

# McQuillan, Zuboff e Supiot. Tre visioni di una distopia numerica

(Numerical dystopias:  
McQuillan, Zuboff e Supiot)

Andrea Saltelli,

UPF Barcelona School of Management, Barcelona, Spain, and  
Centre for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities,  
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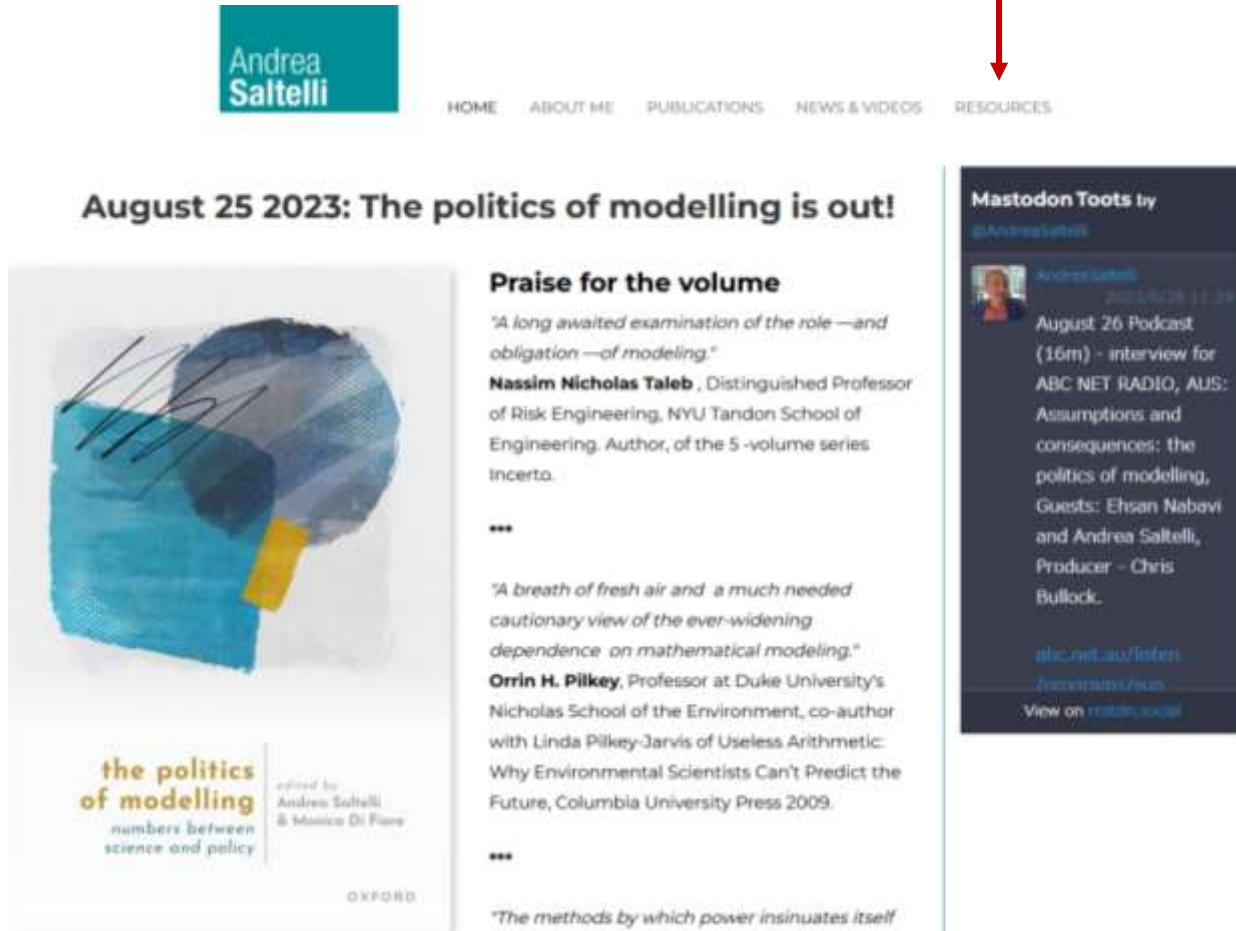
Di dati e di despoti: scienza aperta, ricerca, repubblica  
(Data despotism and data republicanism:  
how, for who and with whom can science be open?)

Pisa, 3-4 giugno 2024

<https://www.sp.unipi.it/it/convegno-di-dati-e-di-despoti-scienza-aperta-ricerca-repubblica/>



Where to find this talk: [www.andreasaltelli.eu](http://www.andreasaltelli.eu)




The screenshot shows the website [www.andreasaltelli.eu](http://www.andreasaltelli.eu). The header includes the name "Andrea Saltelli" and a navigation menu with links for HOME, ABOUT ME, PUBLICATIONS, NEWS & VIDEOS, and RESOURCES. A red arrow points to the RESOURCES link. The main content area features a book review for "the politics of modelling: numbers between science and policy" edited by Andrea Saltelli & Monica Di Fusco, published by Oxford. The review includes quotes from Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Orrin H. Pilkey. To the right, a Mastodon post by @Andreasaltelli from August 26, 2023, mentions a 16-minute podcast interview for ABC NET RADIO, AUS, about the book, with guests Ehsan Nabavi and Andrea Saltelli, and producer Chris Bullock. The post includes a link to the podcast and a "View on mastodon.social" button.

Andrea Saltelli

HOME ABOUT ME PUBLICATIONS NEWS & VIDEOS RESOURCES

## August 25 2023: The politics of modelling is out!



**Praise for the volume**

*"A long awaited examination of the role—and obligation—of modeling."*

**Nassim Nicholas Taleb**, Distinguished Professor of Risk Engineering, NYU Tandon School of Engineering. Author, of the 5-volume series *Incerto*.

...

*"A breath of fresh air and a much needed cautionary view of the ever-widening dependence on mathematical modeling."*

**Orrin H. Pilkey**, Professor at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment, co-author with Linda Pilkey-Jarvis of *Useless Arithmetic: Why Environmental Scientists Can't Predict the Future*, Columbia University Press 2009.

...

*"The methods by which power insinuates itself*

**Mastodon Toots by**  
@Andreasaltelli

August 26 2023, 11:29 AM

August 26 Podcast (16m) - interview for ABC NET RADIO, AUS: Assumptions and consequences: the politics of modelling, Guests: Ehsan Nabavi and Andrea Saltelli, Producer - Chris Bullock.

[abc.net.au/listen/2023/08/26](http://abc.net.au/listen/2023/08/26)

[View on mastodon.social](#)

Of numbers, visible and invisible...

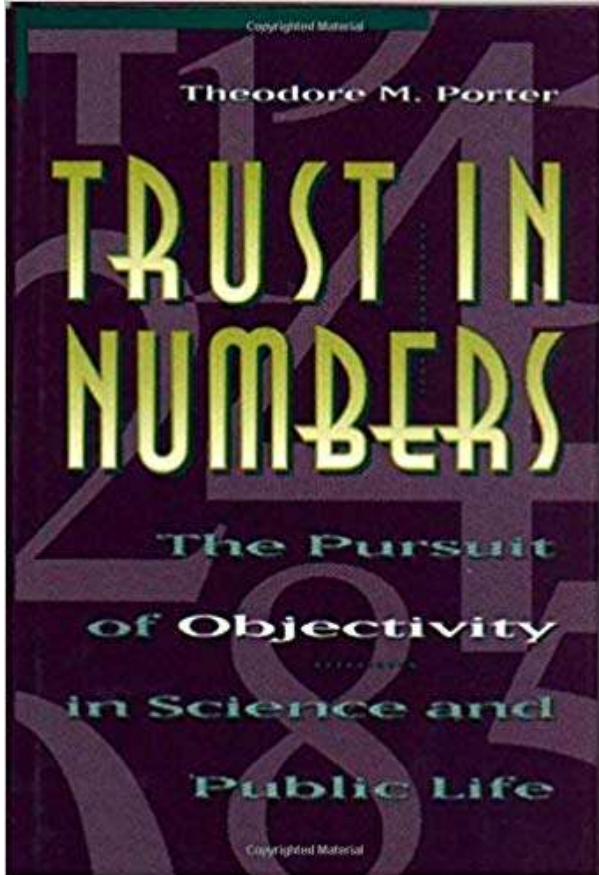
Blurring lines:

“what qualities are specific to rankings, or indicators, or models, or algorithms?”



Elizabeth  
Popp Berman

E. Popp Berman and D. Hirschman, **The Sociology of Quantification**: Where Are We Now?, *Contemp. Sociol.*, vol. in press, 2017.



Numbers are not neutral but their purported neutrality is a large part of their appeal: being performative without appearing to be so

<http://ereserve.library.uta.edu/Annual/WRTG/3705/Mathison/objectivity.pdf> in

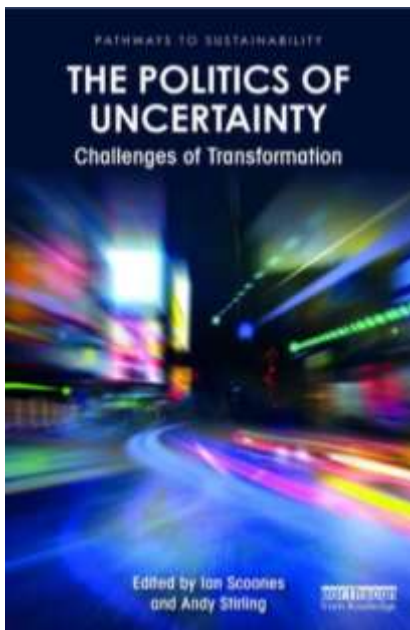


## Objectivity as Standardization: The Rhetoric of Impersonality in Measurement, Statistics, and Cost-Benefit Analysis

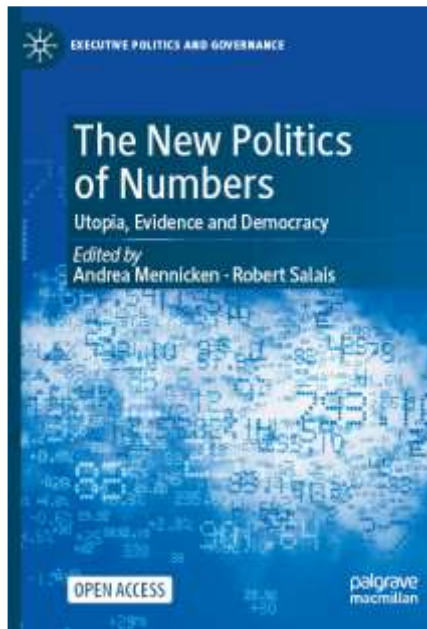
THEODORE M. PORTER

*1. Quantification makes knowledge impersonal,  
hence objective.*





2020



2022



2023



Impact assessment culture in the European Union. Time for something new?

Andrea Saltelli<sup>a,b,c</sup>, Marta Kuc-Gaznecka<sup>d</sup>, Samuele Lo Piano<sup>e</sup>, Máté János Lőrincz<sup>f</sup>, Magdalena Olezyk<sup>g</sup>, Arnold Puy<sup>h</sup>, Erik Reinert<sup>i,j</sup>, Stefan Thor Smith<sup>k</sup>, Jeroen P. van der Sluijs<sup>h,b</sup>

Reveal the policy of the numbers

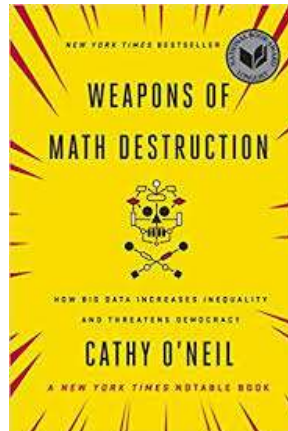


# Powered by algorithms, governance by (visible and invisible) numbers contributes to a loss of democratic agency (a-democracy)

2015  
(jurist)



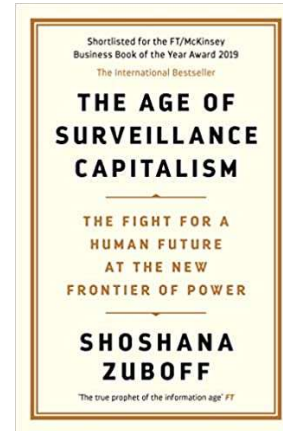
2016  
(data scientist)



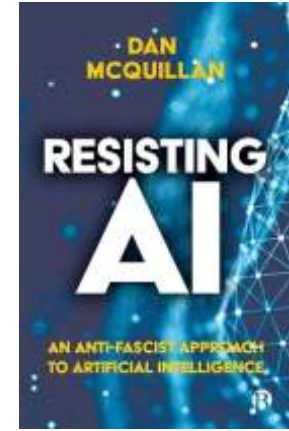
2017  
(philosopher)



2019  
(economist)



2022  
(physicist/sociologist)



# From loss of political agency to identity politics

## The Clash Of Civilizations Is The Politics Of The End of History

Reflections by the philosopher Slavoj Žižek on universality and “workless places.”

ESSAY GEOPOLITICS & GLOBALIZATION

BY NATHAN GARDELS

MAY 3, 2024



“The only remaining legitimate source of conflicts are cultural (ethnic, religious) tensions. Today’s rise of ‘irrational’ populism is thus to be conceived as strictly correlative to the depoliticization of our societies, i.e., to the disappearance of the proper political dimension” (Slavoj Žižek)



<https://www.noemamag.com/the-clash-of-civilizations-is-the-politics-of-the-end-of-history/>



# Why ethics of quantification is needed now

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Open Evidence Research, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain

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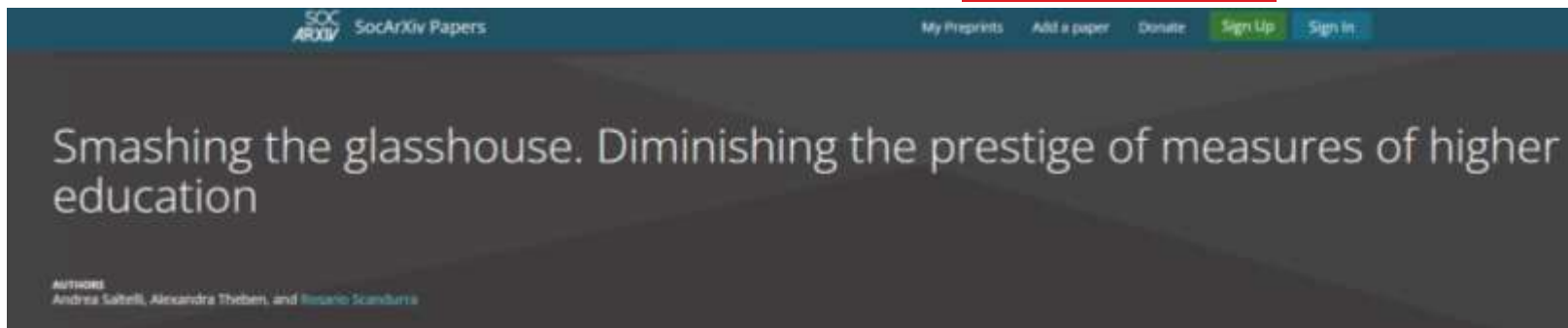
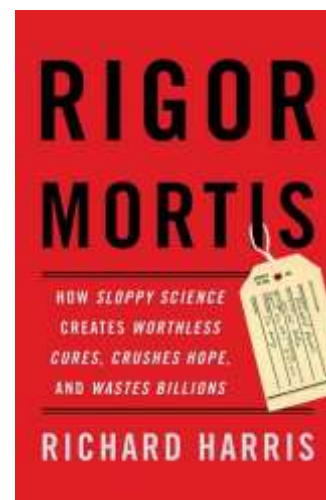
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Public Purpose

WORKING PAPER  
WP 2021/05



Scope for harm from ‘wrong numbers’  
e.g. in :

- Medical research
- Governance of science
- Higher education
- Finance



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WORKING PAPER  
WP 2021/05

Scope for harm from ‘wrong numbers’ e.g.:

- ...
- Numbers from international organizations
  - Food and Agriculture Organization
  - The World Bank
  - OECD (see PISA!) →
  - ...
- ...

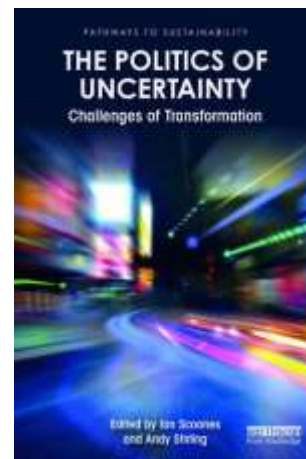


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WORKING PAPER  
WP 2021/05

## ‘Trendy’ methods may also harm

- Randomized control trials) may be misused to suggest more general conclusions that may not be valid
- Sophisticated statistical/econometric techniques that can be designed in ways that promote desired policy conclusions



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**WORKING PAPER  
WP 2021/05**

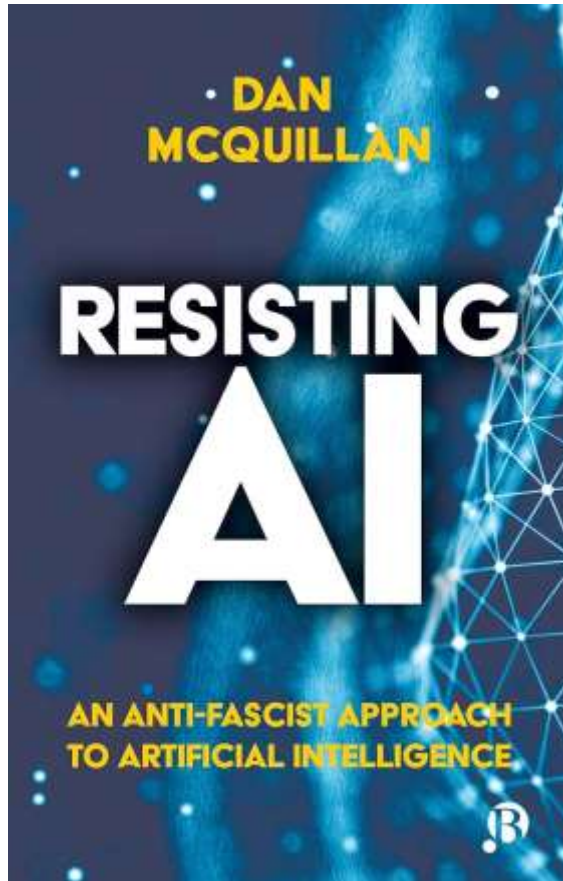
“...is it possible to counter the despotism of data, which seems to have been adopted by the institutions of the European Union, with a republicanism of data?”



The screenshot shows the top header of a website. On the left is a logo consisting of the letters 'd', 's', and 'p' in a stylized, overlapping arrangement. To the right of the logo, the text 'Dipartimento di Scienze politiche' is displayed in white on a dark blue background. In the bottom right corner of this header, there are three links: 'Moodle', 'Iscrizione esami', and 'Orario lezioni'.



The screenshot shows a navigation bar with a light gray background. On the left, there is a home icon followed by the text 'Convegno: Di dati e di despoti. Scienza aperta, ricerca, repubblica'. Below this, a dark blue banner contains the same text in white: 'Convegno: Di dati e di despoti. Scienza aperta, ricerca, repubblica'. Above the banner, a horizontal menu contains several items with dropdown arrows: 'Dipartimento', 'Didattica', 'Post laurea', 'Ricerca', 'Internazionale', and 'Terz'.



Resisting AI contrasts optimistic visions about AI's ... AI may best be seen as a continuation and reinforcement of bureaucratic forms of discrimination and violence, ultimately fostering authoritarian outcomes

AI's promise of objective calculability is antithetical to an egalitarian and just society

... Based on opaque algorithms – various actors can discriminate against categories of people in accessing jobs, loans, medical care, and other benefits





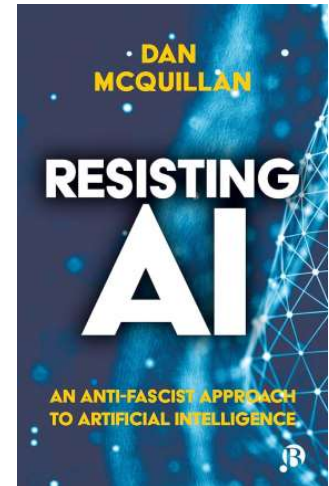
AI  $\leftrightarrow$  soft eugenic approaches to the valuation of life by modern welfare states

AI eugenic logic and technical operations

Parallel is with historical eugenicists: saving the state by sterilizing defectives so that the state would not have to care for their offspring

van Toorn, G., Soldatić, K. (9 April 2024). "Disablism, racism and the spectre of eugenics in digital welfare". *Journal of Sociology*. SAGE Publications Ltd: 14407833241244828.

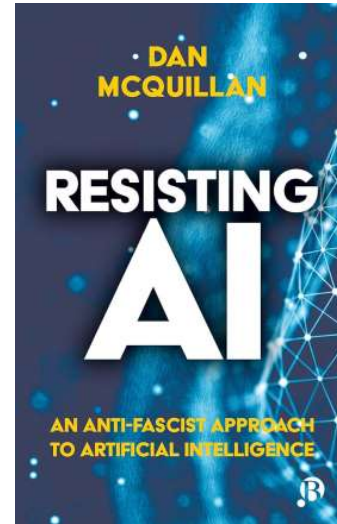
This poster from the 1930s promotes the idea of 'positive' eugenics through the figure of the 'healthy' sower of seed, but also proposes unspecified 'checks' or 'negative' eugenic methods to prevent supposedly hereditary conditions and 'unfitness' © Wellcome Collection. Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0); source: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/blue-plaque-stories/eugenics/>



AI and "hidden and undercompensated labour“

“Necropolitics”, the politics of who is entitled to live, and who to die

AI "self-reinforcing social profiling“ against the vulnerable , see e.g. optimize welfare distribution based on existing data patterns



This image was generated by OpenAI's image-generation software, Dall-E 2. The prompt was: "A seemingly endless view of African workers at desks in front of computer screens in a printmaking style." TIME does not typically use AI-generated art to illustrate its stories, but chose to in this instance in order to draw attention to the power of OpenAI's technology and shed light on the labor that makes it possible. Image generated by Dall-E 2/OpenAI. Source: <https://time.com/6247678/openai-chatgpt-kenya-workers/>



**Hannah  
Arendt**  
**Eichmann in Jerusalem**  
Ein Bericht von der Banalität  
des Bösen

PIPER

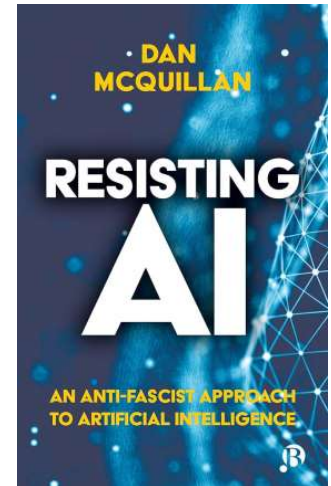
McQuillan  $\leftrightarrow$  Hannah Arendt's concept of the thoughtless bureaucrat in 'Eichmann in Jerusalem'

AI and "algorithmic thoughtlessness"

AI and 'states of exception'

Could AI make possible initiatives like creating LGBT-free zones in Poland?

Cabello Fernández-Delgado, F. (14 January 2024). "Dan McQuillan, Resisting AI: An Anti-Fascist Approach to Artificial Intelligence". International Journal of Communication. 18: 4. ISSN 1932-8036.





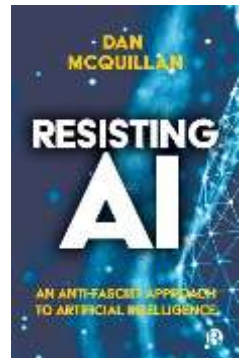
Flyer for the Lucas Plan conference in Birmingham on 26th November 2016, source: <https://theecologist.org/2016/nov/02/lucas-plan-how-greens-and-trade-unionists-can-unite-common-cause>

Resistance:

- people's councils and workers' councils
- feminist science (standpoint theory)
- post-normal science (extended peer communities)
- new materialism

Example: Lucas Plan of the workers of Lucas Aerospace Corporation: workforce takes control, reorienting the enterprise toward useful products

Sharpe, Oli (2023). "Book Summary and Review: Resisting AI by Dan McQuillan, a comment". Go Meta. Retrieved 30 January 2024 – via YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeO50vj5pz4>

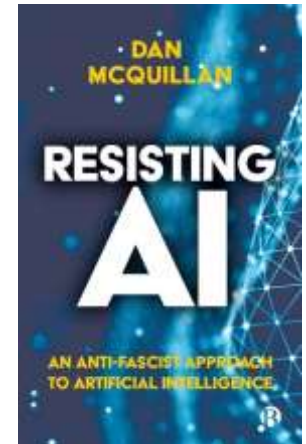




Scarfe, Tim; McQuillan, Dan (2023). "#109 – Dr. Dan McQuillan – Resisting AI". Machine Learning Street Talk. Retrieved 30 January 2024 – via YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1j3VoKBxbc>

McQuillan scepticism about AI ethics:

Beware "watered-down forms of engagement" with AI, such as citizen juries, which superficially look like democratic deliberation but may actually obscure important decisions that transcend the engagement situation (p.128)







Published October 7, 2022 | Version Published

## What's wrong with "AI ethics" narratives

Daniela Tafani<sup>1</sup>

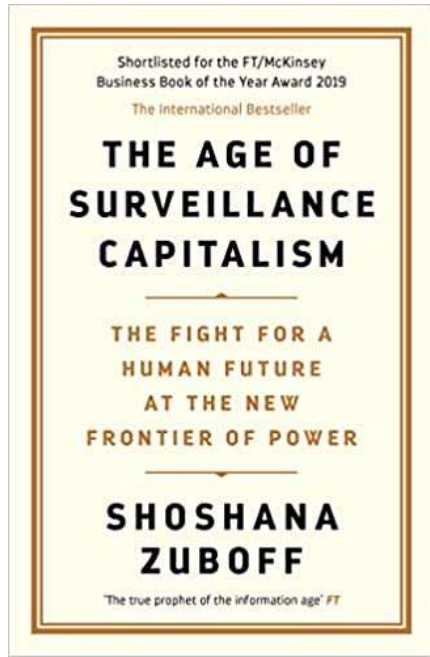
<https://zenodo.org/record/7156364>

- Technological determinism (there is no going back)
- The Principle of Innovation (regulation hampers profit and economic growth)
- Solutionism/technicism (political and legal issues are transformed into technical ones – thus amenable to a technical solution)
- Anthropomorphising machines, dehumanizing people (the Human Brain Project)
- Legal exceptionalism (New rules are needed for a new technology)
- Crying 'wolf' about future challenges to distract from present ones (Pause AI!)





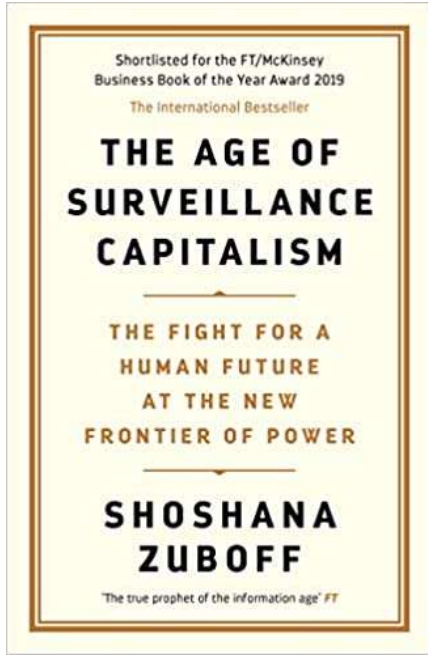
A project of domination of consumers and voters is made possible by artificial intelligence, big data & cognitive psychology



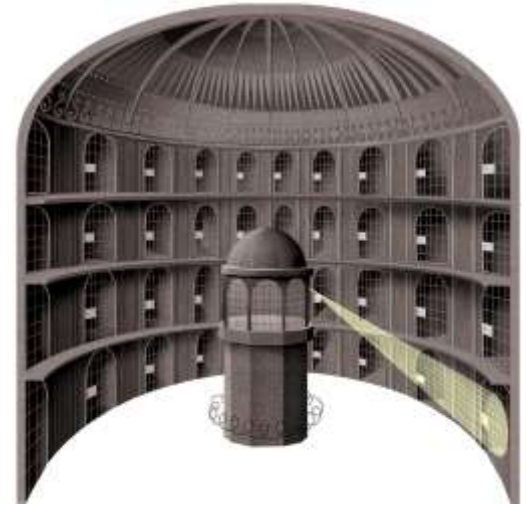
Inequality, power asymmetries and the world of surveillance capitalism

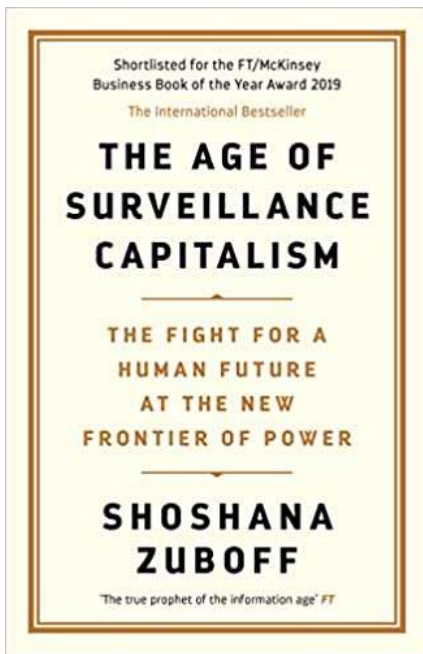


... and the surveillance is voluntarily accepted



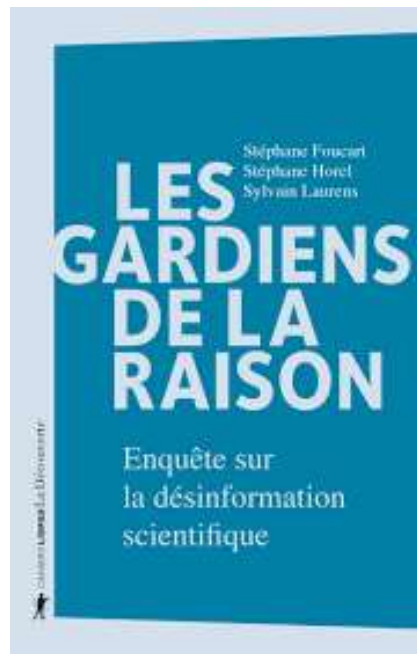
Byung Chul Han 'virtual panopticon'





Chapters 11 & 12

Instrumentarian  
power



Chapter 10

*Néorationalism d'importation*

*La trollisation de l'espace  
public*

AI empowered with  
cognitive psychology

A project of domination?

Contesting unjust/unfair governance arrangement is impossible without producing alternative constructions of evidence – that requires muscles not easily available to the lay citizen



Futures  
Available online 26 October 2021  
In Press, Journal Pre-proof



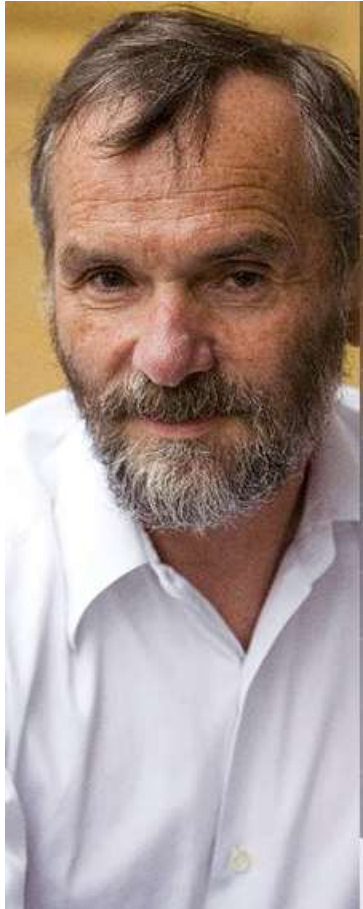
## Science, the endless frontier of regulatory capture

Andrea Saltelli <sup>a,\*, 28</sup>, Dorothy J. Dankel <sup>b,c</sup>, Monica Di Fiore <sup>d</sup>, Nina Holland <sup>e</sup>, Martin Pigeon <sup>a</sup>



Purported facts checkers play numbers to serve private interests

# Alain Supiot

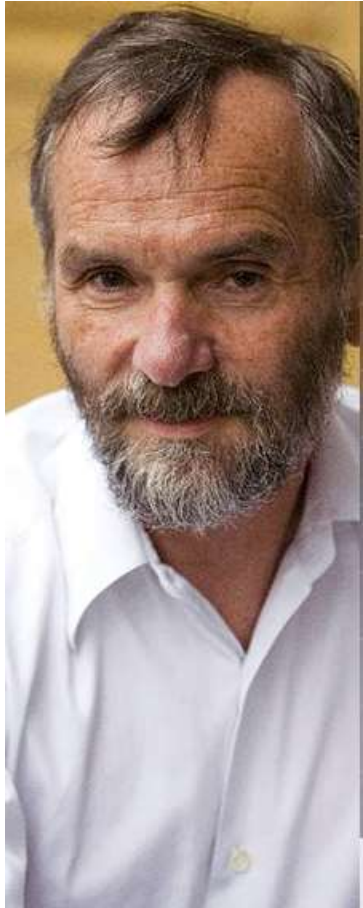


An indictment of the  
Total Market and the  
normative uses of  
economic quantification

<https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/en-alain-supiot/Governance-by-Numbers-Introduction.htm>



# Alain Supiot



…we have entered the era of the cybernetic imaginary, which revives the West's age-old dream of grounding social harmony in calculations.

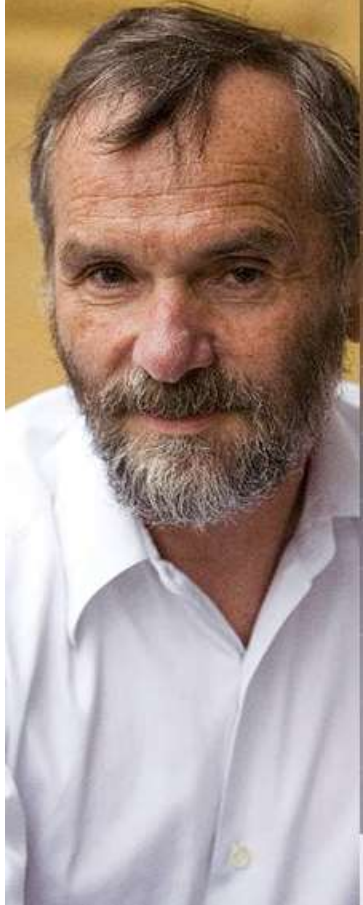
Same diagnosis about the neoliberal 'exploitation of freedom' from Byung Chul Han

Slave of ourselves



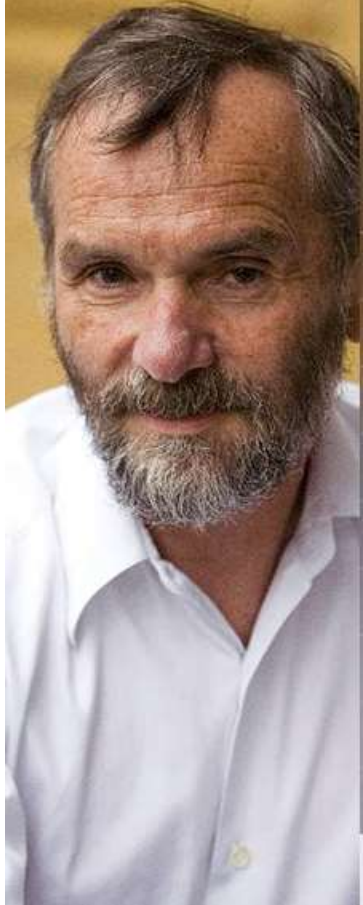


# Alain Supiot



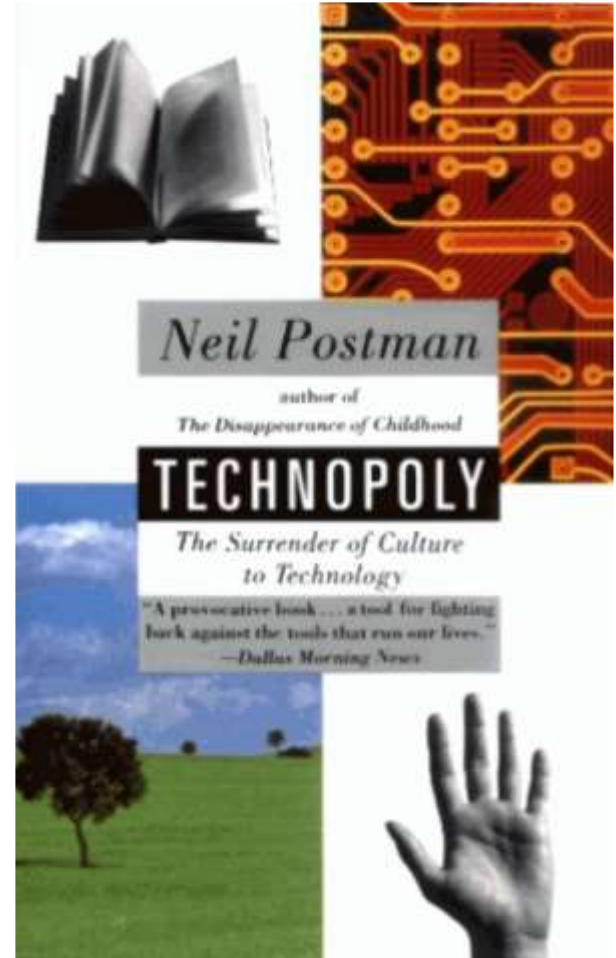
Repudiating the goal of governing by just laws, this new discourse advocates in its stead the attainment of measurable objectives efficiently

# Alain Supiot



… This leaves no option open to populations or countries than to ride roughshod over social legislation, and pledge allegiance to those stronger than they are

“[...] it is inescapable that **every culture must negotiate with technology**, whether it does so intelligently or not. A bargain is struck in which **technology giveth and technology taketh away**. The wise know this well, and are rarely impressed by dramatic technological changes, and never overjoyed” (p. 5)



Are we negotiating wisely?

No. Despite perceptive warnings so far ... the machine moves on at all places simultaneously

“[...] the research was **selected for EU funding** for a purpose, security, that the funders and the city, which volunteered to collect and offer its citizens' data, considered a public good. They also **took for granted their own model of collective happiness**” →



Egregious proof the strength of the techno-optimistic fantasy:

## Digital Twins of the Earth (Destination Earth in EU)

**comment** 

### A digital twin of Earth for the green transition

For its green transition, the EU plans to fund the development of digital twins of Earth. For these twins to be more than big data atlases, they must create a qualitatively new Earth system simulation and observation capability using a methodological framework responsible for exceptional advances in numerical weather prediction.

Peter Bauer, Bjorn Stevens and Wilco Hazeleger

The European Union (EU) intends to become climate neutral by 2050, and the art of politics designed to bring about this green transition — the European Green Deal — was announced in December 2019 (ref. 1). Accompanied by €1 trillion of planned investment, Green Deal policies aim to help the world's second largest economy sustainably produce energy, develop carbon-neutral fuels and advance circular products to energy-intensive industrial sectors with zero waste and zero pollution. A key element of the Green Deal is its dependence on the digital transformation — an openly accessible and interoperable European data space as a central hub for informed decision making. The EU identified two landmark actions to support the necessary information systems: Green Data-4EU and Destination Earth<sup>2</sup>. Whereas Green Data-4EU will develop the European approach to discover, manage and exploit geospatial information, Destination Earth aims to construct highly accurate models, or 'digital twins', of the Earth to monitor and predict environmental change and human impact in support of sustainable development. Aligned with the new Digital Europe funding programme<sup>3</sup>, Destination Earth is expected to start in 2021, and the first, high-priority digital twins serving extreme prediction and climate change adaptation will



Credit: Map of Laverick / Pexels

## Big Data in Earth system science and progress towards a digital twin

Xin Li , Min Feng , Youhua Ran, Yang Su, Feng Liu, Chunlin Huang, Huanfeng Shen, Qing Xiao, Jianbin Su, Shiwei Yuan & Huadong Guo

*Nature Reviews Earth & Environment* 4, 319–332 (2023) | [Cite this article](#)

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 Cornell University We gratefully acknowledge...

 arXiv: physics > arXiv:2306.11176 Search... [This is ArXiv](#)

Physics > Physics and Society

18 October 19, 2023

### Developing Digital Twins for Earth Systems: Purpose, Requisites, and Benefits

Yuhan Rao, Rob Redman, Kristine Dale, Sus E. Haupt, Aaron Hojkinson, Ann Boström, Sid Boukabara, Thomas Geenen, David M. Hall, Benjamin D. Smith, Dev Niyogi, V. Ramaswamy, Eric A. Kohn

The accelerated change in our planet due to human activities has led to grand societal challenges including health crises, intensified extreme weather events, food security, environmental justice, etc. Digital twin systems combined with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and edge computing provide opportunities to support planning and decision-making to address these challenges. Digital twins for Earth systems (DT4ESs) are defined as the digital representation of the complex integrated Earth system including both natural processes and human activities. They have the potential to enable a diverse range of users to explore what-if scenarios across spatial and temporal scales to improve our understanding, prediction, mitigation, and adaptation to grand societal challenges. The 4th NOAA AI Workshop convened around 100 members who are developing or interested in participating in the development of DT4ES to discuss a shared community vision and path forward on fostering a future ecosystem of interoperable DT4ES. This paper summarizes the workshop discussions around DT4ES. We first defined the foundational features of a viable digital twin for Earth system that can be used to guide the development of various use cases of DT4ES. Finally, we made practical recommendations for the community on different aspects of collaboration in order to enable a future ecosystem of interoperable DT4ES, including equity-centered use case development, community-driven investigation of interoperability for DT4ES, trust-oriented co-development, and developing a community of practice.

“By combining this new class of models with advances from past investments in Earth system prediction and observations, digital twins promise to close substantial and recalcitrant gaps in our ability to look into the future [...] An exciting aspect of a digital twin is the potential to break the paradigm of classical Earth system prediction models with fixed and static flows of information managed by layers of experts [...]

A digital twin of Earth would fully integrate observations with an Earth system model and human subsystems for, for example, water, food and energy resource management, to assess the impacts on, and influences from, these subsystems on Earth system trajectories”

comment [Share on LinkedIn](#)

### A digital twin of Earth for the green transition

For its green transition, the EU plans to fund the development of digital twins of Earth. For these twins to be more than big data atlases, they must create a qualitatively new Earth system simulation and observation capability using a methodological framework responsible for exceptional advances in numerical weather prediction.

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A key element of the Green Deal is its dependence on the 'digital transformation' – an openly accessible and interoperable European digital space as a cornerstone for informed decision making. The EU identified two tasks to be done to support the necessary infrastructure systems: Copernicus4EU and Digitalisation Earth. Within Copernicus4EU will develop the European approach to disaster warning and digital geospatial information. Furthermore, Earth aims to construct highly accurate models or digital twins of the Earth to monitor and predict environmental change and human impact to support of sustainable development. Aligned with the new Digital Europe funding programme<sup>2</sup>, Digitalisation Earth is expected to start in 2021, and the first high priority digital twins serving activities: fresh food and climate change adaptation will



Credit: Map of Lambert / Think



Models so large that AI chatbots are needed by users to ‘read’ their output

## nature computational science

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Comment | Published: 26 March 2024

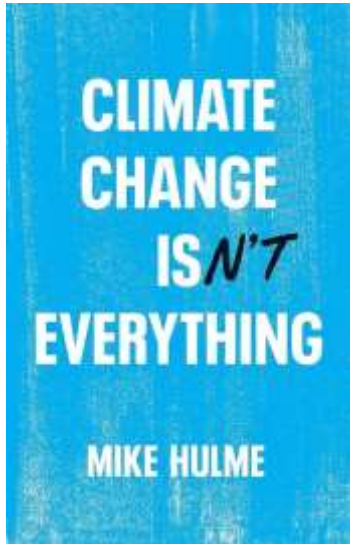
### Digital twins of Earth and the computing challenge of human interaction

[Peter Bauer](#) , [Torsten Hoefler](#) , [Bjorn Stevens](#) & [Wilco Hazeleger](#)

[Nature Computational Science](#) **4**, 154–157 (2024) | [Cite this article](#)

**3447** Accesses | **5** Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

… a promise of accuracy,  
transparency and desirability



Climate change cannot be the lens through which to look at the world's problems. The war in Syria is not a result of climate change

Rejecting climatic determinism is not a refutation of climate change but of its instrumental use

On the EU plan: Destination Earth

*Consequence:* Climate became globalized in a new way, seen as a single universal system that could be simulated with – it was believed – increasing degrees of realism, and made predictable. Thus, NASA again: 'New models of the Earth System are now being developed to explore the interactions among the Earth's components and to analyse the global effects of physical, chemical and biological processes . . . these new models will also provide predictions of the effects of global change on human populations.' Global kinds of climatic knowledge – knowledge detached from specific cultural meanings – began to become dominant. This long-standing promise of prediction is alive and well today, as illustrated by the EU's 'Destination Earth' project. This project aims to develop by 2030 a highly accurate digital model of the Earth to monitor and predict with unrivalled precision the interaction between natural phenomena and human activities.<sup>9</sup>

*Move 3: Global temperature was adopted as the dominant index for capturing the condition of all climate-society relationships.*

We have already seen how Nordhaus pioneered the use of global temperature in the 1970s to conduct the first economic analysis of climate/energy policy. Some scientists had been thinking in terms of 'the Earth's temperature' since the nineteenth century. But they had done so in terms of the radiation physics of the world's atmosphere, not in terms of the relationship between climate, people and society. And for most of the twentieth century, scientists had struggled to derive 'global temperature' from empirical observations, as opposed to determining it through theoretical calculation. This began to change during the 1980s. Global temperature began to be employed not just as an index useful

more powerful models will be able to simulate with ever increasing accuracy and precision the future outcomes of complex interdependencies between physical, ecological, social and technological systems. This was Move 6 as described in Chapter 2. And it is exactly what the EU's Horizon Europe research programme promises to deliver by 2030: 'a "full" digital replica of Earth . . . a highly accurate digital model of the Earth to monitor and predict the interaction between natural phenomena and human activities'.<sup>9</sup>

The first step in dismantling climatist is to treat such claims with great scepticism. The sciences and the social sciences are only able – and always will only be able – to see the future 'through a glass darkly'. Adaptation decisions are better made as hedges against a range of uncertain futures than as attempts to optimize based on uncertain predictions. Because of this lack of foreknowledge, policymakers need to know when to look beyond science and embrace other forms of analysis, reflection, wisdom and judgement. Framing, informing and guiding decisions about future policy requires much more than science. By itself, scientific knowledge offers no moral vision, no ethical stance and no political architecture for delivering the sort of worlds that people desire.

#### 'Technologies of humility'

A second antidote to the dangers of climatist follows directly from this. It is to adopt what science studies scholar Sheila Jasanoff has called 'technologies of humility'.<sup>9</sup> By this she means 'disciplined methods to accommodate the partiality of scientific knowledge and to act under irredeemable uncertainty'. In other words, she urges that in the face of the unknown future humility should replace hubris. This is a broader argument

sheila

# CLIMATE CHANGE ISN'T EVERYTHING

MIKE HULME

Hulme, Mike. 2023. *Climate Change Isn't Everything: Liberating Climate Politics from Alarmism*. 1st edition. Medford: Polity.

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**CLIMATE  
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**MIKE HULME**

Hulme, Mike. 2023. *Climate Change Isn't Everything: Liberating Climate Politics from Alarmism*. 1st edition. Medford: Polity.

planet is secured. In contrast, the reality is that societies struggle along, reacting to problems as they emerge with incremental changes, making many missteps along the way. Ambitious visions to manage the Earth's physical and social complexity – whether using the promise of the EU's Destination Earth, machine learning or artificial intelligence – are chimeras. And a humbler disposition towards systems of



## Destination Earth's nature-based metaphors

“Digital ecosystems”, “evolutionary development”, “data lakes” and “digital species”, “osmotic computing” ...







Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Global Environmental Change

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/gloenvcha](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/gloenvcha)



Who speaks for the future of Earth? How critical social science can extend the conversation on the Anthropocene



Eva Lövbrand<sup>a,\*</sup>, Silke Beck<sup>b</sup>, Jason Chilvers<sup>c</sup>, Tim Forsyth<sup>d</sup>, Johan Hedrén<sup>a</sup>, Mike Hulme<sup>e</sup>, Rolf Lidskog<sup>f</sup>, Eleftheria Vasileiadou<sup>g</sup>

Anthropocene → One Earth → Destination Earth

A post-social, post-political vision;

need for input from **critical and interpretative social sciences**

– as opposed to ‘sedated’ ones

[Home](#) > [Sustainability Science](#) > Article

# The more things change, the more they stay the same: promises of bioeconomy and the economy of promises

Special Feature: Editorial | [Open Access](#) | Published: 23 March 2023 | 18, 557–568 (2023)[Download PDF](#)You have full access to this [open access](#) article[Sustainability Science](#)[Aims and scope](#) →[Submit manuscript](#) →[Dennis Eversberg](#) , [Philip Koch](#), [Rosa Lehmann](#), [Andrea Saltelli](#), [Sabaheta Ramcilovic-Suominen](#) & [Zora Kovacic](#)2247 Accesses | 5 Citations | 7 Altmetric | [Metrics](#) | [Cite this article](#)[Use our pre-submission checklist](#) →

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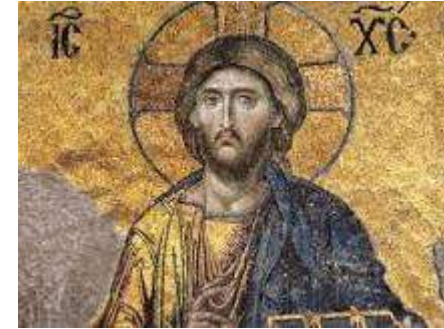


Part of a collection:

Economics of techno-scientific promises' (ETP)= The promise of 'transformation without transformation'

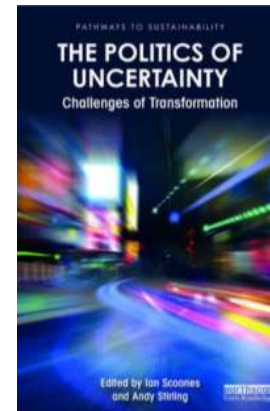
# A technocratic orthodoxy in the EU? Why 'reductionism'?

- The single market needs a centralized, standardized **risk assessment approach**
- EU pro-industry (e.g. biotech) growth agenda
- Fear of opening the road to endless deconstruction of planned policies
- A candid culture of scientism



Impact assessment culture in the European Union. Time for something new?

Andrea Saltelli <sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Marta Kuc-Czarnecka <sup>c</sup>, Samuele Lo Piano <sup>d</sup>, Máté János Lőrincz <sup>d</sup>, Magdalena Olczyk <sup>e</sup>, Arnaud Puy <sup>e</sup>, Erik Reinert <sup>f,g</sup>, Stefan Thor Smith <sup>d</sup>, Jeroen P. van der Sluijs <sup>h,i</sup>



See 'The unravelling of technocratic orthodoxy', of P. van Zwanenberg



# END



Summary and  
extra slides below



**McQuillan, Zuboff e Supiot. Tre visioni di una distopia numerica, by Andrea Saltelli**

Sociology of quantification has lot to say about the relation between numbers and democracy. While numbers, either visible or invisible – those running under the hood of algorithms – are used to take decisions, a full spectrum of possible misuse and abuse need to be investigated and possibly contrasted. Technological progress makes this societal control ever more arduous, leading scholars from different disciplines to ring the alarm, be these physicists/sociologists as Dan McQuillan (2022), jurists as Alain Supiot (2017), economists as Shoshana Zuboff (2019) or data scientists as Cathy O’Neil (2016).

Works on the politics of numbers (Desrosières 1998; Saltelli and Di Fiore 2023; Mennicken and Salais 2022; Scoones and Stirling 2020) can help us to trace the mechanism whereby ‘governance by numbers’ can contribute to deprive society of agency and facilitate a re-feudalization of society (Saltelli 2020). Strategy of resistance on the style of the French movement of Stactivism (Bruno, Didier, and Prévieux 2014) are possible but important power asymmetry stand in the way of a solution (Saltelli et al. 2022). An example of prevalent reductionist and techno-optimist narratives is offered by the Digital Twins of the Earth projects, in Europe Destination Earth

Bruno, Isabelle, E. Didier, and J. Prévieux. 2014. *Stactivisme. Comment Lutter Avec Des Nombres*. Paris: Édition La Découverte.

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O’Neil, Cathy. 2016. *Weapons of Math Destruction : How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. Random House Publishing Group.

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Saltelli, Andrea, and Monica Di Fiore, eds. 2023. *The Politics of Modelling. Numbers between Science and Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Scoones, Ian, and Andy Stirling. 2020. *The Politics of Uncertainty*. Edited by Ian Scoones and Andy Stirling. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2020. | Series: Pathways to sustainability: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003023845>.

Supiot, Alain. 2017. *Governance by Numbers: The Making of a Legal Model of Allegiance*. Hart Publishing.

Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism : The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. PublicAffairs.

… our world is structured by numbers, visible and invisible, where truth is conveyed and reality constructed

Numbers are seductive, performative, confer to their masters' epistemic power and legitimacy

Governing the modern state, or even contesting it, without numbers is impossible

Numbers are the prevalent means to express value in our societies  
… Access & production of numbers reflect and reinforce power imbalances



Numbers capture our attention; they illuminate the part of reality which is being numerified, and fatally push those parts into the background which come without the clothing of ...

... numbers are so deeply entrenched in our existence that we barely reflect on them critically them anymore — too close to us, they have become part of the very lens through which we attend to and comprehend the world

They have engaged in unprecedented cultural regulatory capture; the objectives of the AI corporations are framed as desirable social goods



Futures  
Volume 135, January 2022, 102860



## Science, the endless frontier of regulatory capture

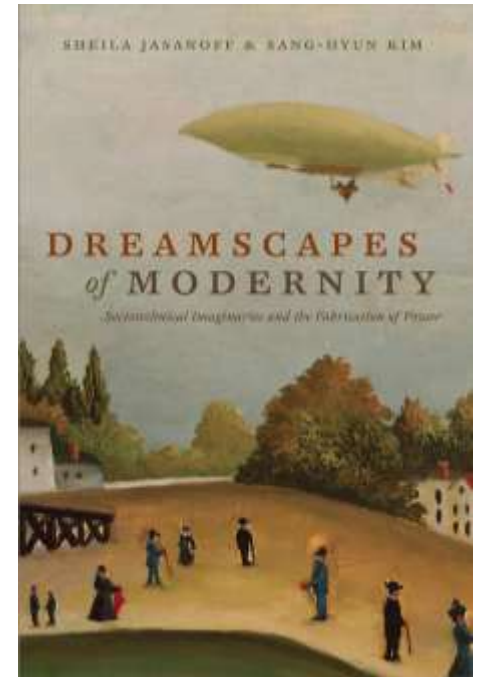
[Andrea Saltelli](#)<sup>®</sup>   [Dorothy J. Dankel](#)<sup>®</sup> <sup>©</sup>, [Monica Di Fiore](#)<sup>®</sup> <sup>©</sup>, [Nina Holland](#)<sup>®</sup> <sup>©</sup>, [Martin Pigeon](#)<sup>®</sup> <sup>©</sup>

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Sheila Jasanoff

A domination of the sociotechnical imaginary



# The articulation of the story includes

- Technological determinism (there is no going back)
- The Principle of Innovation (regulation hampers profit and economic growth)
- Solutionism/technicism (political and legal issues are transformed into technical ones – thus amenable to a technical solution)
- Anthropomorphising machines, dehumanizing people (the Human Brain Project)
- Legal exceptionalism (New rules are needed for a new technology)
- Crying ‘wolf’ about future challenges to distract from present ones
- Distracting regulators with ‘ethics of algorithms’





Making algorithms 'good' or 'transparent' is beyond the point. Algorithms create new norms of good or bad.

Algorithm = ethicopolitical arrangement of values, assumptions, and propositions about the world



Louise Amoore

An ideological substrate: Eugenics, transhumanism, logtermism...

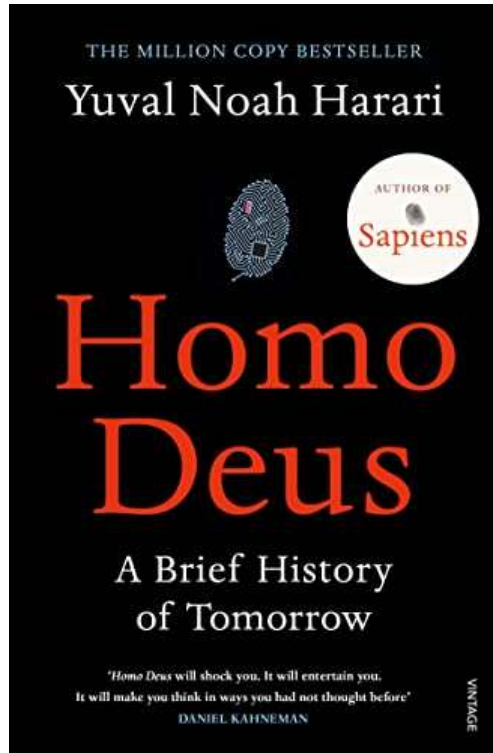


PHOTO CREDIT: Thomas Hawk, SEA News, Chroniclegraph

“TESCREAL=Transhumanism, Extropianism, Singularitarianism, Cosmism, Rationalism, Effective Altruism, and Longtermism”

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## What's wrong with "AI ethics" narratives

Daniela Tafani<sup>1</sup>



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← All Open Letters

## Pause Giant AI Experiments: An Open Letter

We call on all AI labs to immediately pause for at least 6 months the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4.

Signatures  
**33711**

Add your signature

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March 22, 2023

menable to a

- Crying ‘wolf’ about future challenges to distract from present ones (Pause AI!)



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What's wrong with "AI ethics" narratives

Daniela Tafani\*

A technical proof of quality is illusory without a parallel investigation of normative quality; the example of indicators of employment

Technical Quality

Normative quality

Justice: Means versus Freedoms

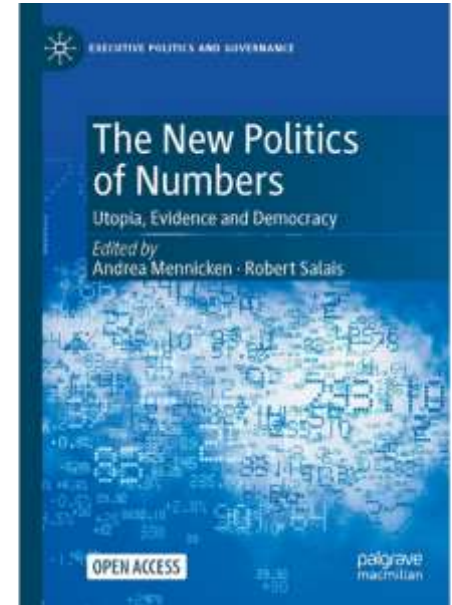
Author(s): Amartya Sen

Source: *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Spring, 1990), pp. 111-121

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Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265406>

Accessed: 28/10/2014 14:48



← Salais, R. (2022). “La donnée n’est pas un donné”: Statistics, Quantification and Democratic Choice. In *The New Politics of Numbers: Utopia, Evidence and Democracy*, Andrea Mennicken and Robert Salais, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 379–415.