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THE *FUTURES* FOUNDATION

future news

A newsletter for members of the *Futures* Foundation

In This Issue:

Education to transform futures

Delivering on the legacy of a guru

What is the connection between a new academic cooperative in Australia, a cooperatives research program in Venezuela, a cooperative training program in Croatia, community based skills sharing groups scattered across the globe, eco-villages in the USA, yoga and meditation retreats across the world, a global network of community service and sustainable development programs, and environmental and animal rights activism across the world?

The answer is people who are inspired to be active participants in their societies to look after the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of the administrators and the administered of their societies as a whole. And their inspiration comes from Prout, a social movement based on spiritual culture, a model of an ideal socio-economic system, a vision of the good society, and the Prout practice.

Prout College (www.proutcollege.org), affiliated with the University of the Sunshine Coast, is a new virtual cooperative university hosted in Australia. Prout College started running its first subjects this year. The members of the cooperative are the teachers Sohail Inayatullah, Michael Towsey, Ivana Milojevic and Marcus Bussey and the administrator Jake Karlyle all of whom have been involved with Prout and/or futures education for many years.

"The coop members are the ones who put the effort in over the last few years to make the college a reality," explained Jake Karlyle. "And the members of the academic faculty are responsible for designing and teaching all the courses. The project is the fruits of Jennifer Fitzgerald's initial groundwork in Australia in the 1990's, inspired by Prout, to create the tertiary college and then the continuation of the project by Stephen Gunther after Jennifer died in 2000. The Prout vision continues to provide the inspiration for Prout College and we warmly acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by Jennifer Fitzgerald and Stephen Gunther."

"The *Certificate in Prout Studies* can be studied full-time or part-time," said Sohail Inayatullah. "As always, the person who learns the most from any course is the one who teaches... thus I love the two- and three-day foresight workshops I run as in the last session the participants teach. We are doing our best to move from single loop to double loop learning about what is my inner story and what is my character in creating Prout inspired futures. We are also doing a dance between using Prout lenses to look at social reality and then using other theories to look at Prout, all with the intent of knowledge pluralism and transformative action. An inner spiritual dimension is also developing in the course."

"We can do something about the future; the future is there as a potentiality," said Marcus Bussey. "Education that generates rather than consumes energy has the potential to return hope and creativity to the human experiment. If we infuse education with spiritual energy drawn from the practices, values and commitments of the great spiritual traditions we produce a system that channels powerful creative forces into the future. Prout with its neo-humanist frame of thinking can inspire us to imagine sustainable futures and create interventions that will enable policy making that sustains the economic, environmental, social, personal and collective aspects of our ways of living."

This semester is the first with enrolled students and the subjects for this semester include:

- Introduction to Prout (epistemology and methodology; neohumanism; alternative economics, macrohistory, and glo-cal governance) taught by Sohail Inayatullah and Michael Towsey,
- Macrohistory and World Futures (comparative macrohistory, scenarios of the world futures) by Sohail Inayatullah and Ivana Milojevic, and
- Education for Liberation (pedagogy for transformation, educational futures, spiritual education) by Marcus Bussey.

Prout College… continued on page 3

Inspired by PROUT and Started/Run by Proutists

Woodshanti is a worker-owned cooperative
San Francisco

Community Centre
Prout Research Institute of Venezuela

FROM THE EDITOR

Seeking the right ingredients

We are living in times when, on the one hand some are receiving treatment for "environmental catastrophe" anxiety while on the other hand others are under increased stress of starvation because available stocks of essential foods are being turned into fuel products.

On the one hand some are declaring immobility in the face of perceived overwhelming problems while on the other hand others are resorting to violence as a means of forcing a change in the status quo.

On the one hand some are individually shunning luxury and consumerism and implementing what they understand as sustainable living while on the other hand others are claiming the right to also enjoy luxury.

The question that often remains unasked or unanswered in these times is "How does my community, my society, and the global society live in a way that can be sustained over the long term?" Because it is now the collective outcome, the global outcome, that will be significant for future generations (some of whom are already born).

This month's newsletter looks at a small sample of global topics and the potential solutions proposed. It can be seen how efforts such as GEO (on page 1) and EPI (pages 5 - 6) are necessary systems to support transformation but are in themselves inadequate to decide how to, for example, deal with the full extent of the threats to domestic animal diversity (page 4). What these systems do not accommodate in the new environment of our time is the aspect of human agency and the motivations that decide on the rules and that set targets to feed into GEO and EPI. It is 'theories' such as Prout (pages 1, 3) that provide alternative visions of living in this world that are necessary ingredients to the mix of GEO and EPI systems.

Barbara Bok

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A Pre-Committed Future – GTOS, GEO, & GEOSS

On account of carbon dioxide that humans have already added to the atmosphere climate will continue to change, with both ocean and land temperature continuing to rise for decades, and sea levels continuing to rise for centuries. The world has therefore already a future "pre-committed" to global warming. This was the message from the Chair, Berrien Moore of the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS), a global system for observations, modelling and analysis of terrestrial ecosystems to support sustainable development. GTOS is working with Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and other partners to develop a terrestrial observing strategy. (1)

GEO reports that "Australia's Governor-General has spoken to the leaders of China, Russia and the US about a joint "space-age" project for more accurate forecasts of floods, drought and weather. This high-level support for strengthening Earth observations highlights the importance of GEO's Project on "The socio-economic and environmental benefits of a revolution in weather, climate and Earth system analysis and prediction"." (http://earthobservations.org/)

"The Group on Earth Observations (or GEO) is coordinating international efforts to build a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). This emerging public infrastructure is interconnecting a diverse and growing array of instruments and systems for monitoring and forecasting changes in the global environment."

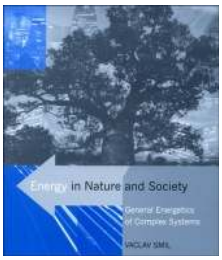
GEOSS will yield a broad range of societal benefits, notably:

- Reducing loss of life and property from natural and human-induced disasters;
- Understanding environmental factors affecting human health and well-being,
- Understanding, assessing, predicting, mitigating, and adapting to climate variability and change,
- Improving water resource management through better understanding of the water cycle,
- Improving the management of energy resources,
- Improving weather information, forecasting and warning,
- Improving the management and protection of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems,
- Supporting sustainable agriculture and combating desertification, and
- Understanding, monitoring and conserving biodiversity.

(1) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2008, Terrestrial observations of our planet, GTOS Biennial Report, Viewed 11 April 2008, at www.fao.org

NEW BOOK

Energy matters shaping the world



Energy in Nature and Society: General Energetics of Complex Systems
Vaclav Smil
The MIT Press, January 2008, 512 pp., 136 illus., $32.00/£20.95

"*Energy in Nature and Society* is a systematic and exhaustive analysis of all the major energy sources, storages, flows, and conversions that have shaped the evolution of the biosphere and civilization. Vaclav Smil uses fundamental unifying metrics (most notably for power density and energy intensity) to provide an integrated framework for analyzing all segments of energetics (the study of energy flows and their transformations). The book explores not only planetary energetics (such as solar radiation and geomorphic processes) and bioenergetics (photosynthesis, for example) but also human energetics (such as metabolism and thermoregulation). Included are chapters on heterotrophic conversions, traditional agriculture, preindustrial complexification, fossil fuels, fossil-fueled civilization, the energetics of food, and the implications of energetics for the environment. The book concludes with an examination of general patterns, trends, and socioeconomic considerations of energy use today, looking at correlations between energy and value, energy and the economy, energy and quality of life, and energy futures."

Prout College – Helping people move from survival to bliss

Prout College offers eight units that, when taken together, are intended to be part of humanity's response to the global challenge faced – the units are intended to help people move from survival to ultimately bliss. Prout has five pillars: 1) spiritual practice, 2) Neohumanism, 3) the social cycle, 4) governance, and 5) socio-economy.

Spiritual practice means that there is an interior dimension to the external world. In a successful Proutist society meditation and other practices are central and the inner dimension flows through the other aspects of Prout.

Neohumanism is both equal opportunity legislation and inner mindfulness. (More is given below in the Origins of Prout).

The social cycle provides a theory of macrohistory and future. There are four stages of history and four ways of knowing – the worker, the warrior, the intellectual and the merchant. History is cyclical. However, we are not doomed to the cycle. There is a way out. At the centre of the cycle are sadvipras – ideal leaders, who can access these four potentials and ensure that the cycle becomes progressive, that each wave of change continues the rotation of the cycle but at higher levels. (See also the table below.)

Prout works as a federalist world system with a sadvipra informal social system (the network of policy boards that inform and guide the formal system). Prout thus reconciles the two grand traditions in political theory: democracy and wisdom, structure and agency.

Prout focuses on the cooperative socio-economic model (along with private small-scale enterprises and state-run public utilities). A Proutist society provides a safety net with incentives for innovation. Prout in this way seeks a third way, progressively beyond socialist and capitalist models of ownership, and resolves the dichotomies of global and local.

A Neohumanist Game

A class room activity was developed by Peter Hayward and Joseph Voros at Swinburne University to demonstrate the social cycle described above. In the game students take on the four social roles and by playing the game students learn how their own social roles are constructed.

An article containing the instructions and background information can be obtained by visiting www.proutcollege.org and following the subscription link.

The Stages of the Social Cycle

Shudra	Worker	Dominated by Environment
Ksattriya	Warrior	Struggles with and dominates Environment
Vipra	Intellectual	Struggles with and dominates Ideas
Vaeslrya	Capitalist	Struggles with and dominates Environment/ Ideas

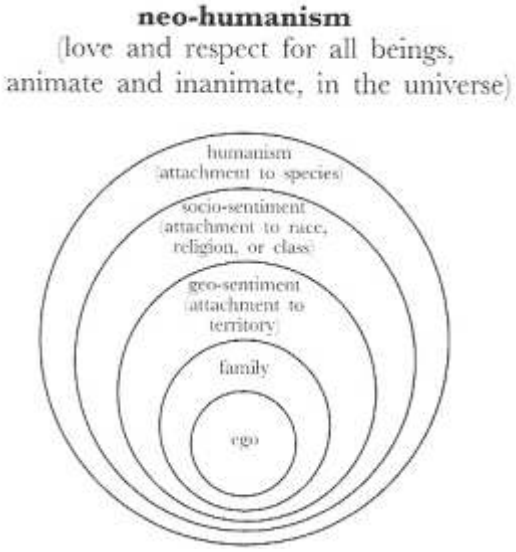
Origins of Prout: Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar

Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar (1921-1990) is described as a controversial Indian philosopher, guru and activist. For his supporters Sarkar was a philosopher, social reformer, and spiritual teacher dedicated to the task of planetary transformation. Through his actions and teachings he inspired people to develop themselves to their fullest, and to assume greater responsibility for humanity's welfare. While Sarkar passed away in 1990, his work, his social movements, his vision of the future remains ever alive for his supporters and through the organisations such as Ananda Marga he had begun.

Sarkar formulated a humanistic philosophy he called "neo-humanism." (pictured on the right) From the stance of neo-humanism, people's aspirations and achievements are not to be measured in reference to creed, state, social institution, or personal wealth. None of these have worth in and of themselves, but possess value only in so far as they serve to nurture bodies, expand intellects, and elevate souls. He felt that humanity's future well-being lies in the hands of those motivated by neo-humanist sentiment – love and respect for all beings, animate and inanimate, in the universe.

According to the theory of neo-humanism it is possible to have more empathy and compassion, greater commitment to social equality, increased unity with others, and re-identification of the self with the Cosmos. The central framework for Sarkar's Neo-Humanistic perspective is his *Pro*gressive *U*tilization *T*heory (Prout)[1].

(1) Inayatullah, Sohail, 2002, *Understanding Sarkar: The Indian episteme, macrohistory and transformative knowledge*, Brill, Leiden



Sarkar's Neo-Humanism

Inspired by PROUT and Started/Run by Proutists


AMURT - Agricultural start-up program Southwest of Banda Aceh

AMURT - Women's self help group, microcredit Nairobi

Guardians of domestic animal diversity

Future capacity is under threat

Small-scale farmers and herders are making an especially important contribution to food security by protecting and increasing the world's stock of genetic resources at a time when domestic animal diversity is being lost at an alarming rate. Their role as guardians of biodiversity has formally been recognised by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in article 8jA.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has documented thirteen case studies that demonstrate that local knowledge is crucial in preserving the equilibrium between farmers, their animals and the environment. However, livestock keepers' role in maintaining this balance and conserving biodiversity is under a great deal of pressure from changing land tenure policies and the expansion of natural reserves.

Livestock diversity represents future capacity to meet unforeseen needs and opportunities. Through traditional farming systems a broad diversity of livestock breeds is being preserved and developed to provide meat, dairy products, eggs, fibre, fertiliser, manure and draught power. Consumers benefit from this diversity since it offers them a wide choice of products for a varied and nutritious diet. However, worldwide, local livestock breeds are being crossed or replaced with higher-yielding animals under the motto "exotic is better" and the native habitats of pastoralists and their animals are steadily disappearing encouraged by a decreasing appreciation of the value of local breeds.

The thirteen case studies describe the challenges faced by livestock keepers and illustrate how their communities have dealt with the challenges. The studies highlight that decision-makers are often unaware of the far-reaching impact of their decisions on the conservation and sustainable use of livestock genetic diversity. The knowledge within these communities about solving the challenges of their farming systems have huge potential to generate new ideas and to address the problems related to loss of livestock diversity.

A Drivers of Change framework has also been derived from the thirteen case studies spanning five continents. See the diagram on the right.

CHAPTER ONE Describes four case studies in the extremely harsh and unpredictable subtropical mountain ecosystems of Argentina, Bhutan, Lesotho, and Nepal. The small, hardy goats in Neuquén are doubly threatened by projects pushing for exotic breeds and the discontinuation of exchange of breeding stock with Chile. In Bhutan the community-managed yak herding no longer have access to Chinese breeding material and pasture quality is exacerbated by a ban on the use of fire as a management tool. The Basotho ponies are under threat from indiscriminate cross breeding and stock-theft. The Lime buffaloes in the Hills of Nepal have dwindled to five percent of the buffalo herd due to replacement by Murrah buffaloes from India.

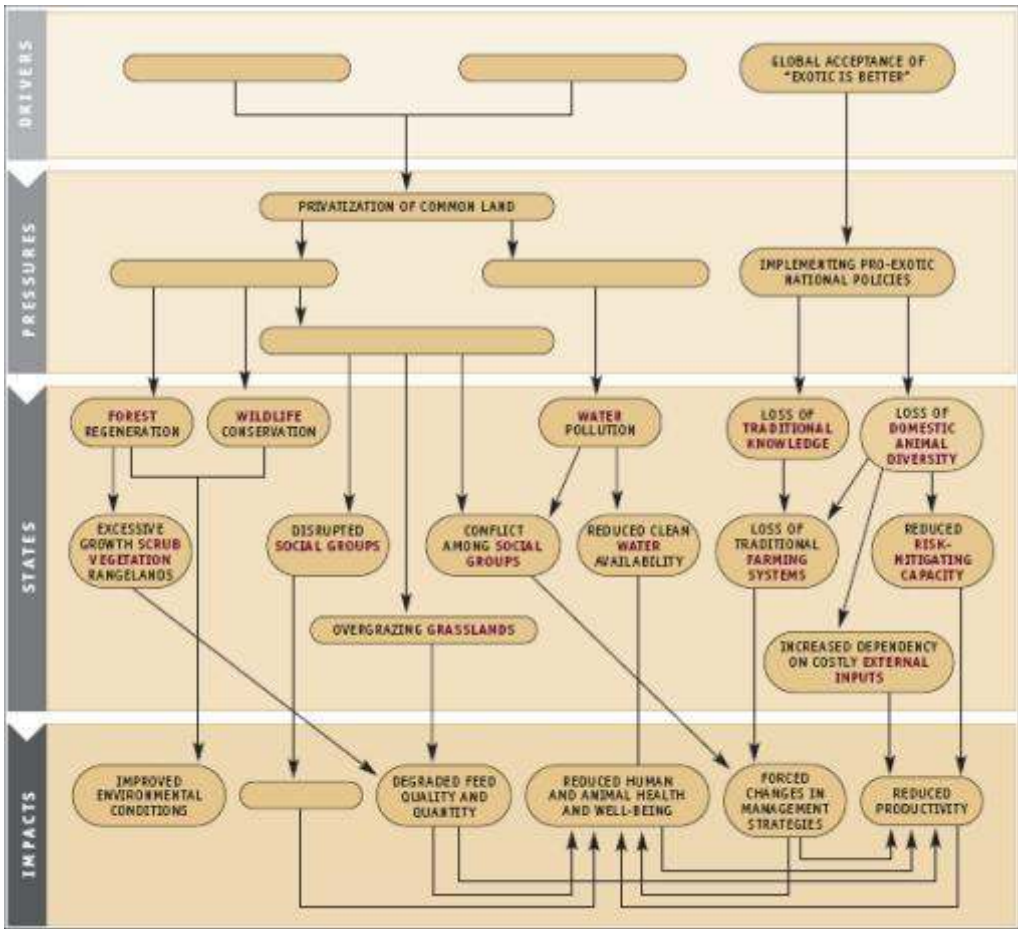
CHAPTER TWO Looks at two livestock systems in extreme climate tropical mountain-ecosystems of Bolivia and Peru. Livestock raised in these areas are both physically and physiologically adapted to the harsh environmental conditions. The llamas and alpacas in the Turco region are managed in a transhumant system. The peasant communities of the central Andes have developed mixed livestock systems involving sheep, camelids, and cattle and devised a complex mixture of organisational and management systems.

CHAPTER THREE Examines two livestock rearing systems in temperate conditions in Germany and Tajikistan. The pig breed introduced into Germany nearly disappeared in the 1960s due to the introduction of commercial pig breeds but the breed has been revitalised through a structured and communal approach. The local zebus cattle in Tajikistan are risking extinction from the uncontrolled introduction of exotic breeds and indiscriminate cross-breeding.

CHAPTER FOUR Looks at three case studies of raising livestock in the humid tropical areas of Laos, Viet Nam, and Togo. The indigenous chicken breeds in the Lao People's Democratic Republic are threatened by expansion of industrial commercial hybrids. The Somba cattle breed, well suited to the climate, is at risk of extinction in Togo. The Co duck in Viet Nam is hardy and resistant to local diseases and bred in a closed production system integrated with rice cultivation.

CHAPTER FIVE Covers two case studies of the symbiosis between livestock and their keepers in the arid and semi-arid areas of the Navajo reservation in New Mexico and in Uzbekistan. Both the Navajo-churro and the Karakul sheep breeds survive in these regions where ordinary sheep would not survive. The Churro sheep breed has been saved by the participation of Native Americans in a special project. The Karakul sheep breed is facing major challenges due to environmental problems and management issues.

Source: Tempelman, Kim-Anh, Cardellino Ricardo A. (Eds) 2007, *People and animals: Traditional livestock keepers: Guardians of domestic animal diversity*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Viewed at www.foa.org



Drivers of change framework

The 2008 Environmental Performance Index

Seeking environmental success in the numbers

The 2008 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) was released by the World Economic Forum in Davos, created by the Yale Center for Environmental law and Policy - Yale University and Center for International Earth Science Information Network - Columbia University.

"The EPI focuses on two overarching objectives: (1) reducing environmental stresses on human health and (2) promoting ecosystem vitality and sound natural resource management. These broad goals reflect the policy priorities of environmental authorities around the world as well as the environmental dimension of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Success in meeting these objectives is gauged using 25 indicators of on-the-ground results tracked in six well-established policy categories."

The quantitative indicators of the EPI were developed to support efforts to spot emerging environmental problems, assess policy options, and gauge the effectiveness of government programs. The EPI seeks to fill the gap where data and analysis of environmental problems are seriously lacking and are still hampering environmental and sustainability decision making.

The 2008 EPI represents a "work in progress" intended to stimulate debate about appropriate metrics and methodologies for evaluating environmental performance.

The 2008 EPI measures individual country-scale performance on a core set of environmental policy goals for which every government can be – and should be – held accountable. Specific targets are identified and the distance between the target and the country's current results are measured. The real value of the EPI does not lie in the ranking of the environmental performance of the nearly 150 countries but in careful analysis of the underlying data and performance metrics for countries and between countries.

Indicators and Targets

Indicators were sought to cover the full spectrum of issues underlying each of the major policy categories identified. They were selected according to their clear relevance to the environmental issue of concern, ability to track the on-the-ground results, transparency with regard to data sources and methods, and the data represent the best measure available.

Targets are taken first from international treaties and agreements, then from environmental or public health standards developed by international organisations or national governments, then from the scientific literature, and finally from expert opinion around the world. The fact that only a few indicators have explicit consensus targets established at a global scale suggests that there is a need to be clearer about the long-term goals of environmental policies at all levels.

The detailed report can be accessed at http://epi.yale.edu/Home.

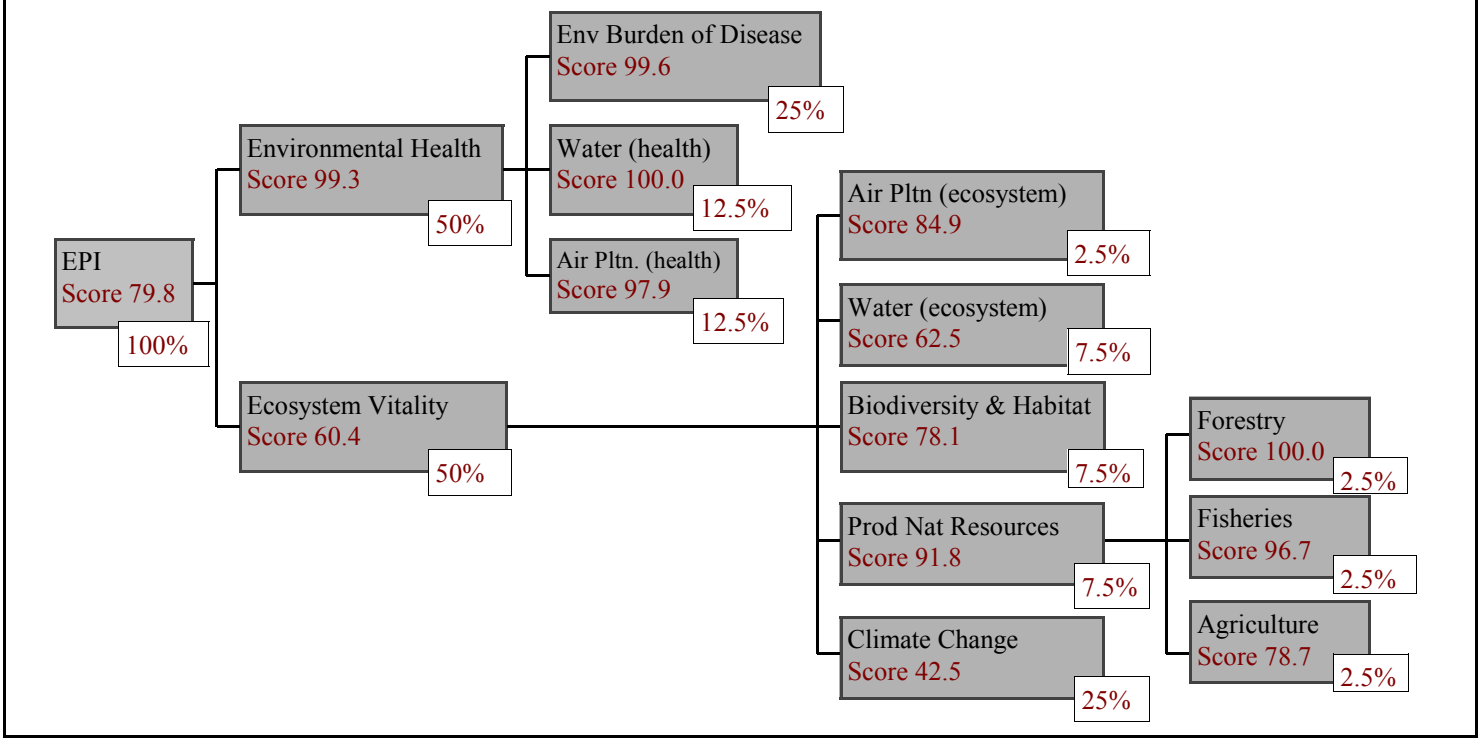
From the Overall Results

The EPI score is made up of an Environmental Heath metric and an Ecosystem Vitality metric each given 50% weight in the calculation of the EPI. Overall there were many more high performing countries in the Environmental Health arena than in Ecosystem Vitality. Sixty-six countries had scores of 90 or above in Environmental Health, whereas only 2 scored above 90 in Ecosystem Vitality. The number of high performers in Environmental Health reflects government attention to basic human needs, such as drinking water and sanitation. Unlike Ecosystem Vitality, Environmental Health is highly correlated with wealth, indicating that many of the low-performing countries have not made the requisite investment in baseline environmental amenities.

Australia's overall score is given on the right and the calculationof the Environmental Health and Ecosystem Vitality metrics for Australia are given in the diagram below. Australia's low performance in Ecosystem Vitality reduced the country's overall rank substantially. These metrics are examined in more detail on the next page.

Australia	
EPI score	79.8
EPI rank	46
Objective scores:	
Environmental Health	99.3
Ecosystem Vitality	60.4
GDP per capita	$30678
Population	20.2M

Australia's EPI score and calculation of Environmental Health and Ecosystem Vitality scores



The 2008 Environmental Performance Index

(*Continued from page 5*)

Environmental Health Metric

The Environmental Health objective is concerned with measures relevant to the goals of reducing environmental stresses on human health to capture the effect that the environment has on the quality of life globally. Environmental Health stands out as one of the most important aspects of environmental policymaking, as its effects can be both immediate and long lasting. Environmental factors significantly impact human health, both directly and indirectly and effective policy decisions focus on reducing environmental stresses on human health and produce long-term health benefits.

The Environmental Health indicator is a composite of three main environmental risk factors:

1. Environmental Burden of Disease,
2. Water (for sanitation and drinking), and
3. Air Pollution.

Environmental issues can affect human health through many different channels and thus determining which factors are directly causal and which indirectly affect health is sometimes difficult. Furthermore, exposure to environmental factors does not automatically lead to changes in human health yet this is what is often measured. Lack of adequate medical infrastructure can cause individuals in one country to suffer greater health effects when exposed to environmental factors than those equally exposed in countries with more substantial medical infrastructures. The ability to be properly treated for medical conditions can determine both the immediate health effects and the lasting predispositions that an individual faces as a result of exposure to environmental risks.

The Environmental Health is correlated to wealth: those that have the resources to invest in a strong medical infrastructure will cope better with exposure to health stressors.

Ecosystem Vitality Metric

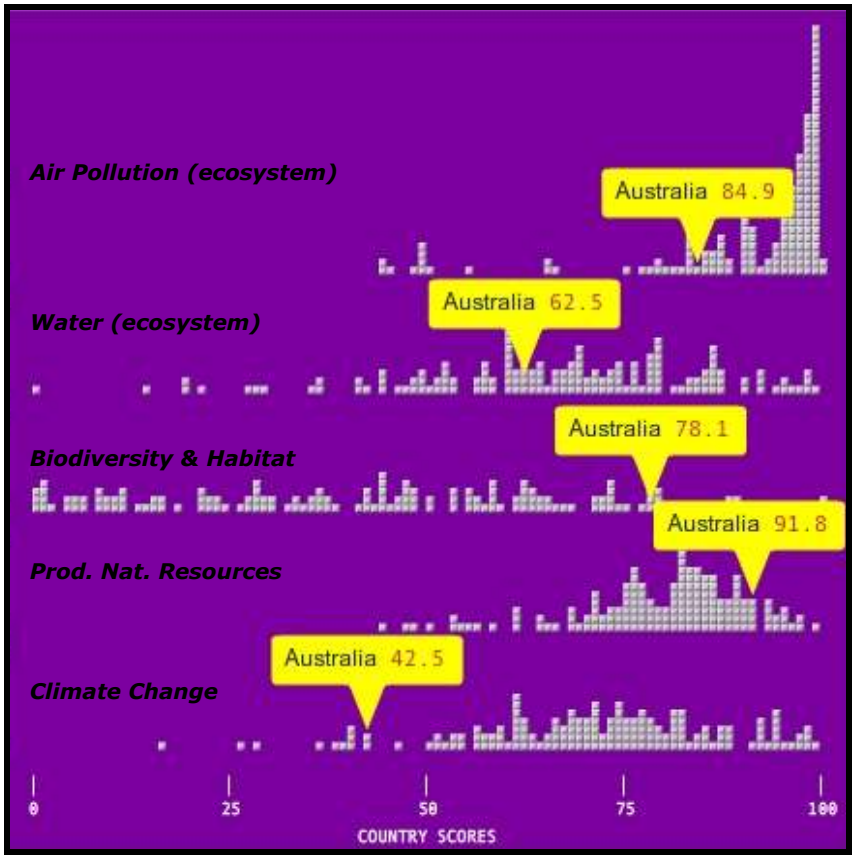
The Ecosystem Vitality metric is concerned with measures relevant to the goal of reducing the loss or degradation of ecosystems and natural resources. The Ecosystem Vitality metric is a composite of the following indicators:

1. Climate Change,
2. Air Effects on Ecosystems,
3. Water Effects on Ecosystems,
4. Biodiversity and Habitat, and
5. Productive Natural Resources.

The Climate Change metric includes three sub-categories to measure the effects of green house gas (GHG) emissions. Countries that have invested in policies promoting energy efficiency or derive energy from renewable energy sources will score higher than countries that meet their electricity demand with fossil fuels or fuel wood. Countries that have low per capita emissions due to small industrial sectors and lifestyles of low energy intensity and where GHGs are being managed within the industrial economy receive higher scores.

The Productive Natural Resources metric includes three sub-categories for Forestry, Fisheries, and Agriculture which are sectors that face unique management challenges, often stemming from excessive resource demand, waste, or damaging methods of exploitation.

The Biodiversity and Habitat metric reflects efforts to protect the conditions of species and natural ecosystems so that "ecosystem services" will remain available for current and future generations.



Graphics and text modified from the http://epi.yale.edu/ website