

## Overview

This is to request funds to support early-stage research and presentation on the question of long-term decisionmaking. The general research question is,

What are the conditions under which individuals, individually and in organizations, think and act with a long time horizon?

"Long," in the first instance, refers to time scales that are i) required to deal with critical environmental problems such as global warming; and ii) longer than prevailing time scales in policymaking and business. Ultimately, "long" is that which achieves congruence between biophysical cycles and human/social cycles.

My approach is to bring to bear as many disciplinary and substantive perspectives as possible on this question. Among them are: behavioral ecology, environmental psychology, neurobiology, business history, and finance.

Within the business realm, I am looking for case studies of two sorts. One is where business practice exhibits time horizons that defy conventional norms (of, say, a few years). Capital-intensive industries such as railroads and aerospace are possibilities, as well as timbering and fishing. Another sort is specific firms within a given industry that exhibit especially long time horizons (for that industry). Privately held newspapers within the media industry and locally based growers within the food industry are examples.

All of this requires literature searches and wide-ranging exploration (in the literature and in the field).

## Project background

A year ago I was invited to participate on a roundtable on long-term decisionmaking at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association (ISA). I agreed because I had already begun thinking through the next step after my recent project and book, The Logic of Sufficiency (MIT Press, 2005), and it was becoming clear the long term has to be sorted out. That panel, organized by political scientist Detlef Sprinz of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, drew considerable interest, enough to inspire Sprinz to organize a formal panel with papers for the next ISA meeting, February 28-March 1, 2007. Interest was so high he actually proposed and had accepted two panels, on one of which I am presenting an early-stage paper

titled, "Constructing the Long Term: The Positive Case in Climate Change in other Long Crises," (a readable draft will be ready in the next week or so).

The requested funding is to bring that paper beyond the "early draft" stage, to fund some half of my conference expenses (the other half coming from SNRE's faculty travel allotment) and to position myself for external funding, all of which will take me through the spring and into the summer this year, 2007.

I expect my paper will become part of a special journal issue and/or a book chapter in a collected volume. Longer term (so to speak) it will constitute an essential piece in my own book-length project, now titled, "A Social Theory of Ecological sustainability."

I have a graduate student, Peter Arbuckle, who is ready to work on this as soon as his thesis is complete, hopefully early March. I will also seek a work study student. Both, ideally, will be able to work through the summer.