

(Un)balance

Sheet

Allen & Carver

“Because governance is the annunciation of universal exchange. The exchange through communication of all institutional forms, all forms of exchange value with each other is the enunciation of governance. The hospital talks to the prison which talks to the university which talks to the NGO which talks to the corporation through governance, and not just to each other but about each other. Everybody knows everything about our biopolitics. This is the perfection of democracy under the general equivalent. It is also the annunciation of governance as the realization of universal exchange on the grounds of capitalism.”
Moten and Harney, *The Undercommons*

“There seems to be something singularly captivating in the word *balance*: as if, because any thing is called a balance, it must, for that reason, be necessarily good.” John Stewart Mill

“Every man thus lives by exchanging.” Adam Smith

“It follows that a person must—in order to act in a normal way—be able to shift... between situations which are relevant to each form of equivalence. These different forms of equivalence are formally incompatible with one another since each of them is recognized in the situation in which its validity is established is universal...the principles of equivalence on which a [justificatory] reality test is based... arrive as orders of worth.” Luc Boltanski & Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification*

What follows is a ledger that demonstrates the attempts we make to equalize incommensurable entities and values, to balance and exchange differences in kind: varied orders of worth in increasingly disorientating settlements.

It serves here as a tool, a model and cautionary ta(b)le for the ordering impulses of making strange exchanges, of reasoned madness in and beyond the Beyond.

CASE	DEBIT	CREDIT	Working Assumptions
INSPIRATION Cultural institutions the world over invest themselves in the elaboration of ecologically minded programs, critical discourses of “the Anthropocene,” and the promise of “reinvigorating” ecological crises; e.g., The Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity’s recent “Beyond Anthropocene” was substantially enabled by the wealth of the oil and gas industry, since 80 percent of its external funding derives from actors in these industries.	Abounding quantities of climate changing GHG emissions; poisoned lakes, rivers, and landscapes; appropriated territories and displaced peoples; cancers and autoimmune diseases; devastated ecosystems.	Handsomely capitalized cultural and arts institutions facilitating artist contributions and conversations over ecological crises.	Public goods as renowned inspiration counterbalance intensely subsidized carbon-emitting industries. The latter function as a necessary evil that is neutralized by investment in culture and arts. For example, socio-geological Earth impacts of 1,249 870 annual tons of GHG emissions is rendered equivalent to 29 residential arts courses, 46 public exhibitions, 73 concerts, 27 restored.
INSPIRATION Premier-league soccer teams compete for the largest sponsorship deals from financial, airline, and betting corporations, which emblazon kits with brand value and logos to undergird the spectacle of a global entertainment industry.	One or two zeros that drop off the end of multinational corporate accounts are diverted to financial investments in soccer teams.	Symbolic valorizing and psychic penetration into sports viewer/consumer markets around the world. Corporate allegiance is purchased off the backs of the sublime bodies of athletes.	Investments produce measurable financial benefits from inspirational values attributed to soccer community solidarity and competition.
DOMESTIC Workers the world over have long had their energies and intellects defined as labor. Atomized and individualized, disciplined and co-opted, participation in the globalized labor market is scarcely the noble and romantic virtue that conservative values see it as. At a human and domestic scale, which sacrifices are reasonable for expectations of a peaceful, secure family life?	Twenty years of immiseration through submission to vicissitudes of globalized labor, and frequent geographic separation through lifetime service to an exploitative firm.	Twenty years familial ongoingness, metabolisms and shelter.	Domestic “security” afforded but compromised by globalized socially hostile milieu corresponding to restricted viability of human life. Socially determined cost-benefit calculation for survival.
CIVIC The Akai Tímirdyátr alumina plant in Aká, Veszprém County in western Hungary is celebrated for the economic benefits it brings to the local area through upward employment trajectories as well as supporting Hungary’s international competitiveness. Apart from the perennial accident or sludge spill and associated deaths, it is also quietly sharing a spectrum of toxic, industrial pollutants with its human operators and their families. Although these are well documented risks, the present cost-benefit analysis and political consensus accepts the cancer risk profile for the identified economic and political benefits.	Ninety-five bladder cancer diagnoses per year arising from sustained exposure to the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and wider range of chemical pollutants.	Three thousand jobs for local residents, economic lubrication, taxable incomes and foundations for further investments, i.e., GDP growth.	Population, ill-health and suffering can be calculably offset by the fiscal benefits that services an entrenched political class, which is slave to industrial employment statistics. Unfortunate but pragmatic tradeoff.
OPINION The UK’s largest rail infrastructure developer is commissioned under a 25-year project to construct a rail line through England’s historic villages and internationally designated ecological sites of outstanding natural beauty. The line will connect London to the cities of Birmingham and Leeds and promises to shave 12 and 17 minutes off commuter journeys, respectively. Politically desirable but civically, environmentally, and economically contested, this drastic dissection of rural England must prove its worth at all scales to all parties.	Productivity losses for infrastructure developer which dispatches employees to voluntary work with wildlife agencies to plant sapling trees that will mature in 50 years and are said to replace the value of woodlands razed.	Political shareholder, and civic recognition through performance of conscientious capitalism and responsible development.	Infrastructural expansion is equal to impressions of corporate social responsibility by affected communities. For example, 2,356 auctions and compulsory residential purchases, 56 hectares of ancient woodland, unique wetlands, ecosystems and historic sites are rendered equivalent in value to the economic acceleration from time-space shrinkage of commuter journeys. Infrastructural actors can counteract public unrest by supplying voluntary labor to wildlife agencies to perform woodland “offsets” for losses.

CASE	DEBIT	CREDIT	Working Assumptions
MARKET Drawing on its uniquely prosperous sovereign wealth funds arising from the country’s abundantly exploited oil and gas reserves, Norway has negotiated the purchase of large swatches of the Indonesian rainforest from the Indonesian State such that it is adequately compensated for economic opportunity costs of not granting palm oil plantation licenses.	Four million BOE (barrels of oil equivalent) per acre of virgin rainforest.	Vestiges of rare tropical forest ecosystems are left standing. Financial valorization through the International carbon markets enables their leveraging against growing scarcity.	Financial values and carbon emissions residing in underground oil and gas reserves in the Global North are rendered equivalent to financial worth of rainforest and sequestered emissions from tree growth in the tropics. Moral responsibility for the global commons of Southern rainforests rests with eco-imperialist Northern nations; actual responsibility needs to be wrestled from the “unstable” government nations in which these commons “unfortunately” reside.
INDUSTRY Industries that have very marginal potentials for the capture or use of greenhouse gases have become able to claim “green” status by eliciting funding (innovation, government) and public support, which further supports expanding production.	More, faster, and “better” processes for creating more modern infrastructures, conveniences, and energy sources.	Green, innovative and high-tech status is secured for the firm, which increases its market value and competitive advantage for further production and investment.	Carbon captured through “clean coal” or enhanced oil recovery strategies (in which CO ₂ is reinjected into coal mines or oil wells in order to dislodge further fuel resources. These are rendered as “carbon credits” and ecological actions, despite being motivated by profit.
MARKET The Donkey Sanctuary is amongst the most well-funded charities of its size, attracting donations and legacies from individuals around the world who have been moved by the campaigns to end donkey cruelty and hardship.	Nine thousand six-hundred and fifty-two of Spanish Human Labor Value Hours (LVH) given to waged employment and transferred as charitable donations.	Resuscitation and ongoing health care underwrite the average increase of five Quality Life Years (QUALYS) for Ethiopian donkeys.	Human labor hours can be made equivalent to the labor of animals. As an inverse to this relationship, the life extensions from reduced donkey hours can provide a useful working ratio. Human Labor Value Hours: Donkey QUALYS.
GREEN Arbitrated by the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation, Moven-Bafing National Park was established in 2017 in the Labé Region of Guinea. It was created with funds from Guinea Alumina Corporation as a “chimpanzee offset” to compensate for the impacts of, and to gain further permissions for, mineral excavation sites in other territories of the critically endangered primate. Chimpanzees are humans’ closest living relatives.	Guinean forests converted to 300,000 hectares of bauxite mines.	Seven thousand, five hundred and forty-three CC (Chimpanzee Credits) purchased and planned to compensate the displaced chimpanzees for converted habitats.	Actual chimpanzee individuals and their social groups displaced or killed are rendered calculably equivalent—intrinsically, scientifically, morally, and economically—to the idealized category of “chimpanzee.”
GREEN In 2016, Queensland’s electrical network benefited from a \$15 million AUS investment by the country’s largest energy monopoly to facilitate production at the Boyne Island Smelter. Land use changes and the building of service roads to the site for grid expansion are deactivating diverse biological communities. The energy monopoly is required to provide some environmental compensation for the koalas, which have vanished.	Erection of a power grid and land clearance for service roads denuded 15,000 trees of Koala habitat in Boyne Island, Australia.	Fifty thousand Kw electrical power capacity for smelting along with 250 hectares of swamp and wetlands in Southern Queensland for bird sanctuaries and crocodile conservation programs, along with breeding for the leather industry.	Koalas are furry and charismatic but have little economic value on Boyne Island. Crocodiles are dangerous but and after meeting biodiversity conservation values, can eventually be made into leather and sold at market.