

Changes Needed

This volume sees the expansion of *Environmental Values* from four to six issues per year. The journal has undergone a sustained increase in submissions over the last few years. This has allowed editors to raise standards and increase rejection rates, but despite this we have found a backlog of articles building-up. As a result we decided to expand the number of issues. This will reduce waiting time from final acceptance to publication down to around twelve months, and clear the backlog. I will take the occasion of this expansion to start by reporting to readers on the state of the journal.

A concern for any academic journal has been the rise of citations ranking as a measure of success. These metrics have potentially pernicious impacts because of their method of calculation (e.g. favouring populist journals in large knowledge fields such as the natural sciences) and also their headline emphasis on immediacy of articles getting cited. However, no journal editor can afford to ignore these metrics, just as academics are now commonly forced to measure their own success by citations in top ranked journals for their field. The good news for *Environmental Values* has been an increasing headline (2 year) impact factor, as measured by Web of Knowledge (WoK), with the latest figure reaching 1.4 and our 5 year impact factor standing at 1.2. This places the journal in the top quartile for ethics journals and second quartile for environmental studies (the two subject areas in which we are listed by WoK).

Since 2007, when I became Editor-in-Chief, some initiatives have been underway which might have helped increase submissions and citations. On the basis that the Editorial Board in part signifies the aims of the journal, a concerted effort has been made to broaden representation both geographically and across disciplines. The strategy involved a deliberate policy of regular Board membership rotation on the basis of longest service. This has allowed a gradual change in membership to improve the international mix and balance across disciplines.

The foundation of the journal in the UK had meant it maintained a strong relationship with the UK academic community. In 2007 this was reflected in Board membership with 56% UK, 9% rest of Europe, 6% Australasia, 29% North America. The UK representation seemed out of proportion compared to the country of origin of our submissions and subscriptions. The Board make-up failed to reflect our international standing, especially in Europe. The journal had also built a strong North American following equivalent to that of the UK. So the aim here was to reduce UK representation, balance this with that of North America and increase Board membership from the rest of Europe. By 2012 this had been achieved with 32% UK, 24% rest of Europe, 6% Australasia, 32% North America, 3% South America, 3% Asia. In addition, the more senior positions on the Board were all UK based academics in 2007,

besides myself, and this has also been changed by adding North American based colleagues to the Editorial Board.

In terms of disciplinary mix, since the journal was established by Alan Holland within the philosophy department at Lancaster University it has always had a strong applied philosophy aspect, and this was evident in membership of the Board in 2007. The journal has also always encouraged debates around economics and public policy. My aim here was to achieve more of a balance between social ecological economics and the applied philosophy/environmental ethics representation. At the same time I also wanted to increase the number of our political science and geography Board members with the aim of signalling that we welcome contributions from such disciplines. This has broadly been achieved.

The content of the journal is ultimately a factor of what is submitted and successfully passes the review process. My impression is that we have had a slight shift in content towards policy related issues and social sciences relative to applied philosophy and environmental ethics. This issue is an example with the general thrust here being the role of Nature in relation to society and economy. Both this and the next issue of *Environmental Values*, which is a special issue on degrowth, pickup on the growing concern over and implications of ever expanding economic production systems.

Turning to the contents of the current issue, Pollini kicks-off with a critical article on the attempts by Latour and others to dissolve the difference between culture and Nature. This is an ontological and epistemological critique and is distinguished from use of actor network theory as a method (as exemplified in the journal by Robins 2012). His basic ontological argument is that Nature should be kept as a realist concept concerning otherness that is distinct from culture. The environment is described as a socially constructed concept capturing much of the potential for a discourse about how humans relate to their surroundings. A central point is that only representations of Nature are socially constructed, not Nature itself. Maintaining awareness of the essential distinction between reality and representation is important to avoid policy becoming a surrealist fantasy.

Unfortunately, a lack of realism in mainstream economics means we are already in the surrealist world with our environmental policies. Ecological economists have long been advocates of a realist perspective concerning the biophysical world and via their appeals to the laws of thermodynamics. Yet today this seems to hold little sway, as the push for the Green economy claims ecological economic credentials while justifying economic growth (Spash 2012). The basis of this being possible is the assumed ability to decouple GDP increases from the energy and material inputs which cause environmental damages. Mauerhofer deconstructs the arguments concerning this decoupling and argues that the European Union (EU) has an environmental policy that is inconsistent, incoherent and ill-conceived. The EU should accept the reality

EDITORIAL

of basic biophysical limits and react accordingly. On the contrary, continuing growth on the basis that it is less damaging (either relatively or absolutely) per unit of value produced than in the past is little comfort when limits have already been exceeded and systems are collapsing.

Yet this moves us onto the question as to how we transform society away from its growth obsession? Mauerhofer wants to maintain a democratic system within the context of a degrowth economy, but sees problems arising due to the type of competition typical of market systems e.g. competition for resources, substitutes, technological innovation. One danger of such competition is the potential spill over into war and domination of others. He believes such competitive urges can be controlled and redirected, although this seems to imply a major role for government. The extent to which a competitive market economy can be maintained in a degrowth society and how it might be controlled to avoid the worst social excesses is left open.

A similar argument on facing up to reality and constraints lies behind the paper by Menzel and Green. Here the concern is the consumption element of the economy and how this can be controlled to avoid environmental destruction. Various fallacious aspects of the idea that consumers are sovereign are explored. The authors argue in favour of banning products i.e., reducing consumer choice. Their conundrum, like that of Mauerhofer, is then how to proceed in a democratic way. Here the appeal is less to traditional government and more to direct democracy via Habermasian deliberation.

Participation and deliberation are familiar topics to readers of *Environmental Values* (e.g., Paloniemi and Vainio, 2011; Paulson et al., 2012; Treffny and Beilin, 2011), but the challenge remains of how to make operational the synthesis of expert knowledge about biophysical reality and citizens' values. Menzel and Green place their hope in our ability to create new participatory institutions that deal simultaneously with both. In contrast the next article in this issue, by Hueting, takes a more traditional empiricist stance in requesting the separation of facts from values, or as he puts it standards that are scientifically determined, and so objective, from subjective preferences. Here we see Hueting's normal science perspective conflicting with the post-normal science perspective of Menzel and Green.

Hueting's aim is to review and justify an approach to environmental policy he has been pursuing for some decades, which sees a central role for an adjusted national income indicator. His overall approach is embedded within the models and discourse of mainstream economics (e.g., equilibrium, preferences, capital, shadow prices) and its environmental subfield. Despite this framing he is able to point out some basic failures of standard arguments, such as: employment and environment must conflict, intermediate expenditures (e.g. greenhouse gas control) add value to welfare, and growth is necessary to finance environmental protection. Along the way, he notes that national income is primarily driven by economic sectors which are the most environmentally

damaging. All this leads Hueting to a position which is basically one of de-growth, in all but name, e.g. he states that a sustainable production level with available technology is about 50% lower than today, and new technology will not fill the gap. Yet, in contrast to the preceding two papers his reliance on an adjusted national income measure appears extremely conservative. He is far from alone in placing faith in adjusted indicators as a means to achieve change (e.g. Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi 2009). However, this seems rather unlikely to convince those who place the cause of social and environmental problems more firmly at the heart of the current political economy, and who themselves call for direct transformation of social and economic systems. From this perspective, indicators are inherently backward looking and used as regulators rather than devices to achieve visionary alternative futures.

Our final contribution explores the difficulties facing activists in a changing world and the role of environmental NGOs (a topic recently covered in the journal by Anshelm, 2011 and van Huijstee 2011). Soltys and Orynassarova explain how Kazakhstan was the dumping ground for the former Soviet Union and as a result faces multiple ecological problems. They discuss how the context of a changing economic and social structure influences the ability and willingness of people to engage as activists and influences the focus of their activism. In Kazakhstan the reality of human cultural intervention into Nature is clearly identifiable in terms of human health impacts which now form the major concern of environmental NGOs. Their hope is that environmental education will spread to create public support for better government action. Yet they do note the priority given to economic growth and employment, with the implication that these are regarded as conflicting objectives.

Overall this issue shows how the prevention of ongoing environmental degradation confronts some common and seemingly universal problems. There is a strong realist aspect to concerns over human replacement and invasion of Nature and the devastation caused by ever-increasing appropriation of resources and ecosystems functions. The conclusion is that humanity cannot continue to act in this way, but the recommendations for how change can be achieved remain far weaker than the arguments for why things must change.

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EDITORIAL

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