AJASN Newsletter

November 2018

Inside

Public sector

The book 'The End of Whitehall' claims that Whitehall has drastically changed over the last thirty years. (1)Now, officials are beholden to the governing party's agenda and its partisan motives. And, (2) undermining the Whitehall paradigm has been detrimental to the quality of statecraft. The institutions of the British state now operate according to the imperatives of the 'permanent campaign.'

The Lowy Institute issued the Asia Power Index 2018. The former head (Pascal Lamy) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) argues in an oped that other nations should craft a new trade system without the USA (as a Plan B.)After the mid-terms President Donald Trump could double down on his disruptive foreign policy in the years ahead, with conflicts over trade a particular concern, politicians, diplomats and analysts in Europe said. Japan's economy faces rising risks from U.S.-China trade war.

A whole-of-government approach to population policy for Australia – an ANU paper says Australia is in the midst of a popularly-constructed crisis of population. This blueprint assesses the immigration challenge that the EU faces and sets out 12 policy recommendations.

A review of the South Australian Government's (2002–2018) unique effort to promote public value across the whole of government, in policy design and practice, and the lessons for public sector leaders and managers.

San Francisco's Proposition C a ballot measure to combat homelessness passed on Nov. 6 with 59.91% support. It will bring in about $300 million each year by taxing large businesses. The measure was framed as a way to force big companies in the city to pay for a problem to which they contribute. Australia needs to triple its social housing by 2036 (here and here.)

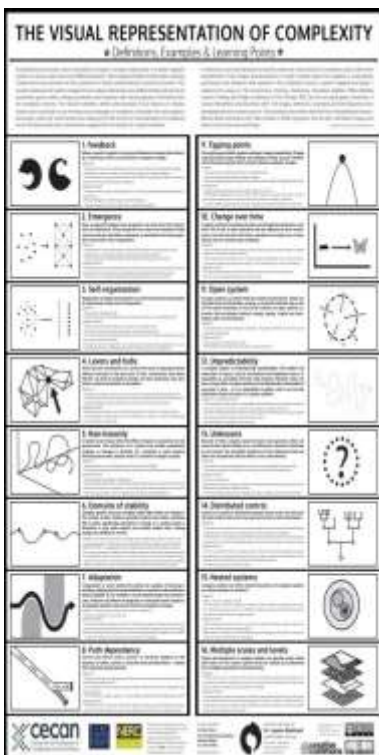Should Australia abolish prison? Podcast … it's time for us to completely rethink our approach to incarceration.

Labor plans for a new evaluator-general – to recognise that evaluation has enormous value and to build up a stronger body of expertise in evaluation in Australia.

Canada Revenue Agency says so many Canadians get calls from scammers pretending to be tax enforcers that real tax agents are having trouble reaching people. A new digital services tax of 2% on technology companies (on revenue) that make more than $638 million globally will come into force in the UK in April 2020.

An article on: The 'nudge unit': the experts that became a prime UK export. The On late-tax payments Syracuse (a city in New York State) found personal notes handwritten by city officials, rather than sending standard legal letters demanding payment, helped the city collect nearly $1.5 million more than it predicted traditional methods alone would have brought in. University researchers estimate that the personal approach brought in 57 percent more revenue from delinquent property owners than the city could expect from using more traditional letters.

Taking stock: A decade of drug policy. This report evaluates the impacts of drug policies implemented across the world over the past decade.

Earlier this year, Grattan published a report looking at the rise of protest politics in Australia. It says the economic explanations for this rise of populism are very unconvincing.

Read

Agriculture

The Canadian government supported vegan protein (once again) by signing on to a nearly $153 million investment in the Prairie-based Protein Industries Canada Supercluster. This is a non-profit value chain group of small-to-large institutions involved in food manufacturing, agriculture and food-related services, research and development, and technology; it seeks to make Canada a world leader in the booming plant-based protein market.

Researchers in Japan have discovered a protein which is critical for regulating plant responses to periods of dehydration (drought.) A study shows how the protein — called NGA1 — controls transcription of a key gene without which plants would perish in the absence of water far quicker.

Read an article here that discusses the potential to create food without plants, animals or soil, using instead bacteria that feed on hydrogen (generated by solar-powered electrolysis of water) and carbon dioxide from the air. And read a research paper about the technology here.

Althea granted cannabis manufacture licence by Australian Government (related Is Australia missing out on a $5.5B pot market?)

Harvesting strawberries with smart robots – shown in a video.

A new, award-winning app is empowering small-scale South African farmers by connecting them with supermarkets.

Defence

Is this more evidence of a post-American world? The French president called for a European army to counter not just China and Russia but even the United States (… the revival of the spirit of De Gaulle.)

The United States has lost its military edge to a dangerous degree and could potentially lose a war against China or Russia, according to a report by a bipartisan commission that Congress created to evaluate the Trump administration's defence strategy.

According to a *story* published in the *South China Morning Post*, the Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT), which operates under the supervision of China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, just selected 31 students under the age of 18 for a special four-year program. Its goal: to develop intelligent weapons systems — weapons that can decide for themselves when to take a human life.

China is producing competitive drones (stealth aircraft, AK-47-toting helicopter drones) and marketing them at air shows.

This short paper 'Russian Influence Operations on Twitter' attempts to measure how much activity from Russian state-operated accounts released in a dataset made available by Twitter in October 2018 was targeted at the United Kingdom.[1]

Economy

A CEDA report 'Connecting people to progress: securing future economic development' calls for a nimble policy approach in key areas including population, technology and the workplace. Here is a list of universal basic income experiments.

Having a young family, with children under age 15, continues to affect women's employment arrangements more than it does men (ABS Stats report.)

This systematic review maps out the academic landscape of *sharing studies* and examines what and how we share.

Environment

Queensland has systematically failed the state's growing list of threatened species, delaying declarations by up to seven years and botching its conservation management responsibilities, a scathing report by the state's Auditor General has found.

A new report Nature in the Urban Century finds that if current trends continue over the next two decades, urban growth will threaten more than 290,000 km^2 of habitat. And protected lands are increasingly in close proximity to cities, with 40 percent of strictly protected areas anticipated to be within 50 km of a city by 2030.

Securing our energy is a collection of expert essays on the challenges and opportunities of energy security, energy access and climate change.

NZ passed an oil & gas exploration ban. 'This law means that around 4 million square kilometres of the earth's surface is now off limits to oil & gas companies, and any deposits under our deep seas will stay in the ground where they belong.'

In the last year alone private investors have put over \$15b into new wind and solar projects. The vast majority of Australia's coal plants were built by taxpayers, and we haven't built one in a decade. After decades of implacable opposition to nuclear power, the Union of Concerned Scientists has reversed its position and now seeks to keep nuclear plants in the US open. Why? If closed early the plants will be replaced by fossil fuels (report.)

Nature looked at bottom-up biology (a new field of study) where "researchers must be able to put aside the context, the system that evolution generated, and instead design and construct a system afresh from component parts."

The Earth BioGenome Project – a 10-year effort to sequence the genomes of all 1.5 million known animal, plant, protozoan and fungal species – was officially launched in November.

The tropics are expanding at around 30 miles per decade, while the smaller equatorial region with heavy rains is actually contracting. Many are calling this the tropic squeeze. The article notes that in Australia 'the arable land at the nation's southern edge is shrinking, and its potential for growing wheat declining.'

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[1] On 17 October 2018, Twitter released data about 9 million tweets from 3,841 blocked accounts affiliated with the Internet Research Agency (IRA) – a Russian organisation founded in 2013 and based in St Petersburg, accused of using social media platforms to push pro-Kremlin propaganda and influence nation states beyond their borders etc.

An [investigation](#) into logging in the Solomon Islands reveals that China is harvesting entire forests to supply its timber demands, and if deforestation continues at this rate the islands' natural landscape will be exhausted by 2036.

The new IEA World Energy Outlook suggests that [global coal use](#) probably peaked back in 2014. They now expect oil use for cars to peak by the mid-2020s.

The Australian Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI) and Better Border Biosecurity, New Zealand (B3 NZ) have signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen [plant biosecurity](#) research.

The IUCN [Red List of Ecosystems](#) determines if an ecosystem is at risk of collapse. Find out how it can support their conservation (see image.)

Singapore is creating a country-wide version of New York's 'highline' park, turning a disused railway line into a massive [eco-park](#) that literally traverses one side of the country to the other.

Half of the increase in Australia's annual [carbon dioxide emissions](#) can be linked to the failure to bury greenhouse gases underground at the country's largest liquefied natural gas development (Chevron's Gorgon LNG development in the Pilbara.)

A new Climate Council report '[Deluge and Drought: Australia's Water Security in a Changing Climate](#)' has found the severe drought gripping much of Australia has been exacerbated by climate change.

As climate-change fuels increasingly large and frequent wildfires that hit closer and closer to densely populated urban centres, the smoke they produce is becoming a [public health crisis](#).

A new study links the build-up of greenhouse gas emissions to more frequent heat waves, floods and droughts in the Northern Hemisphere.

Exploring the links between financial actors and non-linear changes in the climate system - a new study says that (a few) banks, pension funds, institutional investors 'pivotal' in protecting rainforests and helping slow climate change.

Foresight

IFTF Future Food Experiences: Designing Good Food for the 21st Century. Download the full forecast map and download the toolkit here.

This study discusses what parts of the brain are active when people think about the past and the future – there is a lot of overlap.

Findings of Anticipating Future Skills: Jobs growth and alternative futures for Queensland to 2022 s used economic modelling and scenario planning to examine possible futures for work in 19 industries and 15 regions in Queensland. bit.ly/2QoJOaq

Success of next generation business leaders in Asia will depend on, and will be limited by, their level of fluency in understanding how the future will play out in the region, and their ability to not only embrace but also shape the changes future has in store. This is one of the uber learnings of the "Imagining Asia 2030: Future Fluent Asian Leader" study.

Health

Feeding nine billion people today would be an entirely different task than feeding that same number in 2050. Based on anticipated gains in weight and height, the average near-future human will be bigger than their 2018 counterpart and, as a result, will require more food. There are a number of factors influencing this prediction, report.

A paper (rapid review) on the use of research in health policymaking found over 300 papers but the vast majority of these were descriptive. Very few – in fact just 14 of 304 articles – actually concerned testing interventions to see whether they worked. There is a serious discrepancy between surging interest in this area and the small number of studies actually testing strategies (see also.)

A new study says increasing the cost of meat (red and processed) *through taxes* might save lives and also help the environment. A plant-based burger that bleeds – from cult US brand Beyond Meat – makes its UK retail debut in Tesco after its launch was delayed by supply issues.

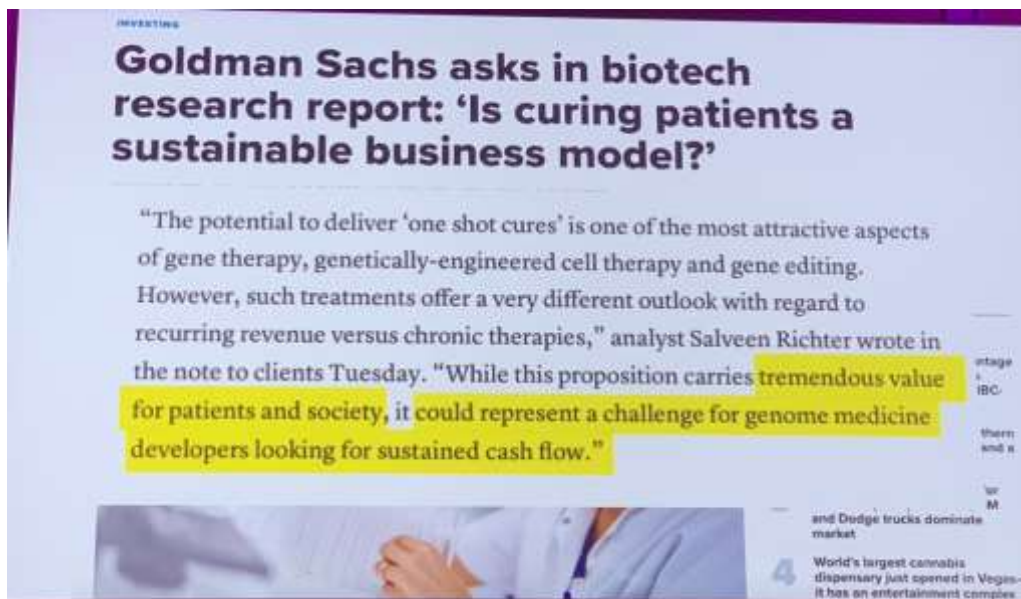The global fertility rate has halved since 1950. A new report says that almost half the world's countries won't have enough children to maintain their population size.

South Africa investigates sterilising mosquitoes in anti-malaria drive. South Africa is one of four southern African countries aiming to eliminate malaria transmission by 2023.
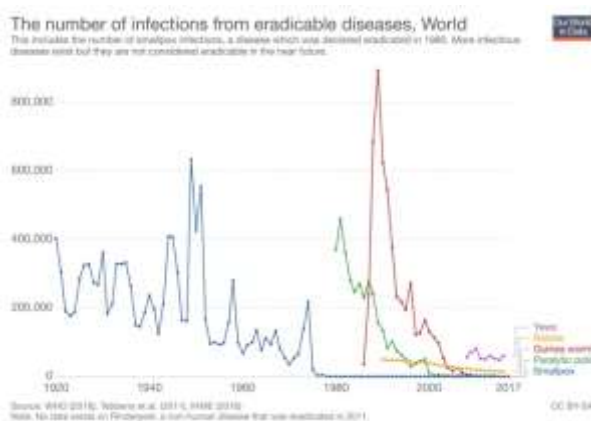
In the future, people may be able to regenerate lost limbs. (As a reminder – here is a 2016 TedTalks about how humans will evolve in 100 years.) This blog post discusses early stage research that shows, grocery-store-bought plants (an apple) can supply the necessary structure for engineering replacement human tissues (an ear.)

Fire and Emergency NZ conducted research to investigate the impact on psychological wellbeing of firefighters attending traumatic calls with the intention of informing actions to strengthen support for firefighters. Here is an article on for-hire firefighters protecting homes in the United States, usually on the payroll of an insurance company with a lot at risk.

A Dutch man, 69, who 'identifies as 20 years younger' launched legal battle to change his age to 45.

Goldman Sachs asks in biotech research report: 'Is curing patients a sustainable business model?'

"The potential to deliver 'one shot cures' is one of the most attractive aspects of gene therapy, genetically-engineered cell therapy and gene editing. However, such treatments offer a very different outlook with regard to recurring revenue versus chronic therapies," analyst Salveen Richter wrote in the note to clients Tuesday. "While this proposition carries tremendous value for patients and society, it could represent a challenge for genome medicine developers looking for sustained cash flow."

Consider this image (above) – is it misleading or thought provoking?

Technology

A range of robots are being used in our care services (aged, education, health, disability) - new ANZSOG research explores the roles that robots should and, even more critically, should *not* play in care delivery, and the role that government has as a steward in shaping these roles.

This research challenges conventional wisdom about how users share information on Twitter.

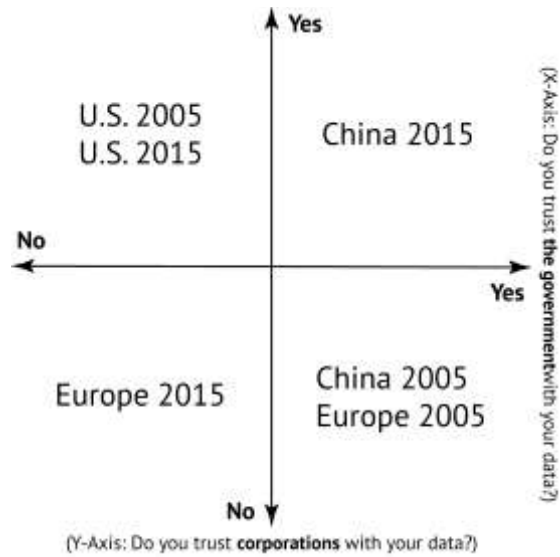China's state news agency Xinhua k introduced AI anchors 'who will report all day every day, from anywhere in the country.'

Economist Mariana Mazzucato explains how extreme financialisation is making us vulnerable to a robot revolution (WEF video.)

This is an interesting article about the 'moral economy' of data – three are emerging and we need to think about interactions within and between three distinct approaches to the moral economy of data: in the United States, China, and the European Union.[2] It is unclear how they will respectively reinforce and impede the abilities of different actors in the state, business, and civil society to achieve their objectives (as well,

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[2] India, Japan, and even Israel will be important technological players in the development of data-intensive information systems, and are likely to have differing views of how privacy, security, state interests, and corporate independence should be balanced in the development of data-intensive applications.

often, as implicitly shaping those objectives). And, how will these moral economies shape different trajectories of technological development, respectively favouring certain lines of research while disfavouring others. (See image.)

(X-Axis: Do you trust **the government** with your data?)

(Y-Axis: Do you trust **corporations** with your data?)

Resources (professional development)

Here is a journal article on 'Effective and efficient committee work: A Systematic overview of multidisciplinary literatures.' Findings suggest that effective committee performance is enhanced by: appointing members from all key stakeholder groups while keeping the group size close to 6-12 (other findings are explained in the abstract and study.)
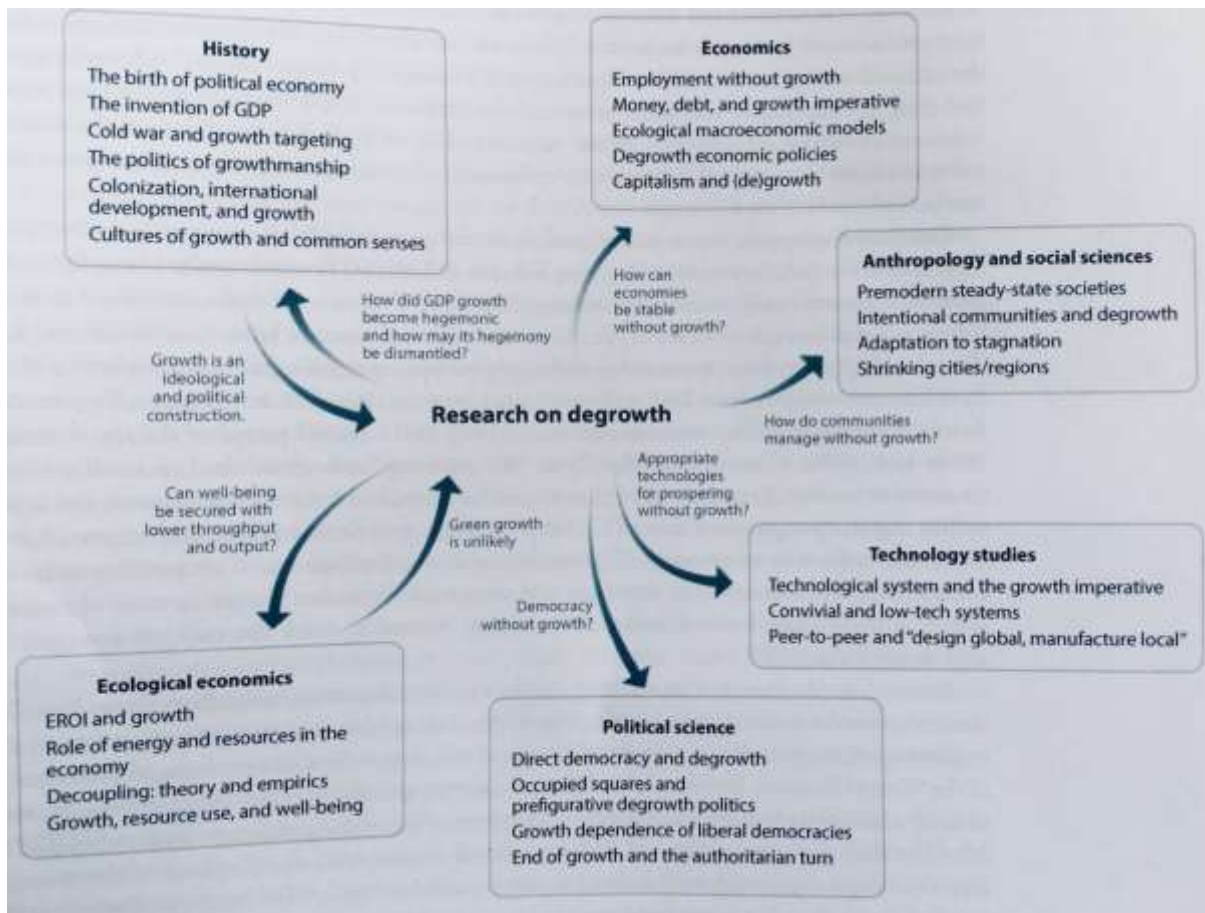
JSTOR published a 'Research Basics: an open academic research skills course' online.

Over at LSE blogs Erzsébet Czifra-Tóth and Jon Tennant have put together a short sequence of steps and flagged a number of freely available online tools that will help researchers to easily integrate an effective literature review and discovery routine into their work lives.

Regardless of how evidence and its use might be defined and understood, research has a better chance of informing policy if producers understand policy processes and frame it accordingly. See Navigating the politics of evidence-informed policymaking: strategies of influential policy actors in Ontario. And another article: The politics of evidence-based policymaking: maximising the use of evidence in policy.

If you need to complete a literature review a [diagram](#) like this (that includes the guiding research questions/findings) might help …

To note

The Journal of Controversial Ideas will be launched early next year. This will permit academics who are frightened to explore controversial topics, in case it provokes a backlash, will soon have a safer route to publish such work. [Jeff McMahan, professor of moral philosophy at University of Oxford](#) is one of the organisers.

And … [Nine sci-fi subgenres](#) to help you understand the future (by Jay Owens.)

Next meeting

21 November 2018 in Wellington, New Zealand