



INSTITUTE FOR AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY

Eco-Commensalism:

*Setting the table for what comes after
capitalism*

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Teach-In +50: End the War on the Planet

Why are we here?

Shadia Fayne Wood/Tar Sands Action



Photo by Alan Glenn



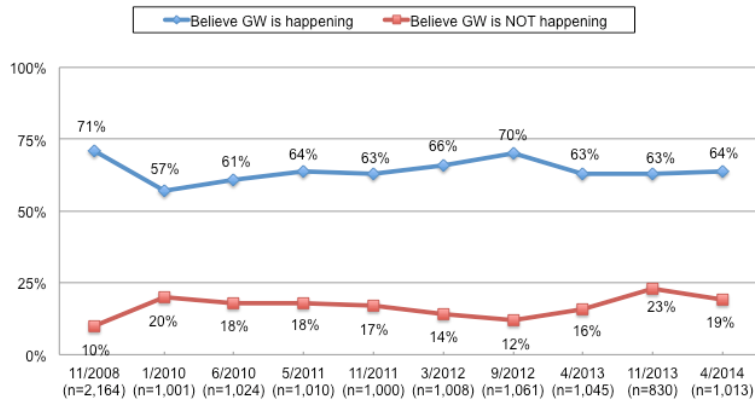
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TEACH-IN + 50
END THE WAR AGAINST THE PLANET

Mission Accomplished?

Majority of Americans Think Global Warming Is Happening - Slight decline in the number of Americans who think it is not happening -



Do you think global warming is happening?

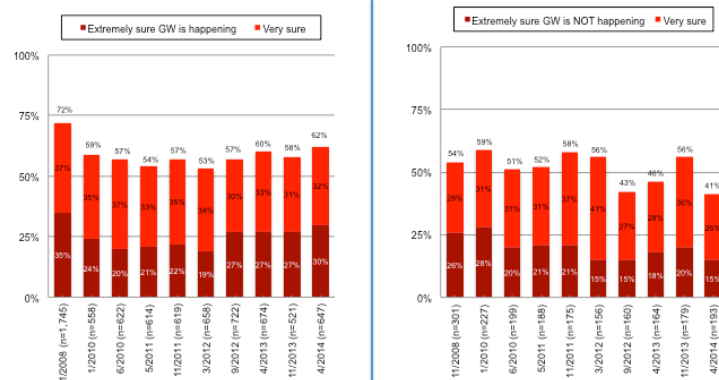
Base: Americans 18+. April, 2014.

Note: Respondent who either said they "don't know" or who did not answer the question are not included in the chart. As a result, percentages sum to less than 100%.



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Trend: Americans Who Think Global Warming Is Happening Are Growing More Certain; Those Who Do Not Are Becoming Less Certain



How sure are you that global warming is/is not happening?

Base: Americans 18+. April, 2014.



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Mission Accomplished?

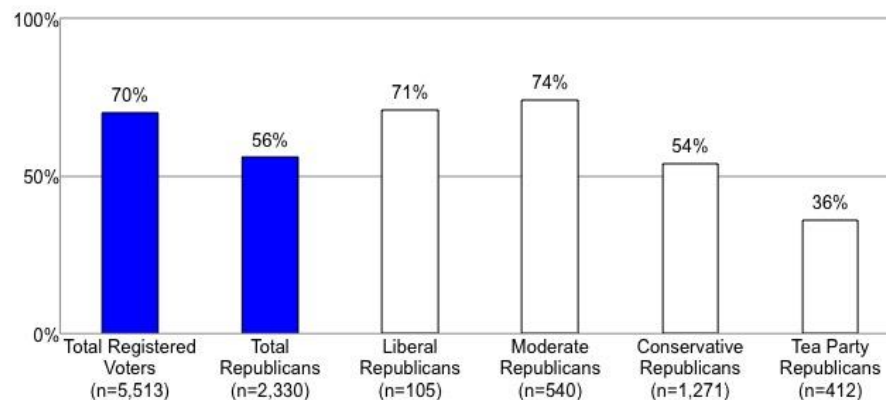
Most Republicans Say They Back Climate Action,

By CORAL DAVENPORT and MARJORIE CONNELLY JAN. 30, 2015



A view of the Capitol dome from the Capitol Power Plant, a coal-burning plant in Washington. Americans are less likely to vote for candidates who question or deny the science of human-caused global warming, a poll found.

Majority of Republicans Support Regulation of Carbon Dioxide as a Pollutant - % strongly/somewhat support the policy -



Question: How much do you support or oppose the following policies - Regulate carbon dioxide (the primary greenhouse gas) as a pollutant?

Base: Americans 18+ who are registered to vote.
Data collected from six tracking studies conducted from March 2012 to October 2014.



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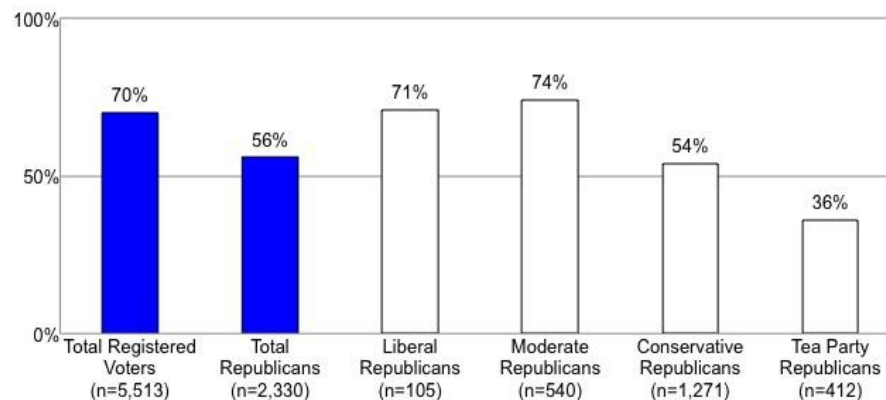
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Matter of Public Will?

- Gilens & Page 2014, *Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens*

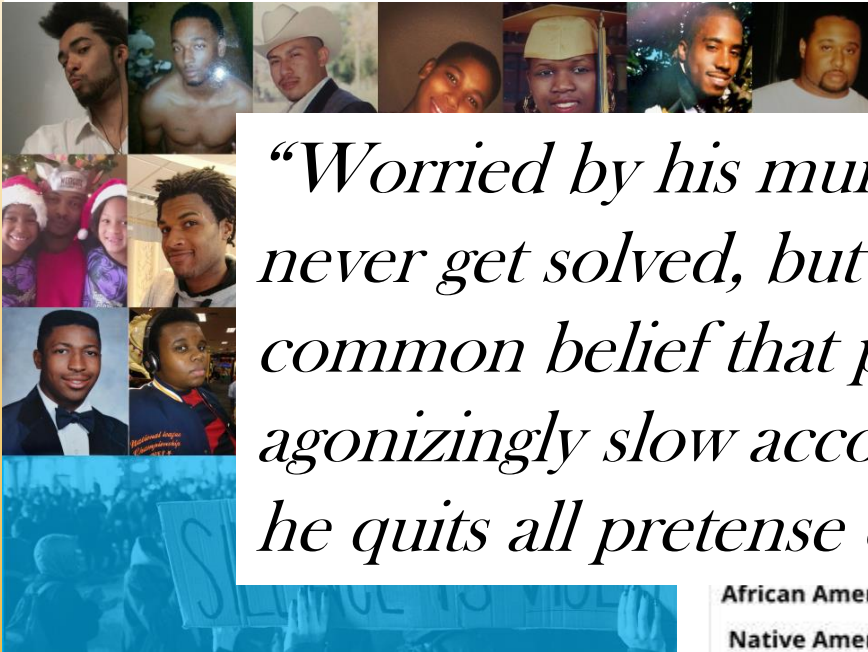
Table 4
The separate policy impact of business-oriented and mass-based interest groups

Average citizens' preferences	.05 (.08)
Economic elites' preferences	.78 (.08)***
Mass-based interest groups	.24 (.07)***
Business interest groups	.43 (.08)***
R-sq	.07

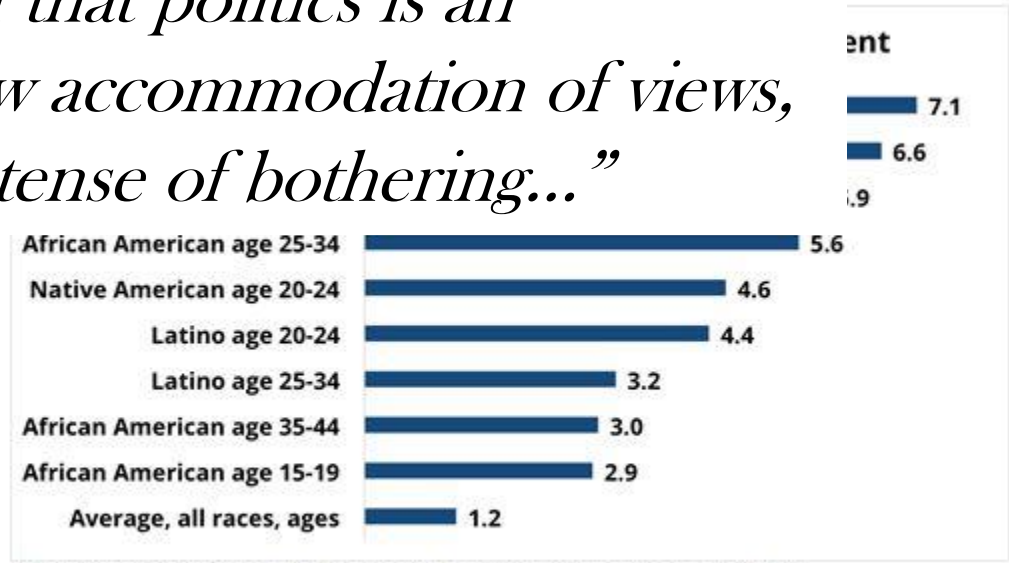
***p<.001

Note: All predictors are scaled to range from 0 to 1. The dependent variable is the policy outcome, coded 1 if the proposed policy change took place within four years of the survey date and 0 if it did not. Predictors are the logits of the imputed percent of respondents at the fiftieth ("average citizens") or ninetieth ("economic elites") income percentile that favor the proposed policy change, and the Net Interest-Group Alignment Indices described in the text. Standard errors are asymptotically distribution-free, and all analyses reflect estimated measurement error in the predictors, as described in Appendix 2. N=1,779.

- “The vast majority of our people regard the temporary equilibriums of our society and world as eternally-functional parts...
- ...the message of our society is that there is no viable alternative to the present. ”
 - *Port Huron Statement*



“Worried by his mundane problems which never get solved, but constrained by the common belief that politics is an agonizingly slow accommodation of views, he quits all pretense of bothering...”



Rate of law enforcement killings, per million population per year, 1999-2011.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Center for Health Statistics.

Two Explanations

- 1. We are currently in a system that does not reward [punishes] involvement, decreasing trust*

Two Explanations

1. *We are currently in a system that does not reward [punishes] involvement, decreasing trust*
2. *We are currently in a system that discourages involvement and cooperation by, among other things, theorizing against it!*

Economic Man/Homo economicus

- “If one such agent has an unsatiated demand for potato chips, **and the cost of one more chip will be to devastate innumerable millions, they simply are not equipped to care.**
- And the principle of Pareto optimality shrugs, saying “who are we to judge?””
 - *Cosma Shalizi, 2010*

It's just a model... *Isn't it?*



Eco-commensalism/ Ecommensalism

- *The realization that all of humankind is seated "at the same table", living in the same "household" as all other organisms on earth*

Commensalism



Eco- (*oikos*)

The “Household”

- Ecology –
 - Study of “the household
- Economics
 - Management of “the household”



Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

1. Humans now exist in a complex multi-scale and *tele-connected* web of social, ecological, economic, and historical relationships and trajectories



Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

1. Humans now exist in a multi-scale *largely non-market* web of connections



"Pan Left To Soak Now Predates All Current Roommates"

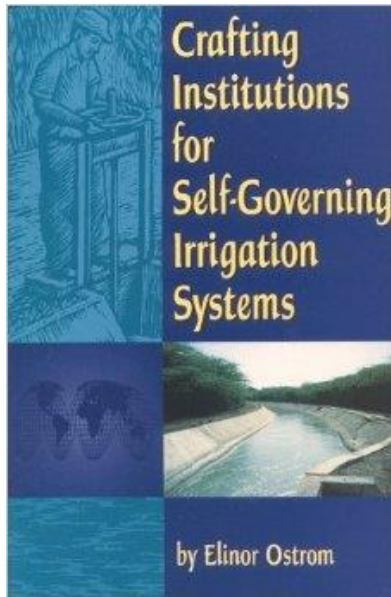


The Onion,
11/24/12

Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

2. The complex, many-variable world (e.g. within climate change) requires social arrangements that are dynamic and adaptable
 - Need subsidiarity/polycentricity: decisions (and decision-making power!) are placed as locally as possible

Polycentricity & Climate Change: An “easier” problem?



Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

3. The ability and tendency of humans to cooperate are idiosyncratic, but pattern-based; they are neither predicted by nor encompassed by prevailing economic theories
 - A “grammar” of cooperation?
 - The importance of *meaning* and *identity*:
 - “*Because identity is fundamental to behavior, choice of identity may be the most important ‘economic decision’ people make (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000)*”

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Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

4. Face-to-face interactions cannot (the evidence thus far indicates...) be replaced

"Much of human knowledge (as Polanyi argues) is practical, and cannot be fully articulated ("tacit")." (Farrell and Shalizi, 2010)

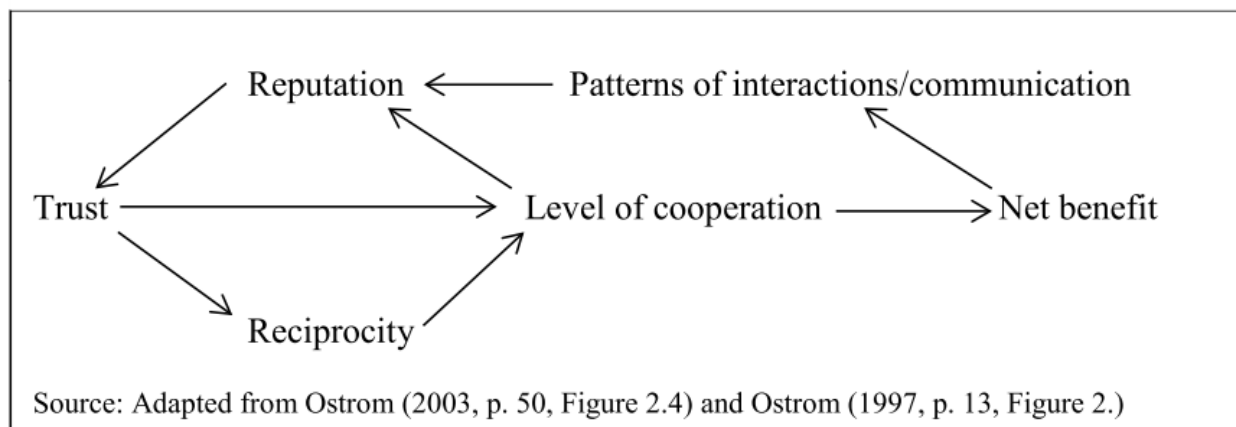
– *BUT:*

- "Weak ties" & network connections
- Transitive trust
- Capacity-building through rotation?

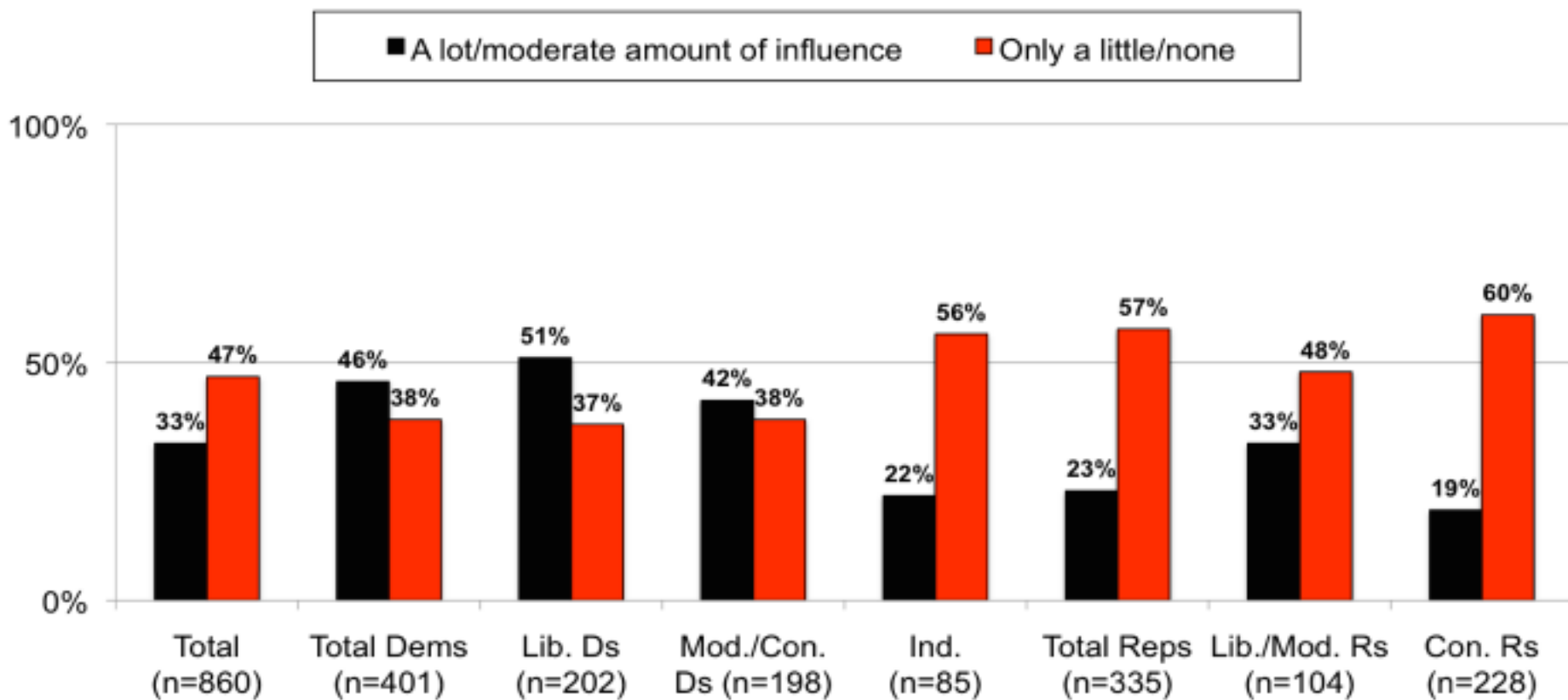
Eco-Commensalism: Tenets

5. Self- (and communal-) efficacy must be fostered
 - Neoliberal/capitalist narrative of incompetency and “un-deliberation” must be fought
 - New narratives & theories must be supported

Figure 1. Core Relations in Repeated Social Dilemmas



Democrats Are More Likely Than Independents or Republicans to Say They Could, Working Together With Like-Minded Others, Influence the Decisions of Government Officials Regarding Global Warming



If people who share your views work together, how much do you think they could influence the decisions of government officials regarding global warming?

Base: Registered American Voters 18+. April, 2014.



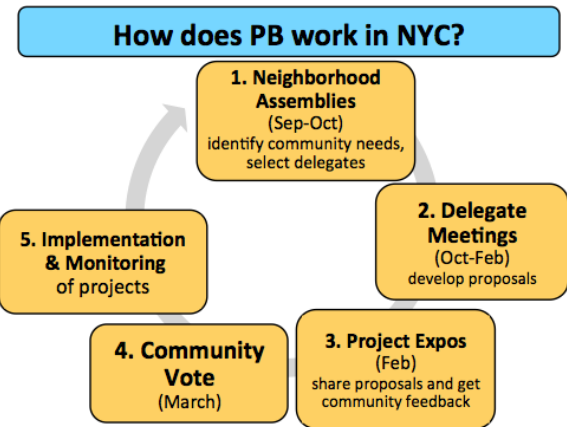
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The future of Participatory Democracy (or Eco-commensalism...)

MORRIS AREA CLIMATE DIALOGUE



Participatory Budgeting



RURAL CLIMATE DIALOGUES

Citizens' Juries



Otro mundo ja chegou...



Another world is already here...