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# **DOES DEMOCRACY REALLY LEAD TO SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION FOR BETTER LIFE?**

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## **Abstract**

Does democracy really lead to sustainable innovation for better life that many in this day and age of democracy would like us to believe? Contrary to the conventional wisdom, democracy is no more conducive to sustainable innovation for better life than innovation is necessarily sustainable in the long run. There are the dark sides of innovation, creativity, and democracy which are yet to be realistically understood.

*Keywords*—creativity; innovation; sustainability; democracy

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## Introduction: A Fashionable Nonsense

Does democracy really lead to sustainable innovation for better life that many in this day and age of democracy would like us to believe?

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, democracy is no more conducive to sustainable innovation for better life than innovation is necessarily sustainable in the long run. There are the dark sides of innovation, creativity, and democracy which are yet to be realistically understood.

This inquiry then requires an examination of three issues, namely, (1) creativity and innovation, (2) innovation and sustainability, and (3) sustainable innovation and democracy—in what follows, in that order.

### 1. Creativity and Innovation

The issue of creativity and innovation contains two sub-issues, namely, (1.1) creativity and (1.2) innovation.

#### 1.1. Creativity

In my book titled *The Future of Post-Human Creative Thinking: A Preface to a New Theory of Invention and Innovation* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), I defined “creativity” in relation to “the faculties of imagination and intuition, which make creative thinking possible in the first place. After all, what is creative has much to do with the ability to think 'analogously' (as in imagination) or 'intuitively' (as in intuition), just to cite two instances (as there are others too, of course). (S. Harnad 2008) In this sense, what is creative is not about the ability to think logically (as in deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning), or, for that matter, to learn by rote memory or to imitate blindly, for instance. (S. Harnad 2008)”

As I wrote, “‘creativity,’ in one formal definition, refers to 'the act of producing new ideas,' or, in another one, 'a mental process involving the generation of new ideas or concepts, or new associations of the creative mind between existing ideas or concepts.' (WK 2008)”

#### 1.2. Innovation

Innovation, on the other hand, as defined in my book on creative thinking as cited above, refers to “‘the process of both generating and applying such creative ideas in some specific context.’ (WK 2008) For instance, '[i]n economics the change must increase value, customer value, or producer value. The goal of innovation is positive change, to make someone or something better. Innovation leading to increased productivity is the fundamental source of increasing wealth in an economy.’ (WK 2008d)”

### 2. Innovation and Sustainability

In order to understand whether or not, or to what extent, innovation as defined above is sustainable, it is important to define what “sustainability” is supposed to mean.

In my book titled *The Future of Post-Human Urban Planning: A Preface to a New Theory of Density, Void, and Sustainability* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), I defined “sustainability” on the basis of “‘a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged' over time. (WMD 2008b) In the technical jargons of economics, for instance, sustainability strives for 'optimization' (for the first best solution, or something close to it), not just 'maximization' (for the second best solution, or something close to it, without dealing with, say, negative externalities like environmental pollution).”

But “sustainability” is hard to achieve, because of different challenges, and two most serious ones are (2.1) “sub-optimality” and (2.2) “complexity,” as explained below.

#### 2.1. Sub-Optimality

The first problem of sustainability is about “sub-optimality.”

In my book on sustainability as cited above, Herbert Simon had criticized the talk of “optimality,” as “he opted instead for 'bounded rationality,' in that 'satisficing... is a decision-making strategy which attempts to meet criteria for adequacy, rather than to identify an optimal solution,' and the reason is that 'human beings lack the cognitive resources' to optimize, since 'we usually do not know the relevant probabilities of outcomes, we can rarely evaluate all outcomes with sufficient precision, and our memories are weak and unreliable. A more realistic approach to rationality takes into account these limitations.' (WK 2009n)”



As I indicated in the book on sustainability, in “neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory, many biologists now notice that 'natural selection' is often suboptimal, because of 'selective compromises,' 'phylogenetic inertia,' or other causes. (P. Baofu 2006; D. Campbell 1975: 1120; M. Sahlins 1976: 78) In fact, many scientists also recognize that 'evolution by natural selection often yields suboptimal but adequate design.' (R. M. Alexander 2001:591) So, the classical Darwinian model of 'survival of the fittest' (for 'producing offsprings fast') is no longer as persuasive as it used to be; instead, there is now the contemporary (neo-Darwinian) version of 'survival of the flattest' (for 'producing offsprings fit'). (C. Wilke 2001; WP 2001:A9; P. Baofu 2002 & 2006)”

## 2.2. Complexity

And the second problem of sustainability is about “complexity.”

In my book titled *The Future of Complexity: Conceiving a Better Way to Understand Order and Chaos* (London, United Kingdom: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2007), I pointed out that to understand “complexity” is not easy, because “David Green (2001) and David Newth, identify six main features of complexity, namely, (i) 'self-organization,' (ii) 'connectivity,' (iii) 'criticality,' (iv) 'novelty,' (v) 'diversity,' and (vi) 'emergence.’”

In fact, this problem concerns “our current abilities and approaches. Can we cope with the complexities and uncertainties inherent in these systems? In particular, can we cope with the sympoietic systems that form the environment upon which we depend? Do we recognize the differences between the two systems types and treat them appropriately? Do we recognize the implications of structural coupling and organizational closure? Do we have planning approaches that carry sympoietic characteristics? Do we recognize the implications of future causality? Does planning play an adequate role as an integral part of our complex, adaptive, sympoietic social system?” (M. Dempster 1998) M. Beth Dempster (1998) thus confessed: 'My general answer to these questions is—not adequately.’”

## 3. Sustainable Innovation and Democracy

But there is another issue which compounds the problem further: Can democracy make sustainable innovation easier for a better life, for example?

The answer to this question requires an understanding of two related sub-issues, namely, (3.1) the dark sides of innovation and creativity, and (3.2) the dark sides of democracy.

### 3.1. The Dark Sides of Innovation and Creativity

The first problem of sustainable innovation and democracy is about “the dark sides of innovation and creativity.”

In my book titled *The Future of Post-Human Creative Thinking* (as cited above), I identified three major ways that innovation and creativity can have their double faces, as explained below.

First, in relation to “instrumental rationality,” innovation and creativity can be desirable for “the sake of efficiency and effectiveness in this capitalist era of our time” but can also become undesirable due to “what Max Weber (1930) called the 'iron cage' of capitalism, where live the 'sensualists without heart, specialists without spirit’—or something which the Frankfurt School has forcefully asked us to be freed from.”

Second, in relation to “substantive rationality,” innovation and creativity can be desirable “for the sake of God, the King, Motherland, or other comparable ideals” but can also become undesirable due to the “domination and oppression of various forms—something which the moderns had struggled to free themselves from in the first place, since the dawn of modernity.”

And third, in relation to “autonomous rationality,” innovation and creativity can be desirable “for the sake of itself, the autonomy of creative endeavor” but can also become undesirable, due to “the decadence of its own degeneration (e.g., the downsides of postmodernism in our postmodern times, or what Nietzsche once called the unbearable 'unreality' and 'falseness' of the autonomous artist's 'innermost existence'—and, in other cases, the painful suffering from different mental illnesses for those highly creative individuals).”

### 3.2. The Dark Sides of Democracy

The second problem of sustainable innovation and democracy is about “the dark sides of democracy.”

In Table 2.4 and Table 2.5 of my 2-volume work titled *Beyond Democracy to Post-Democracy: Conceiving a Better Model of Governance to Supersede Democracy* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), I went to great lengths to show the numerous creative techniques of “legal-formalistic ruthlessness” by those in democracy to engage in immoral and destructive deeds both at home and abroad.



An excellent example is none other than the George W. Bush administration in the 2000s, when the U.S. used all kinds of creative techniques to gather public support for the invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, with such techniques like “covering-up,” “exposing,” “character-targeting,” “pressuring/bribing,” “profiling,” “evidence-spinning,” “emotion-manipulating,” “symbolic-acting,” “bypassing,” “double-acting,” “surrogating,” “prettacking,” “posttacking,” “stalking,” etc.

In addition, the Bush administration excelled in different creative ways to violate international law, as in “invading other countries,” “using excessive force,” “killing civilians,” “ignoring due process,” “abusing/torturing prisoners,” “committing complicity in violence,” “exploiting local resources,” “destroying property and the environment,” etc.

### **Conclusion: A Post-Human Awakening**

In conclusion, there are five essential points to be summed up here, as already explained in my book titled *The Future of Post-Human Creative Thinking* (as cited above) and other books,

First, “there is nothing intrinsically good and bad (or, alternatively, good and evil) about 'creative thinking'—just as there is nothing essentially good and bad (or, differently, good and evil) about 'God,' by analogy. They all have been used and misused for the interests and powers that be in history and in the process, have become good and evil (or good and bad) in so many different ways.”

Second, “the current fashionable nonsense on the unwarranted promises of creative thinking is something to be guarded against, in relation to the three fates (for illustration) awaiting its future” (as shown above in regard to the three ways that innovation and creativity can have their double faces).

Third, democracy is no more special in being desirable and undesirable in relation to sustainable innovation for life, albeit in different ways.

Fourth, “if there is a final thought, it may be that one is to side with neither convergent thinking nor divergent thinking—and is to be obsessed with neither.”

And fifth, “it is time to transcend them all, before it is too late, lest the posterity runs the risk to repeat the past history of innocence (and its sorrows) all over again.”

To understand these points is one step towards a “post-human” awakening in regard to the wishing thoughts of humans, where the term “post-human” is a neologism that I had used in my numerous books to refer to different theories of mine about the future evolution of the mind, when new species after the future extinction of humans on earth and in deep space unto multiverses will emerge (and evolve), and good examples are already worked out in different theories of mine (e.g., “the supersession computing,” “the hyper-martial body,” “the hyper-sexual body,” “floating consciousness,” “hyper-spatial consciousness,” “unfolding unconsciousness,” “genetically altered superior beings,” and others).

In the present context, these “post-humans” will evolve to deal with different “creative techniques” and “creative traits” for life, but in a way which is neither utopian nor dystopian, further away from the relatively primitive mindset of the current human world.

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### **References**

All citations above should be referred back to my books as indicated below, as these citations are different excerpts from these 5 books combined together into this small article.

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