

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/design-to-conserve-nature>

Andy Karsner, senior strategist and “Space Cowboy” at X, speculates that we may be the only species to have ever designed its own demise (by way of tragedy of the commons). But, he says, we also have the ability to design a remedy to this problem by reframing our relationship with nature. Rather than viewing nature as something to be extracted and exploited, we can think of nature as an ally in enhancing our quality of life.



Transcript

But I don't think it's a choice of whether we're going to ultimately value nature.. I think it is an inevitable, inexorable necessity.. As in if we fail to do it, we will be the first species to have designed our own demise.. That's an incredible thing.. We don't have a big claws and camouflage and Harry pelts and the things that nature provides to so many other a species.. We have our brains, that's what we have.. That is the only evolved piece of our entire being that is of any use in ensuring our longevity and the survival of our species.. And if we neglect to use it and manage in a sustainable way, those things that give us security to eat and drink and breathe and thrive, then we have our own will be the only species known to have designed our own demise.. And so since we have designed systems which do put a value on nature, it puts a value on exploiting nature, on extracting nature, on destroying nature, we can also design to conserve nature.. To use nature as an ally in enhancing our quality of living, to use nature as an ally in mitigating the problems that have been self-imposed..

So it's not like some people look at and go, "Well, what a radical theory to create valuation" "and market pricing for natural capital." And I would say having grown up in Texas and being part of the energy industry my whole life, we actually do this all the time.. We value a tree, we value it as lumber.. And if we don't value it as lumber, we value it as worthless or potential lumber.. The only question is whether we're actually going to value it for what we scientifically know it can provide to us, a source of respiration and transpiration, a source of oxygen production.. Unlike any machinery we could possibly devise, a source of sequestration.. Unlike anything, we have yet to biomimic.. And so it's a foolhardy mission to say, let's take away those miraculous beings that coexist with us in symbiosis, let's remove symbiosis to make it harder for our species to thrive.. So since we've imposed this design and designed the market system, designed a tragedy of the comments, of course we can design a remedy of the comments.. But that's why I go back to this Berlin Wall thing.. I'm of the belief that we can, we can solve big intractable problems..

We can preempt our own worst tendencies to destroy ourselves or erode our capacity or live with hostility.. And in this case, we actually don't have a choice.. We just have to execute and fast...