

Reading Guide for Natural Capitalism

1. What does Hawken think will “drive” the birth of a new type of industrialism?
2. How does he frame the “triple bottom line?”
3. According to Hawken, commodities cost less now than ever? How does he explain that when we know that our stock of natural capital is decreasing?
4. Hawken frames four types of “capital” that are needed for an economy to function well. What are these?
5. What is the “carbon cycle” that Hawken describes, and how does it parallel his example of overfishing?
6. Hawken says that “industrial capitalism” liquidates its capital and calls it income. What does he mean by that? Why does he think this practice is a problem?
7. Why can't we just put a price on natural capital that gets used up and add it to the cost of a product?
8. Hawken states that humans can't replace the planet's life support systems. How does this resonate with McDonough's description of trying to design a tree?
9. Review the tenets of our “business as usual” system, as Hawken sees them. Do you agree that this is how our system tends to function? Note how he says that society defines “progress” or human well-being.” Note number 5: we've all heard it. Do you agree with it? How does sustainability theory speak to this statement?
10. Hawken points out that our economic systems were not always governed by these tenets. When does he say they started to define our system? How many generations ago was that. Think about our frames of reference lesson and whether or not this system has been in use for a “loooong” time.
11. What fallacy does Hawken believe exists in these tenets?
12. How does Hawken's notion of “somewhere and elsewhere” resonate with McDonough's notion of “away?”
13. What biological analogy does Hawken offer as a way to describe how our current system operates?
14. How many people were added to the planet every hour when Hawken wrote this book? Is it more or less now?
15. How did the industrial revolution define “progress” according to Hawken. Do you think this definition still flavors the public perception of progress?
16. Note the mass of material Hawken claims is used per person per day – and the mass wasted. Can you see why sustainability theory addresses “inefficiencies?”
17. Look at Hawken's list of tenets that would define capitalism if living systems mattered. Decide which one you would discuss if called upon in class.
18. What four central strategies of NC does Hawken think would operate if these tenets were adopted? Write these down so you can list them in class. Do you see any similarity in the fourth one and in what McDonough meant by buildings that produce rather than consume?
19. Give an example of how Hawken thinks we can make our resources “more productive.”
20. What is his Factor of 10?

21. Read the last paragraph of this section and be ready to discuss it – about developing countries reaching western standards.
22. What exactly is biomimicry? Give some examples
23. Explain how Interface is an example of moving towards a “service economy”
24. How in the heck can we ADD to ecosystems and their services? Read the section on investing in natural capital and explain.