



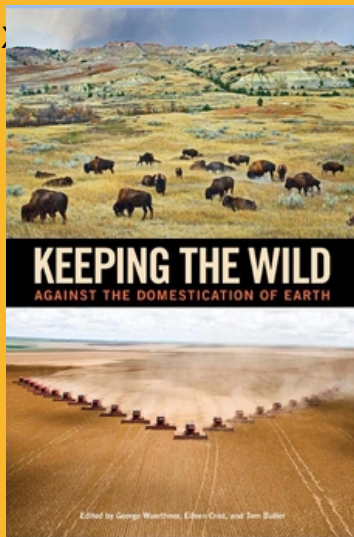
Sustainability, the Animal and the Anthropocene

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Now more than ever



Hettinger in George
Wuerthner, Eileen Crist,
and Tom Butler (eds) 2012



This presentation is a response to Lauren Rickards's and Lesley Head's introduction and their provocative statement: "The implications of the Anthropocene for the environmental sustainability project are contested. Some commentators, including some of its originators, see the concept as a call-to-arms for the environmental movement. But others suggest that it exposes environmental sustainability initiatives as out-dated or out-moded: a hopeless or misguided exercise."

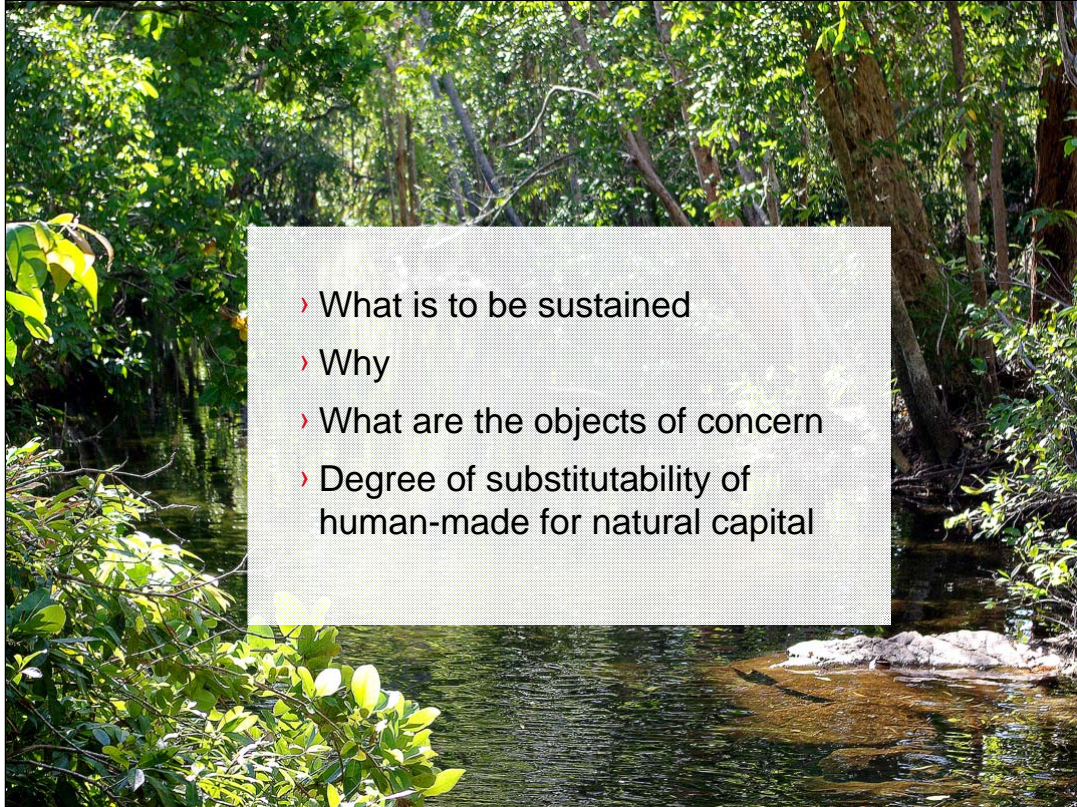
Hettinger is one of those calling to arms: "Valuing Naturalness in the 'Anthropocene': Now More than Ever: "Anthropocene-boosters" support the view that wild nature is no more (or in any case not much worth caring about), that human-caused extinction is acceptable, and that "novel ecosystems" are an adequate replacement for natural landscapes.

"The idea that we now live in "the age of man" has moved well beyond the narrow geological claim that the fossil record thousands of years from now will bear a distinct difference that can be traced to human influence. Defenders of the Anthropocene concept interpret the facts about human influence as justifying much broader, metaphysical and ethical claims about how humans should think of our role on the planet and the human relationship to nature. Our impact, it is argued, is so now pervasive that the traditional environmental ideals of preservation of nature and respect for it are passé.

Their claim of human impact "...is a far cry from the showing that human causal influence on the earth is greater than the combined causal contributions of the nonhuman geological, chemical, physical, and biological forces of the planet. Humans are a fundamental force shaping the planet, but we are one among many."



Imagining our favourite places in the environment, what does environmental sustainability mean to you?



- › What is to be sustained
- › Why
- › What are the objects of concern
- › Degree of substitutability of human-made for natural capital

Every conception of environmental sustainability has to be able to answer these four questions (Dobson 1997).

Conceptions of Environmental Sustainability

	A	B	C	D
What to sustain?	Total capital (human-made and natural)	Critical natural capital: e.g. “ecological processes”	Irreversible natural capital	“units of significance”
Why?	human welfare (material)	human welfare (material and aesthetic)	human welfare (material and aesthetic) and obligations to nature	obligations to nature
Objects of primary concern	Present gen human needs and wants, future gen human needs and wants	Present and future gens human needs, present and future gens human wants	(Present gens human and non-human needs.) (Future gens human and non-human needs.)	(Present gens non-human and human needs), (Future gens non-human and human needs)
secondary conc		Present and future gens non-human needs	Present and future gens human wants	Present and future gens humans wants
Substitutability between human-made and natural capital	Considerable	not between human-made capital and critical natural capital	not between human-made capital and irreversible natural capital	eschews the substitutability debate



Human rights and animal rights

'Rights' to pursue the 'fundamental interests' appropriate for their species (Garlick 2011)

- › No definitive difference in terms of foundation, function and content
- › Part of the same normative project:
 - ensuring minimally decent lives for sentient creatures

Alasdair Cochrane 2013



Humans are included as a matter of rights into every conception of sustainability.

Many have realised that the issue of human rights and animal rights are basically the same. Morally as well as legally.

It seems that a separation is hard to justify.

No definitive difference between human rights and animal rights in terms of foundation, function and content. All sentient creatures have certain fundamental rights – which protect their (sometimes) different interests in a minimally decent life. Animal rights and human rights are part of the same normative project that is: **ensuring minimally decent lives for sentient creatures**. Cochrane, Alasdair. 2013. "Human Rights for Animals (and Animal Rights for Humans)". Melbourne, March 18.

Polity

Subjectivity, selfhood/personhood gives rise to a core of inviolable rights for all, humans and nonhumans alike.



Image: PETA <http://www.peta.org/?s=horse+racing>

To be part of the polity Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011 suggest differentiating rights based on a typology of human-animal relations:

Domesticated

Wild

Liminal



Animals have not been considered part of the polity. So how, at the political level, can animals be included in the democratic process?

Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011 and Abbey 2013: Subjectivity, selfhood/personhood gives all animals a core of inviolable rights – to life against torture, experimentation, imprisonment and enslavement. Rejection of the welfarist and the ecological approach, although these approaches were more successful in gaining popular support. Welfare always means subordination, not more than mainstream common-sense view of how we should treat animals, “letting them be”. ART shortcomings to date: not sufficient attention to the difference of animals, and the kinds of relationships we have with them, and focus on negative rights. Denizen: An individual permanently resident in a foreign country where they enjoy certain rights of citizenship. also used in biology meaning a plant or animal established in a place to which it is not native.

Talk about subjectivity, selfhood, or personhood gives all animals a core of inviolable rights – to life; against torture, experimentation, imprisonment, and enslavement.

Compare discourse in Ecological Citizenship: duties and obligations, and rights and entitlements toward the environment

Justice

Sustainability discourse:

- › **Inter-generational** justice

- › **Intra-generational** justice
 - › **Distributive** justice
= equity or justness of outcome

 - › **Participatory** justice
= **procedural** justice

 - › **Restorative** justice
= dealing with past injustices

 - › **Ecojustice**

Environmental and animal protection discourse:

- › **Intra-generational** justice
between and inter-species

- › **Cognitive** justice



Dimension of justice in sustainability (and in a democracy), see Fredericks 2014, Lele in Sikor 2013,

Cognitive justice: see Garlick 2013



Cognitive Justice

- › Derived from the notion of cognitive justice and the democratisation of knowledge
- › whose and what kind of knowledge is relevant and how can this brought to bear

Cognitive justice as Animal Knowledge Systems (AKS).

(as per Garlick 2013, Thompson 2008)



Significant ethical agency of nonhumans.

“The notion of cognitive justice and the democratisation of knowledge (Visvanathan 1997, 2002, 2009; Santos 2007) is a concept we can use to signify the importance of innate and experiential knowledge of animals in helping understand questions of environmental sustainability. Cognitive justice in wildlife, as an Animal Knowledge System (AKS), is important in enhancing the epistemological rules of empiricism of some sciences in more effectively addressing questions of environmental sustainability.

The kangaroo has significant ethical agency for humans wanting to learn more about restoring environmental integrity (Garlick and Austen 2011, Garlick 2012). The reasons here include their social, affectionate and gentle nature, their ability to range over large areas of the landscape, their vulnerability in limiting environments, the overtness in the expression of their emotions, and the strong anthropocentric instrumentalism and barbarism shown towards them by some scientists and governments.” (Garlick, Steve. 2013)

Conclusions

Vis-à-vis the concept of the Anthropocene the concept of environmental sustainability as in sustainable development appears indeed outdated.

However, an

ecologically oriented, non-speciesist conception of environmental sustainability

is what helps us to advance the discourse and build resilience toward the temptations of the Anthropocene.



Thank you!



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