

Realistic Environmentalism

Julian Barg

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Introduction

A personal episode

Before I wrote my first term paper I had learned to avoid words such as "should", "must" or "have to". I had learned that the researcher should avoid normative language and stay "neutral". Today we know that an author's background inevitably enters the writing process, if not in language then in content, and that sometimes it is more sensible for us reflect on our values and maybe even "disclose" them to our reader. I have come to realize that the abovementioned rule of thumb still holds true in one sense though: it is not that we have to keep our value or norms or opinions out of our research because our research needs to be "objective". Rather, the hard truth is that if you tell "the world" in your paper what to do, the world probably will not listen to you. "The world" probably will not care—beyond your readers.¹ Sometimes, it is more sensible for us to lay out the facts and let the audience arrive at the conclusion herself or himself.

See also Boisot and McKelvey (2010); Gouldner (1962); Jones and Bartunek (2019); Zbaracki, Watkiss, McAlpine, and Barg (2021).

In terms of citations and cultural impact, the last 30 years have been an unlimited success for sustainability research. Yes, the community is less than satisfied with the outcomes (e.g., Ergene, Banerjee, & Hoffman, 2020). This article takes a look at the original motivation of the research and how that motivation has influenced the research that happens under its umbrella (Latour, 1987). That insight on the motivation and the research process allows us to problematize missed opportunities (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Toward this goal we carry out a discourse analysis.

¹And in some cases even those will not care.

References

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