
Review Essay

The Future Post-Growth Society**Clive L. Spash**

Rob Dietz and Dan O'Neill, *Enough Is Enough: Building a Sustainable Economy in a World of Finite Resources* (Foreword by Herman Daly). New York: Routledge, 2013. 256 pp. £11.99 paperback.

INTRODUCTION

Discontent with the economic system amongst those living in the richest nations has not been as prevalent since the early 1970s. The 2008 financial crash has led to many books that are critical of both the economy and economists. A common retort to critiques is, 'what is your alternative then?', as if there were none. There are many alternatives and an increasingly active research agenda looking at what a society would be like without a growth imperative. Ecological economics is part of the academic move in this direction, despite its continuous struggles with avoiding capture by mainstream economic thought (Spash, 2013).

In ecological economics there is radical grassroots activism (Cattaneo and Martínez López, 2014; Healy et al., 2013), and connection to the post-growth community that includes degrowth/décroissance (Muraca, 2013), along with concepts such as basic income, sufficiency and voluntary simplicity (Alexander, 2013; Kallis, 2011; Paech, 2012). In this mix of post-growth ideas the steady-state economy appears and is sometimes linked with degrowth (Kerschner, 2010). The book *Enough is Enough* by Rob Dietz and Dan O'Neill (hereafter the authors) calls the steady-state economy the ultimate goal of degrowth (p. 53). They present a critical perspective on materialism, population growth, income distribution, debt, measures of well-being, employment, commerce, individual behaviour, the media and unilateralism.

Many academics are themselves open to criticism for attacking modernity while enjoying all its benefits, failing to live an activist's life or refusing privilege. Dietz is trying to put his concerns into practice by living in an

eco-community, and O'Neill is an engaged academic activist. Both are seriously concerned about the environmental crisis facing humanity and what can be done. These two younger academics originating from North America offer a book promising practical ways forward, presented in a non-academic, easy to understand format. *Enough is Enough* has twenty-one endorsements from politically disparate people in the Green and system-critical zeitgeist.¹ This glowing set of endorsements alone would seem to indicate a really ground-breaking work going to the heart of our troubled society and what needs to be done about it.

GROWTH, LIMITS AND THE STEADY-STATE ECONOMY

Modern industrial society has been created on the basis of massive material and energy (especially fossil fuel) throughput. The waste produced is a problem both due to its quantity and qualities. Ecological economics, in its socially aware and critical form (Spash, 2011, 2013), analyses the interactions of the economy with biophysical reality as a fundamental determinant of how human societies operate. This is linked back to energy studies and the laws of thermodynamics (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971; Martinez-Alier, 1990), and shows that the capital-accumulating economies of the world have a growth fixation that is both environmentally devastating and socially undesirable. They are in fact not growing at all, when assessed in terms of standard economic externality theory, due to the level of damages they create (Spash, 2014). The voice of social ecological economists has often been muted by mainstream economic conformity and pragmatic natural scientists, but the radical element remains strong (Spash, 2013).

Enough is Enough builds ideas from those same concerns for a more radical critique and specifically the work of Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen's student, the ecological economist, Herman Daly. He has been promoting the steady-state economy for over forty years (Daly, 1972, 1973). However, attributing the term to him (p. 45) is factually incorrect, as it was already discussed by Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill (pp. 202–3). The authors rely heavily on Daly's work and his concern for the scale of economic activity relative to biophysical reality; even though this neglects pollutant quality issues (e.g. toxic waste, radiation). Scale emphasizes 'carrying capacity', 'environmental space', 'limits' and 'thresholds'.

An interesting aspect of carrying capacity, which is not discussed in *Enough is Enough*, concerns the political ramifications and its potentially

1. Those people include (on the back cover) Noam Chomsky, Kate Pickett and Jonathon Porritt, (inside) James Speth, Doug Tompkins, Caroline Lucas, John de Graaf, Robert Costanza, Thom Hartmann, Kathleen Dean Moore, William Rees, Michael Shuman, Richard Heinberg, Gar Aleprovitz, Paul Ehrlich, Molly Scott Cato, Marq de Villiers, Frederick Kirschenmann, Peter Victor, Jerry Mander, Richard Lamm and a foreword by Herman Daly.

very unsavoury aspects. Herman Daly, Robert Costanza and William Rees are all endorsers of this book and all have also endorsed an organization called the Carrying Capacity Network (CCN). Until 2013, when Daly resigned, all were on the board. The CCN website proposes the USA close its borders — not to trade, resources or energy, but to immigrants, who are blamed for what ails America today, including crime and HIV/AIDs. As Muradian (2006: 210) has documented, investigating other board members ‘reveals the links between the CCN and white supremacist and openly racist organizations’. Daly, to his credit, finally removed his name from the board after concern was repeatedly raised by some ecological economists, but Costanza and Rees have refused discussion and remain. What this reveals is the highly contentious politics of the steady-state. *Enough is Enough* discusses resource extraction, consumerism, population, inequity, employment and corporations. Yet, the presentation is often very brief with simplistic messages following relatively long personal anecdotes about the United States of America (USA).

Immigration falls under population stabilization. The authors talk approvingly of USA immigration laws, without any mention of issues along the Mexican border. They want humanitarian enforcement and non-coercive population control, which means ‘education’. Their rich country population stabilization fails to account for the impact of say one more American vs. African. The statement that: ‘The global household is consuming too much stuff’ (p. 68) is misleading because only some are doing so. That the USA is swamped by more than enough consumer goods is exemplified by the growth of self-storage of unwanted stuff now totalling 78 square miles and growing (pp. 60–61). Rather than closing borders, land-rich North America could open up and share their excessive accumulated wealth.

On the most basic level, many people can be said to not have enough, and the global North too much. The materially poor might say ‘wow what a hard time those Americans are having with the burden of too much stuff; tough life, guys’. This would, of course, belittle the seriousness of the problems being raised concerning the impacts of this consumption both environmentally and socially — the psychological sickness inherent in hedonism and materialism, the meaningless lives going nowhere, and the physical realization of this in violence, suicides, drug abuse and eating disorders.

The authors link such health issues to income inequality (p. 90) and recommend redistribution policy. Rather than high tax rate policies, their ‘solutions’ are maximum pay differentials set by employers, employee ownership and cooperatives, and improved gender balance (p. 95). Education, in which they place an excessive faith, is again key. This also appears naïve, for example, believing ‘Corporate board members who understood equality would refrain from authorizing oversized salaries and bonuses’ (p. 97). Here, and throughout, focusing on the USA distracts from international issues; that

is, aid dependency, overriding national democracy, imperialism, military aid and developmentalism.

DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

The authors expect all nations to achieve a steady-state through growth. A major problem for steady-state advocates is how to decide where to set the resting point; that is, the ideal target economy to maintain but not grow. *Enough is Enough* employs a four segment diagram which classifies nations by the size of their economy (given no specific meaning) and the scale of resource use (in some undefined biophysical terms). This apparently ‘provides a map for nations to follow towards a fair and sustainable economy’, although the authors recognize they are lacking ‘rigorous and reliable indicators’ (p. 186).

How does this fit with the reference to degrowth? In their presentation of an ‘optimal steady-state’ the authors want to ‘show which countries should pursue degrowth, which countries should still aim for economic growth, and which countries are closing in on a steady-state economy’ (p. 184). ‘Stabilization and even degrowth of these [rich] economies will free up ecological space to allow poor countries to expand their economies and realize the benefits of growth’ (p. 189). The concept ‘optimal scale’ means growth is necessary to reach the undefined steady-state. Thus, development is growth.

This appears in total contradiction of the authors’ argument rejecting growth for addressing poverty and inequality and criticizing mainstream economics for imposing growth as the solution (p. 182). The text bemoans substitution of growth for broader development goals and a needs approach. ‘Unfortunately, the mainstream view of growth and development has blocked other ideas from materializing on the global policy agenda’ (p. 181).

Contrast that with a guiding steady-state principle of ‘sustainable scale’ defined early on in very traditional economic terms: ‘The economy should grow only if the benefits of growth (e.g. more income, more consumer products) exceed the costs (e.g. climate change, species extinctions)’ (p. 46). A fall back into mainstream orthodoxy is evident with optimal trade-offs and claims that all nations should and could internalize environmental and social costs (p. 187). This is not even feasible for single pollutants such as carbon emissions (Spash, 2002, 2007, 2014). Throwing in a mix of footprint and social measures does not help. Core issues of incommensurability and strong uncertainty are absent. The quandary over whether nations like China and India are ‘optimal’ remains and is unanswerable; the problem framing is simply wrong. Policy recommendations then stand as isolated arguments disconnected from any formal steady-state theory; they are just good things to do.

Enough is Enough offers lists of ‘solutions’ for the rich nations (e.g. USA) to avoid growth while promoting growth for developing countries. Like Tim Jackson’s popular book *Prosperity without Growth*, the authors get caught in the contradiction of presenting a major critique of the current capital-accumulating system and then stating it is required for ‘development’ (Jackson, 2009: 175, 41). The common message here is that ‘prosperity without growth’ requires growth first. This is reminiscent of the discredited environmental Kuznets curve — destroy to create and repair later — something the authors themselves criticize (p. 182).

The substantive aim is not actually growth, but what it promises. Such post-growth literature documents how, in reality, growth quickly becomes a dominant end in itself and its failures are ignored, while much is attributed to it without good reason. Direct routes to address poverty are required, and such routes should devolve power to the poor rather than recommend a traditional top-down growth model. The shifting of rural populations with non-monetary economies to urban poverty and pollution, but with money incomes, should not be seen as progress, which it often unfortunately is in the simplistic statistics of media coverage and targets of World Bank reports and press releases. One alternative is working, in all global communities, with the needs and satisfiers of Max-Neef (2009). Whatever the approach, the post-growth community should avoid the contradiction of criticizing growth on one hand and recommending it on the other.

POWER, CORPORATIONS, TRADE AND IMPERIALISM

There is a very good and simple table conveying corporate power; this ranks nations by GDP and corporations by revenues, revealing forty-eight corporations in the top 100. What do the authors draw from this? They state: ‘Without judging the prudence of allowing corporations to control wealth on the scale of a nation, we can say that these companies have been spectacularly successful at growing revenues and concentrating power’ (p. 142). In a book full of judgement, why back off here?

The authors recognize corporate power is problematic but prefer to discuss ‘alternative business models’. The blind faith in a happy future is encapsulated in the statement that: ‘With leaders in both public and private sectors working together to overhaul the way business is done, positive changes will emerge. . . . Some inspiring businesses are already doing these things, even in resource extracting industries’ (p. 152). One forest company in the USA is cited without any operational details.

The role of corporate influence on government is largely absent. There is brief mention of a problem with campaign funding in the USA (p. 152), but nothing on regulatory capture. The analysis by Galbraith (2007 [1967]) of American society is missing. Yet, the connections between the

technostructure of corporations and the regulator are increasingly important as a threat to democracy (e.g. fracking; see Bridge, 2012). Galbraith's concern over private affluence and public squalor would also have fitted well within the text.

The authors might be averse to mentioning Karl Marx, or perhaps even socialist work by John Stuart Mill (1994 [1879]), despite the latter's liberal politics and advocacy of the steady-state economy. They might yet have considered World War II General and Republican President Dwight Eisenhower's farewell address to the nation:

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defence with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.²

This stark warning about the USA has gone largely unheeded. Yesterday the cold war, the destabilization of countries in South America, the war on drugs, and today resource wars, war on terror and posturing of Christians against Muslims.

When this book turns its attention to the international scene (Chapter 14), there is some criticism of land grabs in Africa and the 'convoluted web of international trade' (p. 183), but scant analysis. In fact, elsewhere the role of trade in human societies is presented as some kind of natural evolution that gave Neanderthals a competitive advantage (p. 35). Sole support for this spurious claim is a modelling paper by three mainstream economists. This appears as nothing more than neoliberal social Darwinism. Susceptibility to mainstream economic ideas is also evident in the requirement that all nations internalize the environmental and social costs of production in order to have permission to trade (p. 187). There is no mention of how to achieve this, perhaps because it is impossible (see Spash, 2014).

There appears a totally unexplained call for democratic reform of the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization (p. 189). How? Why? Why these organizations? Is the UN like the others? What of control and influence over these organizations by the USA? There are no answers because there is no institutional or political theory or analysis, and no discussion.

Instead the authors (pp. 190–91) turn to attacking Adam Smith for 'immoral' recommendations, citing a rather mild paragraph on colonization from 1776. This shows little understanding for historical context. Smith argued for enlightened humanitarianism in an age dominated by dictators

2. Farewell address by US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 17 January 1961; Final TV Talk 17/1/61 (1), Box 38, Speech Series, Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, 1953–61, Eisenhower Library, National Archives and Records Administration.

and the dogmatic power of the Church. If Americans want to look for past colonial immorality they might try their forefathers' extermination of Native Americans; the USA is a nation in denial of its foundation on genocide and human atrocities (see Brown, 1970). The poor scholarship here is evidenced by a standard mainstream economic caricature of 'Smith's prescriptions' as nothing but self-interest and wealth (for more informed accounts see Fitzgibbons, 1995; Sen, 1987). The authors should read *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith, 1982 [1759]), a major work in ethics that went through six editions in Smith's lifetime, was a best seller then, and is generally ignored now. Free-market economists who are aware of the moral work by Smith dismiss it because he places the market and human behaviour in an ethical context they dislike, but most are just ignorant of what Smith wrote; sadly these authors are no different.

Rather than a futile and ill-informed attack on Smith, the authors should have given the reader an account of imperialism, resource extraction, its links to trade, free-market capitalism and consumerism. The capital-accumulating growth economy involves what Brand and Wissen (2013: 699) term the 'imperial mode of living'. Ecological crises have been caused by the spread of production and consumption patterns that fundamentally rely on unlimited access to resources, space, labour power and sinks, which implies a globally unequal appropriation of Nature. Hence the land grabs the authors note. Resource extraction is maintained through exclusive access guaranteed by contract or through open violence. Cost-shifting activities, as Kapp (1978) more accurately termed externalities, push damages onto others. This is the global North's imperial mode of living.

The imperial mode of living is deeply rooted in the growth economy through its exploitative definitions of Society–Nature relationships, everyday practices, institutions and portrayal of material hedonism as an attractive life style. The global North has been able to shift social and ecological costs onto others in order to maintain its imperial mode of development and avoid or ameliorate the worst consequences. However, times have changed as countries of the global South have increasingly claimed their share of global resources and 'environmental space' (Spash, 2014). Little of this geopolitical situation, or the challenges it poses for societal transformation, is conveyed in *Enough is Enough*.

GREEN CAPITALISM, NEOLIBERALISM AND CLASSIC LIBERALISM

At various points the text reads as an apologia for American capitalism. Evidence for this comes from the contradictory attacks on and then support for basic structures of a capital-accumulating growth economy and its neoliberal variant.

Chapter 8, on debt, is built around the anecdotal story of John Fullerton, highflyer at J.P. Morgan, who has an epiphany and reforms himself into a

sustainability entrepreneur. Mr Fullerton has established a venture called the Capital Institute, but there is no detail; rather the reader is led to believe this is a good thing whatever it does. Going to the organization's website reveals a board including Graciela Chichilnisky, a mainstream neoclassical economist and carbon emission trading promoter, and Hunter Lovins, President of Natural Capitalism Solutions, amongst numerous bankers and financiers. Also on the website is this statement:

Many members of the Capital Institute community believe that the emerging markets for ecosystem services hold considerable promise as tools for redirecting the flow of capital toward economic activities that honor ecosystem constraints. [...] We also hold the view that enlightened capitalists, through their collective actions, can lead the way to a more just, resilient, and sustainable economic system, even ahead of enabling public policy'. (Toben, 2012)

The enlightened capitalists, bankers and financiers aspire to replacing the philosopher king. The basic idea is to use high finance to create a new Green Capitalism. Elsewhere, the authors' 'new vision for investment' includes wealthy nations offering financial incentives in exchange for land managers providing 'some sort of ecological service' (p. 67). This is necessary because 'existing protected areas aren't getting the job done' (p. 67). Could that have something to do with developers and multi nationals running wild under decades of neoliberalism and deregulation that has also put financiers in a central power role?

At one point the authors offer a critical reflection on such international investment in exploiting Africa (p. 181). They cite promises of 25 per cent returns being intermingled with claims about sustainable farming practices, job creation and feeding hungry locals as a green-washing exercise. Interestingly, a quick search online finds Mr Fullerton's portfolio includes sustainable agriculture in Africa.

The structure of capitalism is changing as is explained by the 2012 Forum issue of *Development and Change* on the neoliberalization of nature (Arsel and Büscher, 2012). The Capital Institute appears to fit well within the philanthro-capitalist genre (Holmes, 2012). Such literature recognizes that accumulation is necessary before the billionaires can condescend to allow redistribution under their control to the projects they deem worthy. Win-win for them, they get to look good, get moral authority, keep their wealth and promote new forms of capital accumulation while governing society.

Some digging around, and removing layers of 'enough' rhetoric, reveals an American liberal politics below the surface of *Enough is Enough*. This is most obvious with respect to the concern over 'coercion'. On population they want 'the right number of people without being coercive' (p. 79). They state that 'Noncoercion is necessary to put aside fear about trampling people's rights' (p. 83). Concepts like individual freedom and autonomy also appear at key points. When discussing permit trading 'the idea is to give permit holders as much autonomy as possible' (p. 65). They ignore all the problems

of emissions trading (see Spash, 2010; and references in Spash, 2014). The authors assert:

The challenge is to enact policies that reduce throughput with minimal impingement on personal freedom. (pp. 63–64)

Bans and rationing . . . are on the coercive end of the spectrum. With an eye to less coercive means, Herman Daly and other economists have proposed a tradable permit system as an efficient method of limiting throughput. (p. 64)

Success will likely require a combination of both direct and indirect policies, which may impinge on personal freedom to some degree. (p. 68)

That last sentence is so heavily understated it is almost unbelievable. This is, after all, a book calling on restricting advertising, capping the income of the rich, deconstructing the workplace to allow worker ownership, demanding revolutionary changes in human values and confronting the power of corporations. Square that circle with non-coercion.

As Easterlin (2003: 11182) notes: ‘The reason preferences are excluded from policy consideration by mainstream economics is because each individual is assumed to be the best judge of his or her own interests’. His work, like *Enough is Enough*, claims individuals get things systematically wrong to their own (and others’) detriment. In criticizing paternalism, liberals such as John Stuart Mill oppose coercion even when people make choices that prevent them achieving what they want. However, Mill’s work *On Liberty* did not argue that whatever people choose is automatically good for them. Therein lies a problem, because the authors want to change those choices on the basis they are bad ones, but their apparent liberalism prevents using coercion. This seems impossible.

VOLITIONAL POWER: INCREMENTAL CHANGE OR REVOLUTION?

Policy change is said to require ‘an incremental approach’ to ‘allow space for people to alter their behaviour and restructure economic institutions’ (p. 69). How much space is not specified. In fact this book contains a strange and contradictory rhetoric. Consider the following statements (pp. 161–62):

it’s going to take a revolutionary change in values to overcome the prevailing orthodoxy. . . . Successfully fighting these forces will require a sustained and coordinated effort to curtail the power of large corporations and the media, both of which exercise substantial influence over people’s lives But bankers, advertisers, and manufacturers are simply responding to consumer demand So perhaps the shift needs to originate from people’s personal values, and a grassroots rejection of . . . mindless consumption.

Has this text been written by two different people? One minute there is a fight against corporate power and the next consumers are sovereign in the market place. The belief in volitional power is actually evident throughout. Every chapter from 5 through 14 repeats the same structure with the subtitles: ‘what are we doing?’, ‘what could we do instead?’, ‘where do we go from

here?'. Who is this 'we'? As the book is preoccupied with the consumerist rich societies and their excessive materialist lifestyles the 'we' probably excludes most of the world's population of whom approximately 80 per cent live on less than US\$ 10 a day, and are already in a resistance struggle for control over their lives.

The revolutionary volitional changes are then expected from those benefiting most from the exploitative system of growth. This includes the major industrialized nations denying action on greenhouse gas emissions reduction (e.g. Canada, USA, Australia), Europe and for good luck throw in the BRIC's new millions of middle class, and hundreds of super-rich. Those who now enjoy convenience lifestyles, world travel, home comforts, cars, twenty-four-hour electronic entertainment, and so on. The authors cite a survey that 88 per cent of people in Oregon State agreed the USA would be better-off if less were consumed. 'It will be a challenge to convince entrenched, pro-growth elites to accept needed changes, but maybe the 88 Percent can tackle the challenge' (p. 70). Nice for the enlightened citizens of Oregon, but what about the rest of the world? What if the majority do not want to change despite their destructive habits, personal health problems and cost-shifting of harm onto others, including their own descendants?

The authors place emphasis on voluntary buy-in to major transformation mainly through 'education'. This favourite is recommended to address population growth, inequality, debt and better metrics than GDP. It covers a variety of things from information transfer to schooling to changing preferences and norms. Who controls this 'education' programme, the steady-state fraternity, a technocracy?

Bottom-up citizen power is called upon for changing the workplace where the promise is less work, job sharing and more leisure. Unfortunately, getting rid of low entropy material and energy throughput implies less capital and high-tech, reducing productivity, creating more work done more slowly. A move away from Fordism might result in more meaningful jobs (although the authors praise Ford's factory system, p. 142). Reducing consumption might balance lower productivity, but in order for there to be less work to do additional reductions in consumption on top of this would be necessary. Clearly the authors seek carrots for volitional buy-in.

The Catch-22 is an expectation that individuals need to change for the system to change but for the individuals to change the system needs to change. The authors' appeal is for individuals to change first and for this to escalate to a mass uprising (p. 175). This parallels the opening of Chapter 7 of George Orwell's *1984*:

If there was hope, it *must* lie in the proles, because only there, in those swarming disregarded masses, 85 per cent of the population of Oceania, could the force to destroy the Party ever be generated. [...] if only they could somehow become conscious of their own strength. . . They needed only to rise up and shake themselves like a horse shaking off flies. If they chose they could blow the Party to pieces to-morrow morning. Surely sooner or later it must occur to them to do it? And yet--! (Orwell 1975 [1949]: 59)

There is no theory behind *Enough is Enough* as to the causal powers behind the structure of the social and economic system. There are many elements of what might be wrong and what might be done, but these become lists and appear as random barriers and good things to do in response, rather than a thesis.

That people remain silent is because they have bought into the consumerist lifestyle and this has become part of their own identity; that dependency is both a psychological and social phenomenon. For example, recommending product durability is a technical fix that fails in a world of fashion-conscious throwaway consumerism. Marketing and advertising to change people's preferences and manipulate them to join into dependency relationships is currently totally legitimate for corporations, but (outside elections) if governments run anything similar, this is propaganda.

In breaking through the silence, hope is placed on rebranding steady-state ideas, trying to get debate and activating academics as a steady-state fraternity (pp. 171–75). Not wanting to be branded as 'communists' (p. 199) despite wanting communitarian solutions, or 'state socialists' (p. 196) despite wanting social organization in production, the authors (p. 162) prefer to advocate using the same marketing that they tell us is used by Coca-Cola and McDonalds! The steady-state can be sold like tooth-whitener (p. 172).

GOVERNMENT AND PLANNING

The authors dislike mentioning the necessary role of central government, and in fact government and planning at all levels. Early on in the book, the issue of public ownership (i.e. nationalization) of industry is dismissed in three sentences along with the need to address capitalism (which I found only mentioned twice in the entire book). The authors deride any discussion because 'debates have largely regressed to shouting matches about merits and drawbacks of capitalism' (p. 52). What a ridiculous argument! They might as well ignore population, growth vs. environment or any number of heated debates.

They reject without mention the benefits of nationalization of key industries and services and how effective nationalized industries have been in the past. That is, before the cowboy and the chemist (Regan and Thatcher) began the destruction of a more communitarian and social society. They ignore the insanity of spending billions on bailouts and then pretending the system is some competitive, efficient, free-market economy that needs no government. Those public billions should have bought public ownership.

Government is given the role of aiding good business via behavioural incentives using taxes, subsidies and metrics. This is not quite the same position as neoliberal and neo-Austrian economists, but neither is it very progressive. This bias against state intervention is not discussed or explained. That is a major gap when considering societal change. For example, governments

retain ownership of 70 per cent of oil and gas reserves, and operate half the world's power generating capacity (International Energy Agency, 2014: 4).

Economists have long recognized the need for government and a range of goods and services that could be best supplied by the public sector to stop the waste of economic competition. Yes, waste not efficiency. Unnecessary duplication, false product differentiation to create artificial choices, pricing policies to extract as much rent as possible and over complicate the simplest purchase (e.g. buying a train ticket or making a phone call). Natural monopolies, when put into private hands, transfer rent, and so does privatized resource extraction, which is why all those oil companies appear in the book's most wealthy (pp. 144–45).

The fundamental lie in neoclassical economics textbooks is that the market allocates resources efficiently through the price system. Once all the 'externalities' are enumerated, the system can quickly be seen to be a total failure and every price in the economy as in need of change. Taking social costs into account means advocating a planned economy, not some Green Capitalism.

In fact, a planned system is what is being discussed without discussion. Just as the demise of capitalism is being planned here without a plan and the pretence that nothing of the sort is in hand. What any transformation will need is open discussion of these key issues and how a stable and civil society can be maintained and better participatory governance achieved because our democracies are failing us.

The move towards neoliberal market mechanisms as new forms of governance is a major problem not a solution. What higher form of deception could you request than enlightened Green Capitalists doing favours for the proles while improving their personal bank balance and smoothing over the corporate image? This is not to deny problems with government planning, but neither should the undemocratic planning structures of corporations, working on the scale of nations, be ignored.

The authors want to brush this aside with a false dichotomy and claims of extremism: 'It's long past time to acknowledge that we have many options besides the extremes of state socialism and private capitalism' (p. 196). Yet, while institutions of state socialism, or any variants thereof, get no mention, private capitalism is repeatedly promoted from Henry Ford to the new business models to the investors of Capital Institute and their natural capitalist supporters. At the same time nation states are described as needing to negotiate national growth rates in the transition to the steady-state and attributed the power to set biophysical constraints as top-down limits. Then again, 'A steady-state economy includes a strong role for markets, but it is crucially important to recognize where markets work and where they don't, and to deploy the power of markets appropriately' (p. 47). Who decides what is appropriate?

There is perhaps no surprise in the contradictions and failures here. Herman Daly's thesis is that the economic system should be left alone to

pursue efficiency and that it can do so. He wants redistribution on the grounds of fairness and that is also consistent with maintaining standard economics. The serious point of departure (as far as economists think) is enforcing limits due to biophysical resource constraints. Daly has never addressed the contradiction of maintaining the institutions of a capital-accumulating social and economic structure while deconstructing the central supports of economic growth, namely energy and material throughput and resource exploitation. Indeed, Daly (2010) has confirmed his 'preference for the market over centralised planning' and faith in 'ecologically and socially constrained markets' as the best means for achieving allocative efficiency. He has long been an advocate for tradable permits markets, even for the allocation of rights to give birth (Daly, 1974).

CONCLUSIONS

Enough is Enough has been heavily marketed and endorsed as a path-breaking and important book. However, I doubt that any of those endorsing the book have actually read it from cover to cover, and if they have, then their endorsements are even more bewildering. In an attempt to be populist, the analysis is often superficial, contentious issues are stated as facts, and recommendations based on anecdotal evidence are overblown as solutions. There is much wishful thinking and that would be fine if described as visions or scenarios, or hopes, but not as a realistic, practical action plan. *Enough is Enough* offers an eclectic mix of stand-alone options disconnected from any formal steady-state theory. Here you can find everything from Green Capitalism to local communitarianism, from State-planned optimality to individual autonomy. Something for everyone.

The text tries to persuade using simple examples that lack depth but from which broad generalizations are drawn or implied (an unscientific type of naïve induction); telling stories about how one person did this or that, so the whole of society can learn from their experience. This is also a very strong advocacy of the power of the individual in society and the undercurrent of a classic liberal position seems to run throughout the text. Indeed, structural issues are not discussed. The repeated 'solution' is individual action or working to change the individual's values through education, including marketing, as supposedly non-coercive.

As the USA is a major imperialist power, pushing consumerism and growth around the world, maybe the strong focus there could have been justified. However, this is not a book that questions the imperial power of the USA. The book skirts around or avoids completely power, politics, imperialism, the military-industrial complex, regulatory capture, planning, the role of the State, legal regulation and participatory governance. There is little, if anything, in this book that explains or examines these topics, let alone offers ways forward on any of them.

Post-growth studies are important and essential. The current social, ecological and economic relationships cannot last. The capital-accumulating elite and their political supporters are already moving to the Green Growth agenda, and beyond that the financiers are creating Green Capitalism. Both attempt to salvage and maintain a socially and environmentally exploitative system for the benefit of a minority.

The authors are right to highlight many difficult and central problems. They are brave to try to communicate this in a personal, open and simple style. However, that does not relieve them of a duty to be rigorous in their analysis or permit off-hand dismissal of core debates and ideas. I fear if such loosely grounded attempts at populist communication abound then the content will be thin and recommendations misleading. Post-growth, like sustainability before it, will then be another servant of powerful vested interest groups and fail in its mission to help the transformation to a more caring, just and fairer society.

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@article{Spash2015TheFP, title={The Future Post-Growth Society}, author={Clive L. Spash}, journal={Development and Change}, year={2015}, volume={46}, pages={366-380} }. There are many alternatives and an increasingly active research agenda looking at what a society would be like without a growth imperative. Ecological economics is part of the CONTINUE READING. PDF | Society is increasingly digitalised and connected, with computers and algorithms mediating much of people's daily activity in one way or another. | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. Accepted Manuscript. Title: GRASPING THE FUTURE OF THE DIGITAL. SOCIETY. Authors: Tomi Dufva, Mikko Dufva. extreme: We are doubling down on the industrial age mandate of growth above all. (Rushkoff, 2016). However, from the futures standpoint, one could see the disruption as an open.