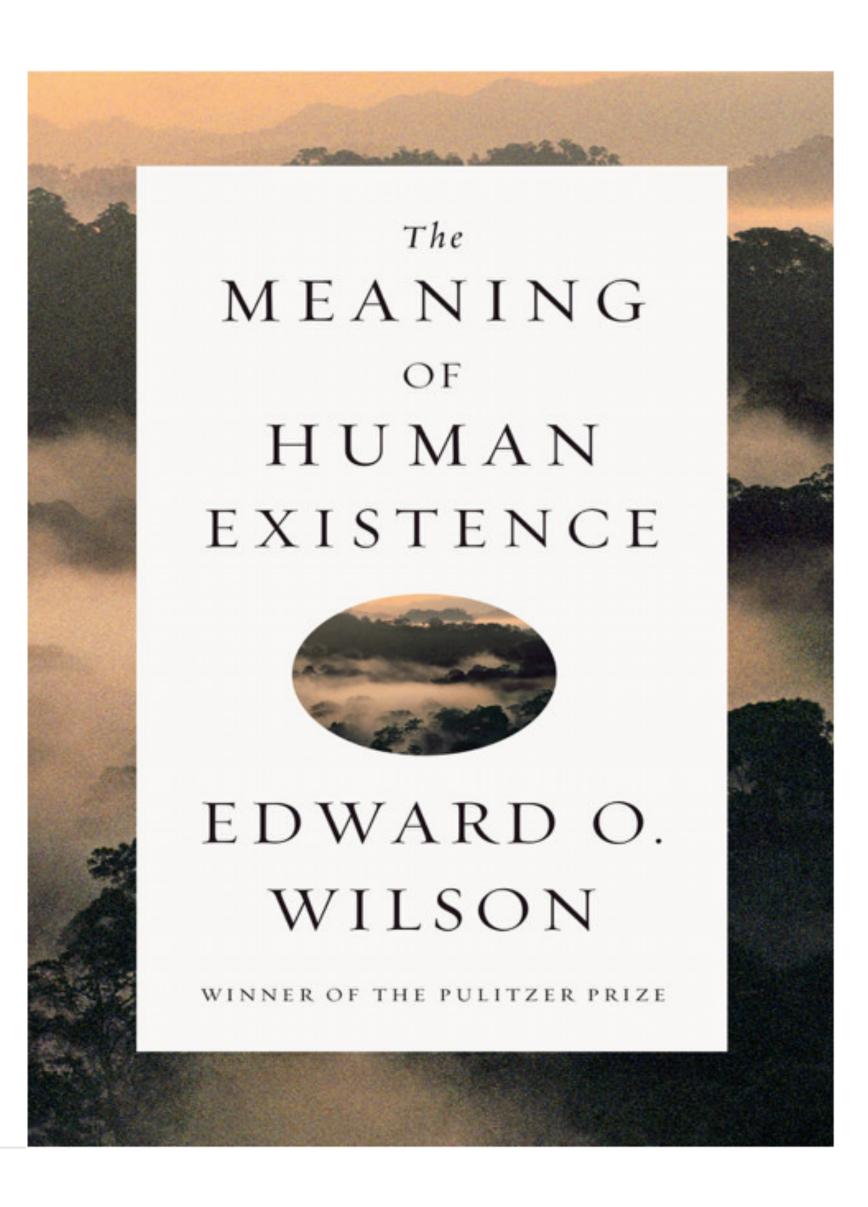


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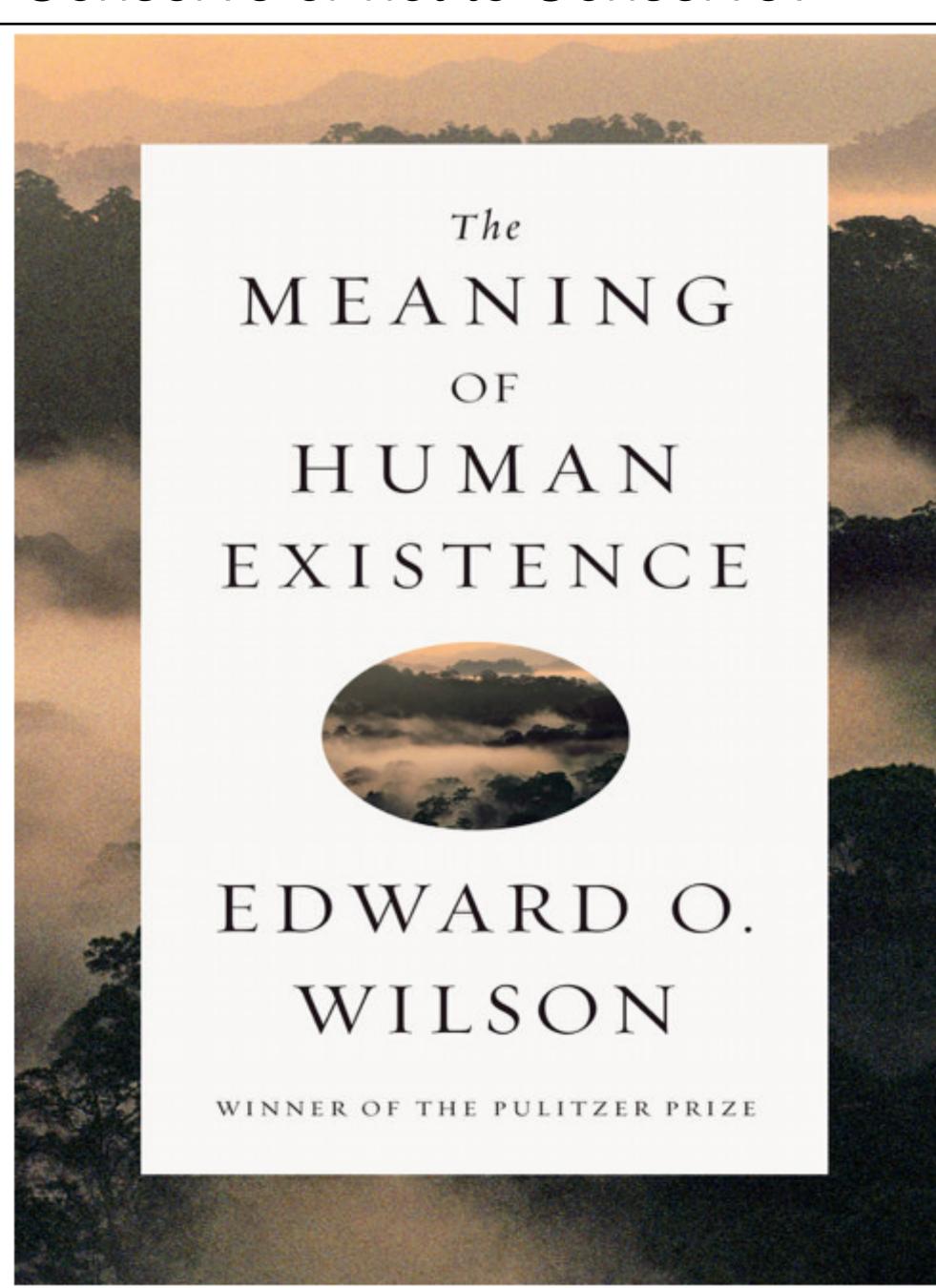
Humanity today is like a waking dreamer, caught between the fantasies of sleep and the chaos of the real world. The mind seeks but cannot find the precise place and hour. We have created a Star Wars civilization, with Stone Age emotions, medieval institutions, and godlike technology. We thrash about. We are terribly confused by the mere fact of our existence, and a danger to ourselves and to the rest of life.

Consciousness, having evolved over millions of years of life-and-death struggle, and moreover because of that struggle, was not designed for self-examination. It was designed for survival and reproduction. Conscious thought is driven by emotion; to the purpose of survival and reproduction, it is ultimately and wholly committed.

We are an evolutionary chimera, living on intelligence steered by the demands of animal instinct. This is the reason we are mindlessly dismantling the biosphere and, with it, our own prospects for permanent existence.

Wilson, Edward O.. The Social Conquest of Earth. Liveright. Kindle Edition.



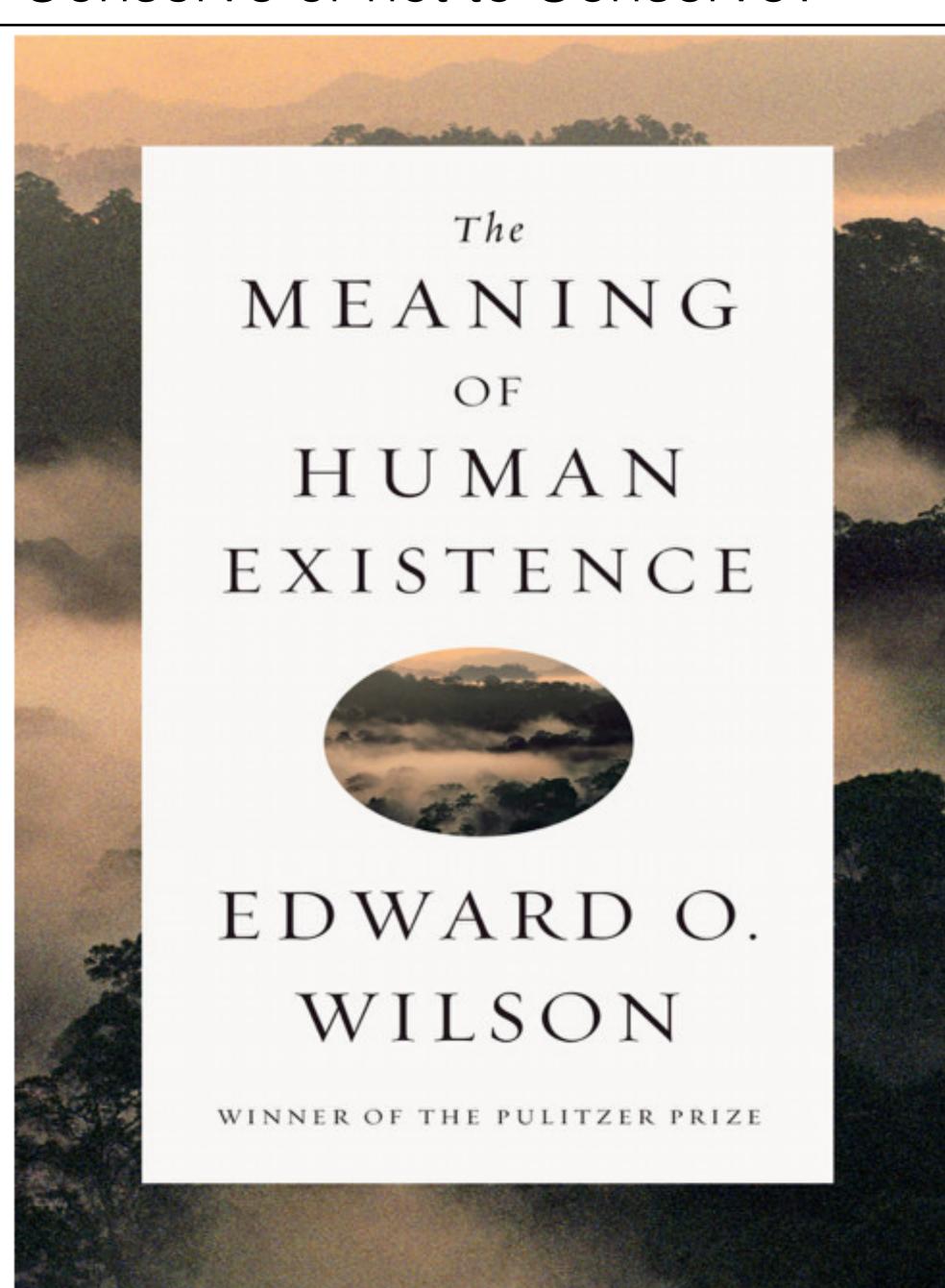


Does humanity have a special place in the Universe?

What is the meaning of our personal lives? I believe that we've learned enough about the Universe and ourselves to ask these questions in an answerable, testable form. With our own eyes we can see through the dark glass, fulfilling Paul's prophecy, "Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Our place and meaning, however, are not being revealed as Paul expected— not at all. **Let's talk about that, let us reason together.**

Wilson, Edward O.. The Meaning of Human Existence (p. 11). Liveright. Kindle Edition.





A spider spinning its web intends, whether conscious of the outcome or not, to catch a fly. That is the meaning of the web. The human brain evolved under the same regimen as the spider's web. Every decision made by a human being has meaning in the first, intentional sense. But the **capacity to decide**, and how and why the capacity came into being, and the consequences that followed, are the broader, science-based meaning of human existence.

Premier among the consequences is the capacity to imagine possible futures, and to plan and choose among them. How wisely we use this uniquely human ability depends on the accuracy of our self-understanding. The question of greatest relevant interest is how and why we are the way we are and, from that, the meaning of our many competing visions of the future.

Wilson, Edward O.. The Meaning of Human Existence (pp. 13-14). Liveright. Kindle Edition.



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Our Planet's Fight for Life

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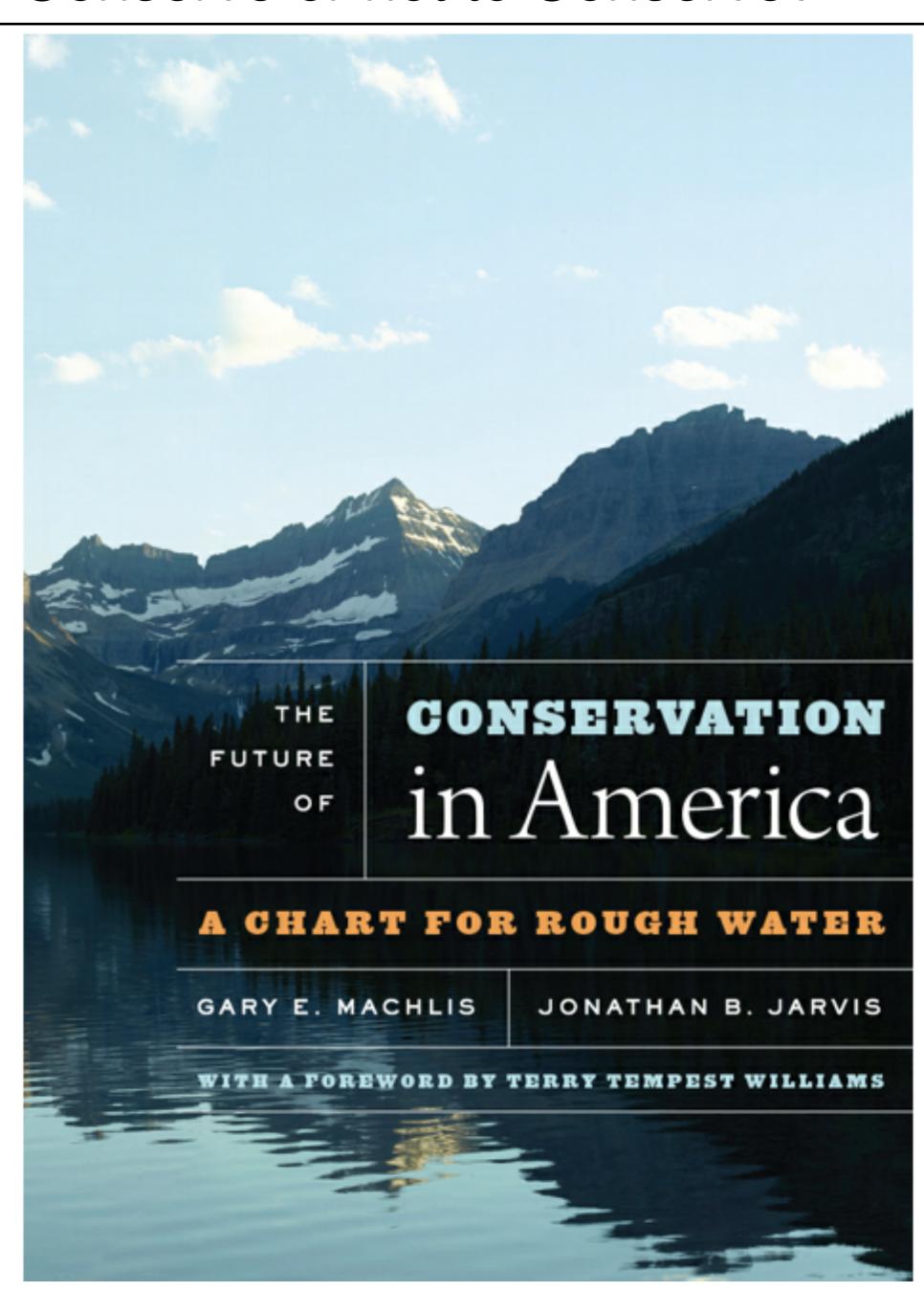
For the first time in history a conviction has developed among those who can actually **think more than a decade ahead that we are playing a global endgame**. **Humanity's grasp on the planet is not strong**. It is growing weaker. Our population is too large for safety and comfort.

Because the problems created by humanity are global and progressive, because the prospect of a point of no return is fast approaching, the problems can't be solved piecemeal.

Meanwhile, we thrash about, appallingly led, with no particular **goal** in mind other than **economic growth, unfettered consumption, good health, and personal happiness**. The impact on the rest of the biosphere is everywhere negative, the environment becoming unstable and less pleasant, our long-term future less certain.

Wilson, Edward O.. Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life. Liveright. Kindle Edition.





"A new and unified vision of conservation is required."

Because conservation decisions have important consequences for resources, people, and communities, they are often contentious and sometimes highly controversial. We believe conservation decisions will be the most defensible, sustainable, strategic, and enduring when they are based on three criteria: the best available sound science, accurate fidelity to the law, and careful consideration of long-term public interest over multiple generations. It is admittedly a lofty standard, especially when merged with strategic intention.

We now know that the paradigm of protection and restoration that has guided management of parks and public for the last fifty years is no longer fully viable in an era of climate change.

Machlis, Gary E.. The Future of Conservation in America: A Chart for Rough Water (Kindle Locations 380-382). University of Chicago Press. Kindle Edition.



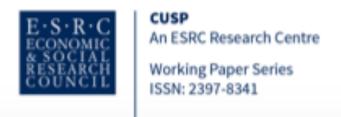


MORAL ECONOMIES OF THE FUTURE

THE UTOPIAN IMPULSE OF SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

William Davies

January 2017



Abstract

The field of 'moral economy' explores the ways in which seemingly amoral economic institutions are normatively and politically instituted. However it has tended to neglect the question of how economic actors make commitments to the long-term future, of the sort that are implied by the idea of 'sustainable prosperity'. Work by Jens Beckert and Elena Esposito has brought a dynamic perspective to economic sociology, and helps pinpoint the precise problem posed by neoliberalism, namely that it seeks to channel all forms of futurity, hope and promise into market-based mechanisms, such as credit, risk, derivatives, business models and so on. This way of instituting 'the future' presents a blockage to all alternative forms of planning, design or imagination, where the latter seek noneconomistic, potentially incalculable forms of long-term commitment (for instance to future generations). Challenging the neoliberal framing of 'the future' requires a rediscovery of the forms of futurity, utopianism and hope that were present in modernism, but now need reinstating in ways that are not predicated on environmental degradation. Anthropocenic utopias are urgently required.





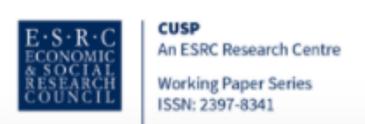
BEYOND CONSUMER CAPITALISM

FOUNDATIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

Tim Jackson

October 2016

A revised version of this working paper is included in Victor, P and B Dolter 2017. Handbook on Growth and Sustainability. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.



Abstract

Consumer capitalism is unsustainable in environmental, social and even in financial terms.

This paper explores the ramifications of the combined crises now faced by the prevailing growth-based model of economics. It traces briefly the evolution of western notions of progress and in particular it critiques the very narrow view of human nature on which these notions were built. A wider and more realistic view of human nature allows us to recover more robust meanings of prosperity and to establish the foundations for a different kind of economy. The paper explores these foundations. It pays a particular attention to the nature of enterprise, the quality of work, the structure of investment and the role of money. It develops the conceptual basis for social innovation in each of these areas, and provides empirical examples of such innovations. The aim is to demonstrate that the transition from an unsustainable consumerism to a sustainable prosperity is a precise, meaningful, definable and pragmatic task.



A NEW PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

Prof Melissa Lane, Princeton University

CUSP Essay Series on the Morality of Sustainable Prosperity | No 1



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Whose job is it to save the planet? Apart from a very few people—the director of Greenpeace International or the French minister who presided over COP 21 (the 21st Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), say—the task is not in anyone's job description. Even those whose jobs involve some kind of responsibility for sustainability may take their professional responsibility to be bounded by, even exhausted by, the current ambitions and commitments of their organization within the field. Yet there is no guarantee that the current configuration of norms, whether for markets, professions, or government regulation, is sufficient to achieve a truly sustainable society. On the contrary.

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Suppose that we understand sustainability as involving self-reinforcing norms over the long term, norms that support development and more generally social and economic activity that 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (to invoke the summary de nition of sustainable development from the 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development led by Gro Harlem Brundtland). 1 The externalities associated with impacts on the long-term future are difficult for economic systems to incorporate, whether market or non-market systems, and even effective governments can struggle to take them fully into account. The pressures of more immediate gains in the short-term are felt by individuals, firms, and governments alike. Then it is as understandable as it is grave that the norms that would govern a truly and sustainably prosperous society—norms that would 'reconsider the meaning of time, investment, futurity and wealth' among other values, as another scholar has observed— are currently largely lacking. To attain a sustainably prosperous society cannot be done by sustaining current understandings of what roles and regulations should be. It will require radical change within them.

Lane, 2017



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»Being a responsible professional, entrusted by society with the privileges of such a role, should involve an orientation to taking initiative in bringing about the future that global society most needs.«

»Sustainability does not by itself answer the question of value; it opens that question and invites debate as to how the values at its heart should be filled in.«

»For a society to be sustainable, it needs to produce the attitudes and ideas that underwrite its continuation.«

»Embedding sustainability goals in appropriate ways into recertification courses, professional meetings, mutual evaluation, and fiduciary duties, would put them on the agenda of widespread social practices and organizations which at best pay them vague lip-service today.«



A NEW PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

Prof Melissa Lane, Princeton University

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»The public good is not an inert thing to be treated as a parameter. It must involve an appropriate attitude of care and concern concern that one's role-specific actions not undermine it but rather, where possible, are compatible with advancing it.« Professionals do not have a monopoly on defining what sustainable prosperity entails.

»But they do have a responsibility to speak up, to initiate and to respond.«

»The broader social vision of sustainable prosperity is one that will require all professionals to consider their responsibility to lean, to push, to initiate, to reshape and to rethink the actions within their power, so as to be so far as possible part of the solution rather than part of the problem.«

Part 2: Project Report - Recommendations