



2011 Business Book Club: New & Noteworthy Books for the Green Industry

Title: The Myth of Progress

Author: Tom Wessels

Reviewed by: Rebecca Lindenmeyr • Linden Landscaping • Addison, VT

E-Mail: lindenlandscaping@gmavt.net Phone: (802) 759-3033

Please use a five-star rating system (1=lowest; 5=highest). Simply darken, or circle, your rating and add your comments.

Notability ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Readability ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Takeaways ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Innovation ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Shelf Life ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

My top 3 takeaways:

Tom Wessel shows how our current socioeconomic system is in direct conflict with several Natural Laws:

a) **Complex vs. Linear Systems** – an ecosystem consists of a series of nested, complex, self-organized biological systems. Machines are linear systems – each part drives then next and it doesn't feedback on itself. The production and consumption of goods that use resources, but are not completely recycled is a linear system.

b) **Law of Limits to Growth** – an inherent law that governs all organisms, all ecosystems eventually reach a dynamic equilibrium where the energy entering the system is equal to the energy being released as heat. Why is the underlying

foundation of our idea of progress ever-increasing growth? As the population increases and the global economy grows and consumes ever-increasing amounts of energy and resources, the system grows increasingly wasteful. Human consumption is extracting more natural resources than can be replenished by ecosystems around the world. How many civilizations have collapsed because they grew past the means to sustain themselves?

c) **Second Law of Thermodynamics** or the Law of Entropy – states that although energy can't be created or destroyed, it can be transformed from one form to another, but no transformation is 100% efficient and some energy dissipates from its nested system into the larger system around it. The loss of energy from a system results in entropy, meaning it moves from order to disorder. Global climate change is the perfect example – the build-up of CO₂ from burning fossil fuels is a process of diffusing carbon from a nested system into the larger atmosphere, resulting in entropy.

So - In order to survive we will have to mimic the behavior of other species that have evolved into stable and self-organized teams. We need to:

***become more efficient, more inter-related, specialized,
*learn to co-exist without competition within a group,
*be a regenerative part of the ecosystem and reap the benefits of that mutualism.**

How?

- 1) decrease our ecological footprint in as many ways as possible – consume less
- 2) actively work to restore damaged habitats and biodiversity
- 3) support local organic farmers, develop smaller local distribution of goods and services
- 4) support small, locally owned, specialized commercial enterprises