

Reports to the Club of Rome. Global Challenges Facing Humanity

Review of "Come On! - Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet"

By [Anthony Judge](#)

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Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [History](#)

The following text is the Introduction to a review article

A new "Report to the Club of Rome" has been prepared by [Ernst von Weizsaecker](#) and [Anders Wijkman](#) ([Come On! Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet](#), 2018) as part of its 50th anniversary celebrations — subsequent to its original foundation in Rome in 1968. Its declared mission is to promote understanding of the global challenges facing humanity and to propose solutions through scientific analysis, communication and advocacy.

The new report is divided into three main sections as succinctly described in a review by [Ugo Bardi](#), himself a member of the Club ([Saving the World: Top-Down or Bottom-Up? A Review of the Latest Report to the Club of Rome, "Come On"](#), Resilience, 13 April 2018):

- The first part, the review of the current trends, is – in my opinion – the best part of the book. It is a well thought-out review which doesn't shun from facing some politically unnameable subjects, such as that of overpopulation and of the need to stop its growth.
- The second part of the book is a review of the theories and models currently used to understand the situation in which we find ourselves. This section provides a description of religious views of the relation of humankind with the world, starting with the Pope's encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* and then moves to a detailed criticism of the current economic theories.
- Finally, the third part of the book. This is the most ambitious section, indeed it is as long as the first two summed together. It is also the most difficult and complex: what to do, in practice? Here, the authors face a problem that has affected the Club's analysis over the past 50 years: who should act to save humankind from destruction?

Since 1968 some 60 [reports to the Club of Rome](#), or variously associated with it, have been produced — most notably following publication of [The Limits to Growth](#) in 1972. The concern here is how best to review another such report, in the light of the insights variously offered in the earlier reports. That concern has previously been partially articulated in a review of that pattern after 40 years (2012), updated for this occasion ([Club of Rome Reports and Bifurcations: a 50-year overview](#), 2018).

The issue is how the insights have been accumulated over 50 years and how they are now articulated within the new report in the effort “to promote understanding of the global challenges facing humanity and to propose solutions through scientific analysis, communication and advocacy”. Has the understanding of global challenges taken more coherent and insightful form? Is there indeed greater insight into the challenges of “communication and advocacy”?

Clearly the first part of the book is be valued as a new clarification of the issues — the “problematique”? — on the assumption that the key factors have not been adequately articulated previously. Whether the issues have been presented in more systemic terms susceptible to more integrative comprehension — as a catalyst for remedial action — is obviously a concern. In then reviewing a range of theories through which the current situation can be viewed and comprehended — the “resolutique”? — again the question is to what extent that set reflects a comprehensive range of envisaged modalities. What might some consider to have been excluded or misrepresented? Given the eternal strife among the model builders and advocates, what new insights are offered regarding the reconciliation of their conflicting perspectives — a challenge articulated by [Nicholas Rescher](#) (*The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985)? Or is one approach simply to be favoured over all others?

Rather than advocating a “top-down” approach which has arguably been called into question over the past 50 years, the authors have focused on a “bottom-up” strategy. This is most clearly apparent in the third section of the book focusing on practical, implementable solutions — the “imaginatque”? — such as agro-ecology, the blue economy, regenerative urbanization, benign investments, and much more. The emphasis — and hence the title *Come On!* — is not to endeavour to force people not to do something by legislation (“top-down”). The focus is rather on encouraging people to choose to do something for their own benefit — namely “bottom-up”. Clearly this can be valued as a catalogue of possibilities. How people might choose between them, and whether the resulting pattern of choices is systemically viable, is another matter.

[Read the full text here.](#)

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