Eco-Commensalism:
Setting the table for what comes after capitalism

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Teach-In +50: End the War on the Planet
Why are we here?

Photo by Alan Glenn

Shadia Fayne Wood/Tar Sands Action

DISTURBED
US. POLICY
HELL
VIET NAM?

Photo by Alan Glenn

END THE WAR AGAINST THE PLANET

TEACH-IN + 50
Mission Accomplished?

**Majority of Americans Think Global Warming Is Happening**
- Slight decline in the number of Americans who think it is not happening.

**Trend: Americans Who Think Global Warming Is Happening Are Growing More Certain; Those Who Do Not Are Becoming Less Certain**

**Do you think global warming is happening?**

*Note: Respondent who either said they "don't know" or who did not answer the question are not included in the chart. As a result, percentages sum to less than 100%.*
Mission Accomplished?

Most Republicans Say They Back Climate Action,

By ROSEDALE VENIT and MARJORIE CONNELLY  JAN. 30, 2015

A view of the Capitol dome from the Capitol Power Plant, a coal-burning plant in Washington. Americans are less likely to vote for candidates who question or deny the science of human-caused global warming, a poll found.

Majority of Republicans Support Regulation of Carbon Dioxide as a Pollutant
- % strongly/somewhat support the policy -

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Question: How much do you support or oppose the following policies - Regulate carbon dioxide (the primary greenhouse gas) as a pollutant?

Base: Americans 18+ who are registered to vote.

Data collected from six tracking studies conducted from March 2012 to October 2014.
Mission Accomplished?

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By DORAL DAVIDPOT and MAJORIE CONNELLY  JAN. 30, 2015

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Matter of Public Will?


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***p<.001
Note: All predictors are scaled to range from 0 to 1. The dependent variable is the policy outcome, coded 1 if the proposed policy change took place within four years of the survey date and 0 if it did not. Predictors are the logits of the imputed percent of respondents at the fiftieth (“average citizens”) or ninetieth (“economic elites”) income percentile that favor the proposed policy change, and the Net Interest-Group Alignment Indices described in the text. Standard errors are asymptotically distribution-free, and all analyses reflect estimated measurement error in the predictors, as described in Appendix 2. N=1,779.
• “The vast majority of our people regard the temporary equilibriums of our society and world as eternally-functional parts...

• ...the message of our society is that there is no viable alternative to the present.”

  • Port Huron Statement
“Worried by his mundane problems which never get solved, but constrained by the common belief that politics is an agonizingly slow accommodation of views, he quits all pretense of bothering...”
Two Explanations

1. We are currently in a system that does not reward [punishes] involvement, decreasing trust
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1. We are currently in a system that does not reward [punishes] involvement, decreasing trust.

2. We are currently in a system that discourages involvement and cooperation by, among other things, theorizing against it!
Economic Man/Homo economicus

• “If one such agent has an unsatiated demand for potato chips, and the cost of one more chip will be to devastate innumerable millions, they simply are not equipped to care.

• And the principle of Pareto optimality shrugs, saying “who are we to judge?””

  • Cosma Shalizi, 2010
It’s just a model… *Isn’t it?*
Eco-commensalism/
Ecommensalism

- The realization that all of humankind is seated “at the same table”, living in the same “household” as all other organisms on earth
Commensalism
Eco- (oikos)

• Ecology –
  – Study of “the household”

• Economics
  – Management of “the household”
Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

1. Humans now exist in a complex multi-scale and *tele-connected* web of social, ecological, economic, and historical relationships and trajectories.
Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

1. Humans now exist in a multi-scale *largely non-market* web of connections

“Pan Left To Soak Now Predates All Current Roommates”

The Onion, 11/24/12
Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

2. The complex, many-variable world (e.g. within climate change) requires social arrangements that are dynamic and adaptable
   – Need subsidiarity/polycentricity: decisions (and decision-making power!) are placed as locally as possible
Polycentricity & Climate Change: An “easier” problem?
3. The ability and tendency of humans to cooperate are idiosyncratic, but pattern-based; they are neither predicted by nor encompassed by prevailing economic theories

– A “grammar” of cooperation?
– The importance of meaning and identity:
  • “Because identity is fundamental to behavior, choice of identity may be the most important ‘economic decision’” people make (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000)
Why are we here?

Photo by Alan Glenn

DISTURBED HELL NO VIET NAM?
COME TO THE TEACH-IN LECTURES - DISCUSSION DIAG RALLY SEMINARS - FILMS FINAL RALLY

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Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

4. Face-to-face interactions cannot (the evidence thus far indicates…) be replaced

“Much of human knowledge (as Polanyi argues) is practical, and cannot be fully articulated (“tacit”).” (Farrell and Shalizi, 2010)

— BUT:

• “Weak ties” & network connections
• Transitive trust
• Capacity-building through rotation?
Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

5. Self- (and communal-) efficacy must be fostered
   – Neoliberal/capitalist narrative of incompetency and “un-deliberation” must be fought
   – New narratives & theories must be supported

Figure 1. Core Relations in Repeated Social Dilemmas

Source: Adapted from Ostrom (2003, p. 50, Figure 2.4) and Ostrom (1997, p. 13, Figure 2.)
Democrats Are More Likely Than Independents or Republicans to Say They Could, Working Together With Like-Minded Others, Influence the Decisions of Government Officials Regarding Global Warming

If people who share your views work together, how much do you think they could influence the decisions of government officials regarding global warming?

The future of Participatory Democracy (or Eco-commensalism...)

Participatory Budgeting

1. Neighborhood Assemblies (Sep-Oct) identify community needs, select delegates

2. Delegate Meetings (Oct-Feb) develop proposals

3. Project Expos (Feb) share proposals and get community feedback

4. Community Vote (March)

5. Implementation & Monitoring of projects

How does PB work in NYC?

Citizens’ Juries
Otro mundo ja chegou...

Another world is already here...