

## **The NEXT Industrial Revolution**

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If someone were to present the Industrial Revolution as a retroactive design assignment, it might sound like this: Design a system of production that

- puts billions of pounds of toxic material into the air, water, and soil every year
- measures prosperity by activity, not legacy
- requires thousands of complex regulations to keep people and natural systems from being poisoned too quickly
- produces materials so dangerous that they will require constant vigilance from future generations
- results in gigantic amounts of waste
- puts valuable materials in holes all over the planet, where they can never be retrieved
- erodes the diversity of biological species and cultural practices

Eco-efficiency instead

- releases *fewer* pounds of toxic material into the air, water, and soil every year
- measures prosperity by *less* activity
- *meets or exceeds* the stipulations of thousands of complex regulations that aim to keep people and natural systems from being poisoned too quickly
- produces *fewer* dangerous materials that will require constant vigilance from future generations
- results in *smaller* amounts of waste
- puts *fewer* valuable materials in holes all over the planet, where they can never be retrieved
- standardizes and homogenizes biological species and cultural practices Plainly put, eco-efficiency aspires to make the old, destructive system less so. But its goals, however admirable, are fatally limited.

The Next Industrial Revolution can be framed as the following assignment: Design an industrial system for the next century that

- introduces no hazardous materials into the air, water, or soil
- measures prosperity by how much natural capital we can accrue in productive ways
- measures productivity by how many people are gainfully and meaningfully employed
- measures progress by how many buildings have no smokestacks or dangerous effluents
- does not require regulations whose purpose is to stop us from killing ourselves too quickly
- produces nothing that will require future generations to maintain vigilance
- celebrates the abundance of biological and cultural diversity and solar income